Sapphire Scalpel

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Sapphire Scalpel

by Weirwoo

Summary

Brienne Tarth is on her way to become the first female surgeon in Westeros. In her journey, she meets allies and foes - and potential love matches. This story is set in the early 1900s, and explores Brienne’s growth as a character and her increasingly complicated relationship with the Lannister family.

Notes

I'm new to the fan fiction world, but I spent the past many months reading all the J/B stories I could get my greedy eyes on. They have been amazing to read (thank you guys so much!), but they also inspired me to write a story of my own. So here goes.

Notes:
1. Since it's set in the medical world, there will be blood and bodily things. Death and pain are present. I know nothing of medicine, especially turn of the century medicine, so there will likely be inventions and inaccuracies.
2. This story is a Brienne First (!) story and focuses on her development and various relationships.
3. This fic deals with the incest between the Jaime and Cersei in a realistic way, exploring
their toxic dynamic and the psychological implications on Jaime. This story shows them being sexual with each other in the beginning.

4. In this fic the endgame is Jaime/Brienne, but Brienne has flirtations with others and there is a strong Jon/Brienne element. That may not be your cup of tea. However, the Lannisters are prominent from early chapters, and Jaime has prominent POV chapters.

5. GRRM owns the characters and places, not me. And forgive my leeway around ASOIAF characters. I love the books and show, but do not have encyclopedic knowledge of them.
She was sinking down beneath the waters, the sea forming ropes that dragged her feet into cold and swirling darkness. Desperately looking up, her eyes could barely make out the light from the surface under the roiling waves; above that, the round disk of sun was growing ever smaller and dimmer. Her legs and arms tried to beat back the sea, but watery anchors continued to pull down. She could feel her muscles grow weaker and her lungs feeling like they were exploding. Her mouth opened to scream and a rush of frigid salt water pummelled down her throat. Her arms were frantic, waving against the current, her legs kicking, and again she tried to scream. Bubbles rose from her mouth, as she swallowed more and more ocean. She silently screamed again and again.

Brienne awoke with a start, her throat constricted and her heart banging furiously. Her pillowcase was drenched with tears. She blinked, hot breaths coming out in gasps. It took her a moment to realize that she was in her bed in her small room at the Citadel. That she was safe, that it was just a dream. The dream. The same dream she’d been having since she was four years old. Her eight-year-old brother, Galladon, disappearing under the waves, caught by a freakishly strong current. He had been so far away that his head was just a speck in the water. Brienne remembered seeing his head bob in the distance, and then seeing just waves as his head disappeared under the water. Brienne wasn’t worried; her older brother belonged in the water, and was practically a fish. But when his head didn’t re-emerge, the normally quiet Brienne started wailing and crying, pointing her little fingers at the ocean. Her septa ran for help, and her father and her uncle ran out into the sea, frantically slashing at the water. In the end, it was too late. They found him and dragged his pale little body onto the beach, his lips almost as blue as his eyes were. But there was no life in those eyes now. They stared blankly, their colour fading and seemingly seeping into his skin.

Again, the dream. She untwisted her blankets around her legs, turned over the pillow to the dry side, and hugged another pillow to her chest. Breathe, breathe, Brienne. She couldn’t help but be reminded of how alone she was in this world. Her mother was dead and barely remembered. Her two sisters, both dead in the cradle. Galladon, her sun. Her uncle, who perished in the last war. There was only father left, and he was miles and miles away on Tarth. Gradually, the painful throb of her heart faded to a dull ache. Sleep still lingered in her bones. She closed her eyes, and allowed herself to drift.

Her sleep the rest of the night was shallow, and she awoke at dawn. The faint blue light through the narrow window illuminated her sparse surroundings: a bed, small desk and shelves. A chair. A small closet which held her few clothes and small trunk. A chair. A small closet which held her few clothes and small trunk. She quickly rose, pulled up the sheets and blankets to make the bed presentable. Poured water into the basin to quickly wash her face and neck. She stood in front of the small mirror which hung on a white-washed wall. Her face was as usual: broad and ugly, with a bent nose and prominent crooked teeth. Lips overly plump and dark. Her large eyes were blue and wide-awake, and today, tinged with the sadness of the lingering dream. She sighed. Another day with this face. She no longer wished she would wake up one day and become pretty overnight, but that disappointment was always there every morning she gazed at her reflection. Her body was another matter. She quickly stripped off her white nightgown, and pulled on small clothes. Her white chemise. She disliked corsets, but she was thankful that her body was lean and muscular enough to warrant the least restrictive of corsets, one that was more a nod to the conventions of female dress and acceptability. She was very lightly laced, which allowed her to breathe properly and have enough ease of movement for her work. Over that, a black wool skirt, petticoats (useless petticoats!) and white button up shirt. Like her person, her clothes were plain. Her shirts were actually men’s shirts that she had tailored to fit her frame, as she found men’s clothing often fit her better around the shoulders than those with a woman’s cut. She pulled her light, straw-coloured hair (no one could mistake the shade for golden) into a severe bun at the nape
of her neck and aggressively poked pins into the bun to keep it in place. The best thing she could say about her appearance was that she was neat and clean and proper. Appropriate, she thought, for a doctor.

She walked briskly across the courtyard and along winding stone steps. Unlike other medical students and residents who lived in a building attached to the hospital, Brienne, as a woman, was given “special housing” away from the men with the nurses-in-training in the building of the Septas. She was used to it by now, not being entirely accepted by the men in medicine but also being alienated from the young, female nursing students. Both sexes looked at her as an oddity, an alien so perverse and freakish in looks and attitude that she’d best be left alone. It was not always like this. She remembered her first year, when she endured the cruelest of the taunts. “Brienne the Beauty,” they jeered as she walked into the lecture halls. “Beast!” and “Giant!” the men taunted as she walked the hallways of the Citadel. They mockingly addressed her as “Mister Tarth” and “Sir” on even everyday interactions.

It was often no better in classes; Dr. Tarly emphasized the differences in the brains of men and women, looking pointedly at Brienne while lecturing, “Women’s brains are lighter in weight and smaller in size. Thus, it is no surprise that women’s capacity for learning and intellect far inferior to those of men. The woman’s inability to grasp science and mathematics is therefore biological…” Brienne’s felt her face flush, and an anger quickly rose within her. This attitude she was hearing from him wasn’t new – in fact, she’s had to face it over and over from the boys on Tarth, who all thought they could outrun her, outswim her, and beat her in swordplay. No, she was angry because these words came from a medical doctor, someone in a teaching position who was spreading these ridiculous notions to future generations of doctors. She curled her hands into hard fists and pursed her lips until they were white to keep herself from yelling at the idiot man.

She also remembered the mocking and teasing when they had their first cadaver. “Brienne the Beauty!” Connington called out. “Take a good look. This will be the only time you’ll get to see a man’s privates!”

“Indeed,” Ben Bushy added, “she’s so ugly that no man would want to show his body to this beast! Any man confronted with her face would just shrivel up!”

“Don’t you just want to give the dead gentleman a kiss, just to know what it feels like, beauty?” added Edmund Ambrose. Hyle Hunt, their oft companion, doubled up in laughter.

Robb Stark, who was the unfortunate soul who had been assigned to be her partner that day, gave her a look that prevented her from bursting into tears and running away. “Just ignore them,” he said under his breath to her. “They’re jerks and you’re better than them.” Since that day, he was always her partner in anatomy class, for which she was ever grateful.

Thank gods she was nearly done with this place, she thought to herself as she opened the door to the hospital. In the lounge she donned her white coat, draped her stethoscope around her neck and stored her medical bag in her locker.

“Tarth,” A dark-haired young man walked in. “Early as usual, I see.”

“Snow,” Brienne smiled warmly, “You know what they say, the early bird…”

“Gets the worm,” Jon finished. “Well, my dearest ostrich, today’s the day. Nerves?”

Brienne blanched, suddenly remembering that today was the day that residencies were to be announced. How could it have slipped her mind? Of course, she had her rounds this morning, then they were assisting the bowel surgery later that day…. 
“Oh my… I can’t believe I forgot that it’s today! Frankly, I did not get much rest last night. My mind must be on the moon.”

“Not much sleep last night?” Jon smiled, his usually solemn eyes twinkling, “Did you get up to something naughty, dear doctor?”

Brienne rolled her eyes. “Oh yes. I was torn between reading the latest research on bowel resections or Chapter 11 of our medical text book. It was positively indecent!”

Jon laughed. “Dear Tarth. I sincerely hope that we’ll be placed together in our residency. If not, I shall miss you terribly.”

His words reminded her that their years of study were coming to an end, and that Jon, along with Robb, were the only friends she ever made in medical school. She and Jon had been drawn to each other in those initial first weeks, her for being a woman (especially an ugly one), and he for being poor and a bastard. They were both treated as insignificant by the privileged and wealthy young men that made up most of her class. She reflected that perhaps even Jon had it worse than she did, because she, after all, was a hightborn from Tarth, the daughter of the Evenstar, and her father had enough money to invest in her board and education. Jon, on the other hand, was abandoned by his mother and was raised with Robb Stark’s family. The Starks were a noble and old family, but the matriarch berated Jon’s bastard status and treated him little better than a servant, although Ned Stark, the man all thought to be Jon’s real father, treated him well enough. Luckily, Robb and his siblings all adored him, but this love did not help pay for medical school, especially after Ned Stark died in the aftermath of the war a few years back. Jon earned his way to medical school, working part-time in the hospital as a porter and laboratory assistant, and studying the rest of the time. He even stayed off hospital grounds in a dingy and damp room on a questionable part of Oldtown to save money. Brienne wondered how he even had time to sleep. But she recognized in him a compassion which she rarely saw in her fellow medical students, an understanding of the downtrodden and underprivileged. They had both undergone difficult times growing up. Jon was one of the very few people that she felt comfortable enough to be herself with.

“Tarth,” Jon said softly, looking at her. “I can see your eyes. Don’t go soft on me now. I don’t want to see those big blue eyes of yours cry.”

Brienne blinked. Pursed her lips. Tried a half-hearted scowl. “Snow. You’re ridiculous. I don’t cry. Especially over a shortie like you.”

Snow let out a laugh. He seemed to laugh a lot when she was around. He was usually remarked by others as being serious and almost dour. He looked up at her (he really was remarkably shorter than her, nearly a head), and placed a light hand on her shoulder.

“I really shall miss you, you old giraffe.” he smiled.

“Jon.” her voice wavered. His dark eyes seemed suddenly sad.

“Brienne.”

Suddenly his expression lightened; a smile was on his lips. “Shall we do rounds now? I have an inkling that our patients would appreciate an early wakeup call.”

Brienne laughed as they headed towards the door.

“After you, dear doctor,” she said.

“After you, dear lady doctor,” he replied, with a bow.
The Operation

Chapter Summary

In which we meet the great Dr. Oberyn Martell and enter the operating theatre.

Chapter Notes

Warning: it's a surgery, so there's blood, disease and medical stuff.

The operating theatre was filled to overflowing, front row seats occupied by Citadel doctors and professors, and other rows filled by men in dark suits, medical students of various years, devoutly carrying pens and tiny notebooks. The shiny oak rows of seats formed a half-circle around the blindingly white operating floor. Electric lights, still a novelty to most of the lower classes but long established in the hospital, flooded the stage. The floors and back walls were tiled white. On either side lay steel table trolleys. There was a large rectangular vat of boiling water, used for sterilization of surgical instruments. Everything looked and smelled entirely clean, a faint chemical residue lingering in the air. An excited buzz permeated the atmosphere. The gentlemen were excited to see this new bowel resection procedure performed by one of the most innovative surgeons in Westeros, Dr. Oberyn Martell. Dr. Martell, originally from Dorne, studied at the Citadel years ago and went overseas to Essos and Lys for further training. It was said that his eye was sharper than his scalpel, his hands steadier than mountains, and his fingers as deft as the movements of a hummingbird. His innovative practices were published in prestigious medical journals and his techniques spread far and wide, undoubtedly saving many lives on the operating table around the world. If it weren’t for the fact that Dr. Martell was a graduate of the Citadel, this demonstration would never have happened. His main work was at King’s Landing, and there was no lack of demand for him there.

Behind the swinging doors of the theatre, four doctors were soaping up and scrubbing at the two rows of facing sinks. They were dressed in identical white uniforms, their hands roughly rubbing their fingers and arms up to their elbows. A lanky, slim man with dark cropped hair, an aquiline nose, sparkling black eyes and a full mouth glanced long at the two new doctors across from him. Fresh meat, Oberyn thought, not unkindly, for he had this thought every time he encountered newly graduated doctors. They were so young and unspoiled and filled with nerves. It was rather adorable. But this time was rather…special. Extremely special. These were the first and second place students in their year. Jon Snow appeared entirely focused on the block of soap and the water and the movement of his hands. When he dared to look across to Oberyn his face betrayed nothing. Just focus and a steady gaze. He was a handsome young man – rather, a beautiful one, almost. He was slim and muscular, with dark curly hair that would have hidden his eyes if the hair hadn’t been slicked back. A narrow, plump mouth; large dark eyes that could only be described as soulful.

The other student was rather more…singular, not only for the fact that the student, this one at the top of her class, was a young woman. Additionally, she was an extraordinary physical specimen. Immensely tall, towering over his own tall frame, muscular, and powerful. Dressed in white surgical pants, as they all were. A daring choice, Oberyn mused. She didn’t wear a long white skirt like the nurses. How very improper. We can see the shape of her legs. He smiled. A long, graceful
neck reinforced the fact that she was a woman; well, that, along with her immense, long-lashed fringed blue eyes which were round and open and seemed to take in the light of the sky and stars. Those eyes were rather disconcerting in her otherwise broad, rough face that many would call ugly. The way Brienne Tarth peeked at him and the way she chewed her lip in nervousness revealed to Oberyn that the young woman was aware of this fact, that she was ugly and everyone found her so. She was so self-conscious, he thought. He wondered if she would be knocking things over in the operating theatre. Still, Dr. Tywin Lannister, who was the fourth doctor present in the room, assured him that these two were the best of their class, and have had considerable experience assisting surgeons in various types of surgery in the past year. They were, supposedly, the most talented of the bunch. We’ll see, he said to himself.

“It looks like you’ve drawn quite a full house, Dr. Oberyn.” Dr. Lannister evenly remarked. His green eyes calm and his thin, narrow mouth quirked in a tiny hint of a smile.

“Well, I only perform to capacity crowds,” Oberyn smiled. “In fact, I feel quite at home here. It brings me back to my student days.”

“I’m glad that you were able to take the time to demonstrate this procedure for us. I hear even our professors are in the audience today. Quite the honour,” said Tywin.

Oberyn chuckled. Turned his eyes again to the young ones.

“And are our dear new doctors ready for this sold-out crowd?” asked Oberyn.

Brienne blushed a dark pink, eyes cast down. Interesting, thought Oberyn. After a pause Jon spoke first, his gaze straightforward, “I endeavour to do my best, Dr. Oberyn. It’s an honour to be in the same theatre as you.”

“And you…Dr. Tarth? As one of the first female doctors, the top of your class?”

She went an even deeper shade of red, if that were possible. “Er…I…ah…I won’t…I won’t let you down, Dr. Oberyn.” she stammered. Her hands scrubbed even harder.

“Ah…as long as both of you have steady hands, doctors. I like my assistants to actually assist in my surgeries, isn’t that right, Dr. Lannister?” Oberyn smiled widely, revealing straight white teeth and dimples that accentuated his roguish charm.

“That’s correct. I will be alongside you, Dr. Snow and Dr. Tarth, but largely in a supervisory capacity. You will assist Dr. Martell in much of the work.”

Jon paled slightly, and nodded, while all the colour seemed to quickly drain from Brienne’s face. She also nodded, rather decisively.

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“The patient is a 41-year-old male, violently ill for a week before his family dragged him to a hospital. Nausea, vomiting, constipation, pain. Early stages of sepsis. We suspect that a section of his lower intestine has undergone necrosis. Surgery is of the utmost importance to save his man’s life.”
Oberyn faced the crowd, his deep, melodic voice ringing to the rafters. Members of the audience bent forward and were utterly enraptured.

“We aim to resect six inches of the dead tissue, joining the healthy ends with precise stitches. Theoretically, this surgery is simple, but a great number of things can go wrong. The sutures must be perfect. There must not be any leaking of fluids, which would further damage the tissue. Today I will demonstrate my new joining method – a method that ensures no gaps and allows for quick healing and a healthy movement of stomach contents.”

He turned to face the patient, who was draped hip to ankle in white cotton, with his torso exposed. He was earlier eased to unconsciousness by ether gas, and appeared to be peacefully sleeping, breaths regular and steady.

Oberyn asked for the scalpel and made the first incision, with Jon following with the suction, which was being cranked manually by a nurse. Brienne followed with the cauterization, the familiar smell of singed tissue reaching her nostrils. Oberyn’s movements were precise and economical, with him narrating his every movement to the audience with complete confidence. Even with this performance, he took note of his assistants. They were very good. He was particularly astonished at the transformation in Brienne, who was all awkwardness outside the operating theatre, but inside it she was a fluid, efficient and graceful machine. In particular, he noticed that she and Jon seemed to work well together, effortlessly moving in tandem, supporting each other and him, the main surgeon. Remarkably, they both seemed to have a unique sense of anticipation of Oberyn’s own movements. He suspected that they studied his new methods, but still, this watchfulness of his own hands, his shifts in stance and muscle was very rare indeed. They read him, and read him well.

Oberyn had no qualms about this particular surgery; he had done many of these before, and barring complete disaster, it was a routine procedure. He had perfected his new resection and stitching technique. The patient was fine – blood loss was minimal, his blood pressure steady, breaths normal. Let’s actually teach, he thought.

“Dr. Tarth,” he said. Brienne looked up, her eyes like bright beams. “You shall practice my new stitching technique with me.” Her eyes widened. “You have been observing my movements, have you not?” She nodded. “Come then.” He stepped aside, handing her the needle. Brienne frowned in concentration, but her movements had no hesitation whatsoever. Her stitches were even, close together, and dare he say it, perfect. There would be no leaks here.

He then asked Jon to close the incision, and observed him sew together layers of muscle, fat and skin with quick, precise stitches. He was suitably impressed.

The patient was rolled out of the theatre and into the recovery wing.

The doctors were again scrubbing their hands, washing away the blood. It was a successful surgery. All four of their white outfits remained almost pristine, there was so little blood lost.

Oberyn was quiet this time, smiling at both Brienne and Jon, who both had small, satisfied smiles on their faces. He nodded at them as they both left the room, leaving to go to change.

“Your verdict?” remarked Tywin.

“They did well.” said Oberyn. Tywin smiled his thin smile.

“Remarkably well.” repeated Oberyn. He winked at the older man.
Putting Things into Place

Chapter Summary

Brienne meets with Dr. Tywin Lannister who is...surprisingly supportive.

Chapter Notes

Kudos and comments/questions totally welcome!

Is Tywin too nice?

Dr. Tywin Lannister, eminent surgeon of the Seven Kingdoms, recipient of numerous medical awards and honors in his decades-long career, Lord of Casterly Rock and in his final months as interim director of the Citadel medical school, sat still at his desk. His office was a large wood-paneled room with a heavy mahogany desk in the centre. A sole desk lamp lit up the room. It was well into evening and had been a long day. He had been meeting separately with new graduates to inform them of their residencies, with a several hours-long break to assist (no, he corrected in his mind, observe) the surgery of Dr. Oberyn Martell. Martell was brilliant as usual, displaying technical skill in demonstrating his new procedure while maintaining an enviable showmanship and charm in front of a packed audience. Tywin smiled ruefully. Perhaps the rumours were true, the star surgeon was irresistible inside and outside the operating theatre.

Tywin felt every year of his 59 years. His once golden hair had grown grey and thinning; his face over the years had narrowed and sharpened. Only his Lannister green eyes retained the vibrancy of youth. Now they were quiet, looking over documents for his next appointment.

Brienne Tarth.

She did well today, and even impressed Dr. Martell. Of course, Tywin had always suspect she would, since she was the best student of her class, and had unusually fine hands (though they were massive). He remembered first meeting her a few years ago, how she slouched in her plaid travel dress to make her 6 foot 3 frame smaller, how she could barely look anyone in the eye. How she turned red at every glance directed her way, and how she stammered or answered in monosyllables when someone deemed to speak to her. And she was as unsightly as she was awkward. The gods surely punished her when he gave her that face and hulking form. Can this pathetic, cowling, squeaking creature become a doctor? At the time, he had his doubts.

She surprised him in the following weeks, months, and even years. She was constantly studying, especially with that Jon Snow; she showed up for lectures early and stayed late to ask questions. She spent most of her free time at the library. She was even a regular at the gym after hours (modesty did not permit her to exercise with men, so special accommodation was made for her at the gymnasium). Yes, a number of special accommodations had to be made for her. Her fellow male students made sure of that. They were all fools. He was furious when he’d heard from Dr. Tarly about the bet between a group of students to take the girl’s maidenhead. He made sure that the group was given a brutal lecture, extra work, and the worst possible placements in their
rotations. But credit to her, Brienne barely reacted when he gave her the news about the bet. He could see from the slight sheen in her eyes that she was affected and hurt, but her face remained impassive and calm. She had control. She had a spine of steel. After that, she became even more determined to be the best. She seemed to have found her voice in class and in labs, asking questions boldly during the sessions instead of waiting meekly to speak privately to her professors.

When her surgical rotation started he was even more impressed at the steadiness of her nerves. She was efficient in her movements, steady and calm. Her long fingers were nimble and quick. Watching her at the operating table was like seeing everything falling into place. She was only four and twenty, still so young. She had a bright future, even though she was a woman. She could be Westeros’ first female surgeon if she continued to work hard.

He had known a couple of women doctors in his day. There was the legendary Nymeria Nysar who trained with ancient maesters of the East, and Maege Mormont who learned her trade on battlefields. However, neither of them had the formal medical education of medical school, let alone the Citadel. Still, he respected them, though both were now long gone.

He was interrupted from his thoughts by three soft knocks.

“Come in.”

Brienne Tarth stood uncertainly at the threshold of his office, changed out of her surgical clothing (the trousers, that was another exception) and back into her usual sober uniform of a tailored man’s shirt and dark, long skirts.

“Dr. Lannister.”

“Please sit.”

She nodded and hesitantly lowered herself to the leather chair in front of his desk. She finally raised her eyes to meet his, her gaze shy and questioning.

“I must commend you and Dr. Snow on your performance in the surgery today. You were flawless, though I expected that of you. Even Dr. Martell was impressed.” He tried to send her a kind glance and nod.

“Oh…I…thank you, Dr. Lannister.” Brienne pinked from her neck to the top of her head. “It was a real honour to assist Dr. Martell. I learned so much from him in those few hours. I…I thank you for the opportunity.”

“You will make a fine surgeon.” Tywin pronounced. She blushed an even deeper shade of pink.

“That’s why I have recommended you for a surgical residency in Kings Landing Hospital, along with your colleague Jon Snow.” Her mouth opened in shock and those big eyes got even bigger.

“I…I…oh my…” She stammered.

“You’ll be working under Dr. Oberyn Martell. You may know that he rarely takes on residents. This is an exceptional opportunity.”

“W-w-what?”

“Yes. He was unsure about you at first, but today’s events more than convinced him of the decision.”
“Oh…thank you, Dr. Lannister! I don’t know what to say…”

“You could be the first female surgeon in Westeros, if you are successful.” Her eyes got impossibly wider at those words. “Dr. Tarth, I have witnessed your hard work and determination these last few years. You have a talent that few women or even men possess. But I must remind you that this career is tough and difficult as is, and I imagine it will be even more so as a woman trying to break through the surgical field. You need to be strong. You need to show that you have armour on, even if you may be hurt inside. I have seen how you dealt with those idiots and the taunts you receive. You’ll need more of that strength, exponentially more.”

Brienne nodded.

“No more simpering. No more trying to hide in the corner. You need to be a warrior. Stand as such. Remember that with your intelligence and skill, no one is superior to you. Be proud.”

At those words, Brienne straightened her spine and looked straight at Tywin, her gaze impossibly frank and grateful. “I’ll try. I know I have it in me. I will be strong.” She nodded with determination.

“Your father, Selwyn Tarth. I knew him slightly, though he rarely came to the mainland in those days. I don’t believe I’ve seen him in these many years.” Tywin cocked his head. “How does he feel about you being here? Becoming a surgeon? You are his only child, are you not, and heir to Tarth?”

She nodded. “He has been fully occupied with the island as the Evenstar, Dr. Lannister. I believe he has become less and less inclined to travel and engage with the rest of Westeros as he’s gotten older. But he still has plenty of life in him yet, and seems permanently fixed in his role there.” She paused. Hesitated.

“As for being a doctor, I don’t believe I gave him a choice. He tried to marry me off, more than once, but none of those times actually worked.” She gestured at her face and form as if that were an explanation, cringing. “I believe he has given up on me being a proper lady. I care little about society and propriety, you see, and he has taken comfort in that fact that I’m safe, not yet pregnant with a bastard, and haven’t killed anyone with my sword.” Her lips quirked into a smile.

Tywin was unexpectedly tickled at her words, and let out two sharp barks of laughter. Brienne was a little astonished, as she had never witnessed Dr. Tywin Lannister be more than very slightly amused in her presence.

Tywin leaned forward, tenting his hands in front of his mouth. His gaze was cold, dangerous steel.

“I believe you will make it, after all, dear Dr. Tarth.”
Bye Bye Oldtown

Chapter Summary

Brienne agrees to do some celebrating with Robb and Jon.

Chapter Notes

Thank you for the kudos and comments so far! I may not have time to respond to every one of them, but know that they are so, so appreciated. For someone new to fan fiction, they really make me happy.

I know. The Jon and Brienne friendship may be a bit weird for some. But I think they have a core similarity in terms of their integrity and sense of honour/duty. In my mind they get along great.

And yes, we will meet Jaime in the next couple of chapters, I promise. Thank you for your patience in this slow ship.

“It’s our last night in Oldtown, Brienne. Come on, live a little!” Robb grinned, cocking his head and throwing himself on a very old and very worn chair in the corner of his room. He looked at her slyly with his light blue eyes, now brightened in merriment. With his auburn curls and those eyes and high cheekbones he knew he was handsome, and was attempting to use those masculine wiles to tempt a very reluctant, a very tall blonde giantess.

Brienne twisted her mouth into a scowl. What was she doing in his rooms? She shouldn’t even be in the gentleman’s dorms, let alone in a man’s private quarters. The scandal! She shrugged and looked around. His trunks and suitcases were piled in a corner, and his surroundings had been emptied of any personal things.

“Brienne, my dear doctor ostrich, we are leaving town tomorrow! We’ve graduated. We are doctors! Even if someone comes in, they couldn’t do anything to us.” Jon Snow pulled her down to sit on the bed beside him. She collapsed on the bed with little protest. What would her old septa say to this sight?

“Dear Jon makes a great point, Dr. Tarth,” Robb insisted, “Even if someone – though I don’t imagine why anyone would care at this point – were to come in at this very moment, they couldn’t be bothered to action. In any case, I’m sure all of the graduating class will be out carousing in the taverns and whorehouses (apologies, dear lady, for bringing up this indelicate picture) and they will not even notice three rather well-dressed gentleman enjoying a tipple or two…”

“Or three…” Jon grinned.

“It’s not as though you haven’t done this before, Brienne. I distinctly remember a particular Long Night two years ago…” Rob supplied.
“Oh, and of course, the end of term last year, after…” Jon raised his eyebrows.

“Yes, yes.” Brienne frowned. “There is nothing wrong with my memory, gentlemen. I do remember those particular times…though I’m surprised that either of you do, considering I had to virtually carry both of you to your rooms.”

“There! We need you, dearest, to save us from stumbling and knocking our heads bloody against the very ancient cobblestones of Oldtown. Will you not be chivalrous?” Robb stood up and pulled her up to standing.

Brienne hesitated. It was their last night, and it would be the last time all three of them would spend time together, since Rob’s residency would be in his hometown of Winterfell, while she and Jon would be traveling to the capital of King’s Landing. She already had what she would need to wear; coincidentally, those articles of clothing had not yet been packed. Oh, what the hell.

“Fine.” Rob and Jon looked at each other and grinned. “Meet me in half an hour outside my building.” She narrowed her eyes. “Try to stay inconspicuous.”

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As the sun was setting, three gentlemen walked along the narrow, winding streets of Old town, surrounded by old mossy walls, crossing the Honeywine river over rickety bridges. It was spring, and the fragrance of moonblooms and honeysuckle flowers filled the air. The heat of the day simmered and dimmed to a pleasant coolness. There were voices calling, of merchants offering food and inn keepers offering shelter and drink. Singing from mummers in the main square. Later in the night they would hear the seductive calls of the pleasure houses, which would surely be kept busy tonight.

Brienne, disguised as a man, wore a black suit over which she threw on a light cloak, to even better hide what feminine features her body possessed. Her bun was tucked under a black fedora, which was pulled down to hide her eyes. As she expected, passersby did not give her a second look. People want to see what they expect, she reflected, not for the first time.

The three of them reached The Quill and Tankard, and were able to grab a corner table in the already crowded room. A lithe brunette in a rough spun but rather low-cut gown approached.

“What can I get you lads?”

Robb smiled and crinkled his eyes. “Well love, we’ll have three pints of your best ale. And those little fried fish and clams, if it’s no bother.”

The tavern girl jutted out her hip, lowering her dark eyes to Robb’s blue ones, then pausing a little to look at Jon and briefly glancing at Brienne, who avoided her eyes.

“Tis no trouble at all, lads.” She sauntered off slowly, peeking over her shoulder as she walked away. Robb smiled a rather lecherous smile.

Brienne elbowed his arm. “Ow! What was that for?”

“Must you flirt all the time?”

“You mistake flirting for my natural charm,” Robb countered.
Jon guffawed.

They were deep in their cups a few hours later. Jon became quieter the more he drank, but he smiled a lot more. Robb was even more charming, twinkling his eyes at everyone, men and women included. He even flirted with a dog that trotted up to their table, Brienne thought sarcastically. She drank slower than the other two, so her faculties were relatively intact. Well, a growing sluggishness of her thoughts notwithstanding. She felt a sense of well-being, of being at one with the world. That nothing would go against her this day. Tomorrow they would be on the train, leaving this little world behind.

“I just love every one, you know?” Robb suddenly declared, his arm going around Brienne’s shoulder. “I just love you, Brienne. You’re so smart! And Jon, my brother! My true brother!” Jon raised his eyebrows and smiled goofily at Robb. “I don’t know why our mum treated you so badly, we all love you, you know? Me and Sansa and Arya and Bran and Rickon. Even Theon. Our dear dad. You’re our brother, not a bother at all!” Robb giggled. Brienne laughed softly and shook her head. He was ridiculous.

“And Brienne – you mustn’t let the little shits get to you or put you down. I think you’re an awfully handsome woman, you know that?” Rob grinned, raising his perfect eyebrows.

Brienne rolled her eyes. Jon smiled at her, but not mockingly, she thought.

“Her, handsome? The ass of an old pock-marked mare is more handsome than this beast of yours.” A loud voice interrupted them.

Brienne stiffened. Ron Connington. She would recognize that high whine anywhere. Behind him were Ben Bushy and Edmund Ambrose. The three of them had made her years at the Citadel torture. Their meanness and cruelty had lessened after the reprimand they received from Dr. Lannister, but still their taunts followed her, when none of the other doctors or professors were around. The three surrounded their table.

“You would be an expert on pocked marked asses, wouldn’t you, Connington? Is that how you lost your virginity? With an ass?” Robb sneered.

Connington stepped closer to their table, “Pretty boy Robb. Need this ugly brute to protect you, don’t cha? Don’t want to break that pert little nose of yours.”

Robb jumped up, his eyes fierce and fists at his side.

Ben Bushy laughed. “Brienne the Beauty, finally dressed in something that suits her. Hiding are you?”

“Nah, there’s no way to hide your ugly face with men’s clothes, my lady.” Ambrose jumped in.

“Besides protecting your delicate faces, is she fucking you two? Or do you boys just fuck each other? Is that why you’re together all the time? Is she your whore? Or does she watch?” Connington sneered.

Jon jumped up and growled. “Don’t you say a word about her.”

Brienne tried to intervene. “Jon, Robb, ignore them. Let’s get out of here.” She left some coins on the table.

“Yes, listen to the big ugly beast.” Connington smirked. His arm lashed out and suddenly her hat flew off her head. “Let’s see your beautiful golden tresses, my lady!”
Then everything happened at once. There was pushing on either side between Jon and Robb and the three men. Chairs were upturned. Ambrose tried to take a swing at Jon but missed. Robb pushed Connington almost off his feet. Brienne was furious at the sudden turn of events and sensible that Robb and Jon had consumed plenty of ale between them, thus impairing their coordination and reflexes. She grabbed them by the elbows and pushed them through the mocking trio, through the crowd and towards the door.

“Bye bye, beast, pretty boy, and bastard! No wonder your mother didn’t want you!” Connington yelled.

Brienne paused. A fire flared inside her. She slowly turned around and strode forwards, her eyes narrowed and blistering, her face screwed in an ugly, determined frown. She swung her right arm, and her fist smashed into Connington’s face, his nose making a sickening crunch upon impact. Blood poured out as he yowled and was brought down to his knees, whimpering in pain.

With that, she picked up her black hat on the floor, and calmly walked out of the tavern. Jon and Rob, mouths open in shock, quickly followed.

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Although Jon’s hands were gentle in cleaning the broken skin on her right knuckles, Brienne still winced in pain. He knelt in front of her with a washbasin and cloth, as she sat in a chair.

“Your hand is a little swollen, but thankfully it’s not broken.” He gave her a look that was reproachful. “You shouldn’t have done that, you know. You’re a surgeon. You have to think of your hands.”

She looked around. All was quiet. They had come to Jon’s rooms nearby instead of returning to their housing at the Citadel. Luckily, Jon lived in an undesirable part of town so no notice was made about all three of them entering his building. Plus, Brienne was in her male garb.

Robb had almost immediately fallen asleep as he crumpled onto the worn brown settee in the corner of the room. He did not at all stir at the sound of their conversation. Brienne looked down into Jon’s eyes with a sad expression.

“I couldn’t let them say that about you, about your mother. It isn’t fair…”

Jon closed his eyes and rested his forehead on her fingers and paused for a moment. He raised his head and looked up at her. “Thank you,” he said softly, kissing her fingers.

“Jon.” Brienne smoothed the curls away from his eyes. His sad eyes.

They were silent after that. They gently removed Robb’s shoes, took off his tie, and undid the top buttons of his shirt to make him more comfortable in his slumber. Jon handed over a robe to Brienne, which was honestly the only thing of his that would fit her. She quickly undressed as Jon turned his back. It was not the first time the three of them shared a room. The other drinking expeditions had Brienne sleeping on the settee while the men shared the bed. This time though, it looked like Jon and Brienne would have to share the bed.

“Is it okay?” Jon asked.

“I think my virtue is entirely safe with you, Jon.” Brienne smiled.
“I would never--” He murmured, looking down.

“I know.” She yawned. “I’m exhausted. My head is fuzzy. Let’s sleep.”

Jon, dressed in his loose tunic gingerly slid into bed, covering himself chastely with blankets. Brienne slowly did the same. The light of the crescent moon shone through the window. She could make out Jon’s eyes, glittering in the darkness. She smiled softly at him.

“Good night, Dr. Snow.”

“Good night, Dr. Tarth.”

They both quickly fell into a deep sleep. The alcohol had taken its effect in bringing them under. There would be no dreams for either of them. Throughout the night, their bodies would move closer to each other, as if unconsciously seeking comfort in each other’s warmth. When they woke up, Jon lay face down, arm encircling Brienne’s waist and his head pillowed upon her shoulder. She woke up disorientated but with a profound feeling of comfort. They both did.
The Arrival

Chapter Summary

Brienne arrives in Kings Landing.

Chapter Notes

Our dear Brienne is slowly being introduced to the Lannisters and their circle.

Thank you for the feedback so far - and I'm so pleased that people seem to like the Brienne and Jon friendship. There is a lack of their dynamic in the fanfic world, strangely enough.

I appreciate you taking the time to read this story. So much love.

The next morning they were all the worse for wear, with Brienne faring much better than the other two. They fortified their stomachs with strong tea, biscuits, and rashers of bacon and madly rushed to gather their things. At the train station, they said cheerful goodbyes to Robb (there were no tears allowed that day), who extracted promises from Brienne to visit Winterfell when she had a chance, and made Jon promise to come back to live in the North. Jon and Brienne laughed as Robb stuck his head out of the window and waved wildly as the train started to chug away.

By the time Jon and Brienne made it to King’s Landing, it was evening the next day. Jon would be staying in the hospital dorms, along with the rest of the male residents. Brienne, organized as ever, had rented rooms through contacts of Dr. Lannister’s; Tywin Lannister would be returning to Kings Landing in the next few months when his interim position at the Citadel ended. Again, due to her unusual situation, she would have been unwelcome staying with the other male residents, and Brienne did not feel like sharing living quarters with female nurses either. She’d had enough of that, as she recalled the scathing and pitying looks the young, lovely nurses-in-training gave her, their words and brief glances like those they would give to an unwanted and deformed animal. Some of the girls delighted in making snide remarks about her frame and unfashionable clothing. Although the cost of renting rooms off hospital campus would diminish her modest earnings as a medical resident, she felt she had little choice in the matter of her living situation. Plus, she much preferred to have time alone, away from the stares and mockery of her fellow colleagues. She inwardly groaned. In any case, the rooms she rented were ideal – it was within a ten minute walking distance from the hospital, above a bookshop, ensuring, she assumed, a particular quiet. The cost was reasonable, considering the building had electricity and indoor plumbing.

However, her first day in King’s Landing proved to be a rather confusing one. After saying farewell to Jon and dropping him off at the hospital, she continued in the hansom cab to the address provided, a bookstore called The Paper Lion. It was a handsome red brick edifice, the front adorned with painted gold lions. Lannister lions? Hmm, subtle, she thought. But there seemed to be a problem, as she dragged her small but extremely heavy trunk (filled with medical books, of course) and suitcases to the front of the entrance. The interior of the building was dark. She
glanced through the dim windows and could make out shelves and piles of books heaped upon tables and counters. No one was there. She took out her pocket watch. Perhaps she got the time wrong? She was sure she had sent word to the landlord that she’d be arriving this evening. She sighed. What else was there to do, but wait? She plopped down on her trunk. The evening was rather fine, she supposed, though the city certainly has an odor. She wrinkled her nose. It was a far cry from the night blooms of Oldtown to be sure.

“Gotten a good whiff of King’s Landing, have you?” a rough voice called out to her. A man, rather wiry and a little, well, rough-looking, emerged from the shadows. Brienne sat up straight. Examined the man. He was shorter than her, but lean. He looked like he’d been in a few fights in his time. Still, she still thought she could take him on, if it came to that, even though her right knuckles were still sore from giving that special gift to stupid Ron Connington the night before.

“Do I know you?” Brienne said stiffly.

“You don’t know me, but I know you, lady. Or should I say, lady doctor?” He stopped a few feet in front of her and the trunk, smirking.

Realization dawned on Brienne. Of course. Stupid Brienne, you were about to attack your landlord! She shook her head and let out closed-lipped smile.

“Are you Mr. Tyrion Lannister? My name is Brienne Tarth, and I’m to be your tenant. And yes, I’m one of the new resident doctors at King’s Landing Hospital.” She stood up and held out her hand for a handshake.

As she stood, the man looked up…and up…and up, seemingly astonished at her height. He looked her up and down, seemingly making sure her feet were on the ground.

“Well fuck me.” the man cleared his throat. “Err…pardon my French, lady.”

Brienne snorted, frowning. She lowered her hand.

“I am not Tyrion Lannister, sad to say, but his employee. He was unexpectedly detained this evening, else he would not have missed meeting you. My name is Bronn Blackwater, at your service, and I’m to show you around your new residence.”

“How kind of Mr. Lannister to remember me.” Brienne said diplomatically. Next he’ll say something about her height, she guessed.

“Gods, you are tall. And strong, I wager. And a lady doctor! I’ve never met one before. Who’d a thought?” Brienne stared at him.

He shrugged. “Follow me then, doctor. This way. I will come for your trunk presently.”

He led her to a side entrance, which led to a set of stairs. At the landing, he unlocked a room to the right, and switched on a light. The room, though small, was bright and clean, with a bed in the corner, a desk and bookshelves in another corner, as well as a small kitchen with a wood stove and small dining table. There was a large wardrobe against a wall, and a settee near the window.

“You’ve got all you need here – everything’s been recently cleaned, and there are pots and dishes so you can cook if you’d like; that is, if you know how to work this gas stove.”

Brienne frowned. “Why wouldn’t I? Is there something wrong with it?”

Bronn looked at her quizzically. “Huh. I mean that the folks that usually stay here wouldn’t know
how to boil water let alone cook with a stove, them being used to having servants and cooks and all.”

“Well.” He paused. “There is a restaurant next door if you don’t feel like cooking. Food’s good and prices reasonable too.”

“Thank you, Mr. Blackwater.”

“Bronn, please. I’m not the sort that goes by formalities.”

“Mr. Bronn then.”

“Slightly better, doc.”

He gestured for her to follow and led her out to the landing. He opened another door. “Here’s the bathroom, a tub and toilet and fancy plumbing to boot. Though I should mention that you might be sharing this with another occupant.”

“Oh? Is there another tenant?” She raised her eyebrows.

“Well, not exactly. Tyrion or his brother use the rooms in times of need.”

Bronn grinned. “That is to say, it’s a rare occurrence, my lady doctor. And I do need to mention that they are quite respectable gentlemen, unlike myself.”

“They are Dr. Tywin Lannister’s sons?” Brienne tried to recall if he’d ever mention his sons in the years she’d known him at the Citadel. No, he did not. Was that strange? She couldn’t decide. She remembered a vague something about one of the sons, a scandal, years ago, but could not find that particular memory.

“Aye, that they are.”

Bronn insisted on bringing her (very heavy) trunk in by himself, despite her getting up to help him. He waved her away.

“It’s part of my job. And you may be a doctor, and strong as all hells, but you’re still a lady, and I have my codes to abide by.”

Still, she couldn’t help but grimace as he struggled up the stairs, huffing and puffing and loudly mourning his poor back. In the end he succeeded in dragging the trunk to her rooms, and he asked her if the blasted trunk contained bricks from the Citadel. She almost laughed.

He showed her how to work the locks, how to lock up, and handed her the keys. He gave her a card that included the telephone and address of Tyrion Lannister, but Brienne had no idea where the nearest telephone was. Finally, he said goodbye with a somewhat sarcastic bow, looked her up and down again, and told her that Tyrion would likely be meeting on the morrow, though he did not specify the time.

What a strange man, she mused after he left. She unsure if she liked him or not. She looked around in her bright little room. It was quiet, but she could still hear the clip-clop of horses and voices yelling into the night. She removed her cloak, threw it over a chair and flopped onto the bed. This place was hers, and she was starting this new life. King’s Landing! She felt incredibly lucky to have this place all to herself. She smiled, and decided to run herself a bath.
She had a week to get settled before the residency started. Brienne had never lived in Kings Landing before, but visited the capital on short trips. She had once been overwhelmed by the sheer size of the city and the number of people jammed in the streets, but this time, she was imbued with a sense of adventure, and for the first time in a while, looked forward to her future. She slept in the next morning, and awoke without the sense of travel fatigue or any academic anxiety that had been her constant these last few years. She grinned to herself, luxuriating in the sense that she was her own master. No place to be, no specific time to wake up. The city unfurled all around her. She heard the bustle of the streets getting gradually louder as the morning progressed. Horses, carriages, voices. She slowly got up, and went to the bathroom to do her business and wash, leaving her door apartment door wide open. Why not, she thought, since there was no one else around? She could scream her head off and no one would be the wiser.

After dressing in a white shirtwaist, a long, plaid skirt and matching jacket, Brienne quickly twisted her hair into a bun. She looked around, found a basket that she could use and walked out the door. She noticed that the bookstore remained closed, even though it was past ten in the morning. The morning sun greeted her as she stepped out. She should have worn a hat, she thought, not for the first time. Her battle with freckles continued to be an ongoing one, and one that she felt sure she would lose. She slowly strolled around her neighbourhood; it was busy, with little grocers and tailors and all sorts of shops that she’d like to explore in time. At the nearest dry goods store, she bought some tea, flour, salt and sugar. Soon her wicker basket was filled with milk, butter, fruit and bread. She headed back.

She unpacked, which didn’t take her very long; her heavy trunk was emptied of books, and she methodically ordered the heavy tomes on the bookshelf. She made herself a cup of tea and sat looking out the window. Her eyes scanned the room and fell upon the only photograph that she brought with her. It was small and resided in an ornate silver frame on her nightstand; it was a picture of Brienne when she was four, wearing a flouncy dress, looking adoringly at a young boy who stood beside her, his eyes clear and looking directly at the camera and smiling a tiny smile. Behind them was a very tall man in a suit, his arms touching the head of the girl and the shoulder of the boy. His light-coloured eyes seemed to be gazing far beyond the camera. She thought of her father, and how she seemed only to miss him after she’d had one of her nightmares. She remembered how much she longed to be hugged after Galladon died, and how her father shut himself away for a long while. Instead, she grew close to her Uncle Endrew, who often made sure she was eating and sleeping and playing. She loved her father, of course, fiercely even, but she could not help but think that a part of him closed himself off after all the deaths in their family. She knew that he loved her too, but perhaps he never really understood her.

He hired Septa Roelle who tried her very best to tame her. It was the septa that first convinced her she was one of the ugliest girls ever born.

“Look in the mirror,” she’d said. “Look at the truth of your face, of your thick body, of your abnormal size.” Septa Roelle had made her stand in front of the looking glass and stare at herself.

She’d said, “This is why you need to be better, be more pious, more good, more obedient than any other girl, to make your future husband actually want you.” Brienne had wondered at the time if the Septa had failed in her own lessons, being unmarried and childless and shackled to a religious order herself. Septa Roelle nevertheless tried to constrain young Brienne with harsh words and harsher truths, and fortified with the occasional pinch of the arm, or bruising squeeze of the shoulder. But Brienne kept on wearing breeches and climbing cliffs and fighting with the local boys who taunted her. She watched Master Goodwin train with his sword and convinced him to tutor her every day. Her father eventually allowed this training as she was always getting into fights.
with boys and coming home with a bloody face and bruised knuckles. Still, she wondered about her father. Why did he ever think she wanted to get married so early? She supposed he thought that was what she wanted. Or perhaps he didn’t want to worry about her anymore. In any case, she seemed to have worn him down with her conviction to make a career for herself. He supported her, and loved her, albeit at a distance. She decided to write to him, tell him of her journey, of her new home, of the few things she’s seen of King’s Landing thus far.

Long ago, she did dream once of being married and fancied herself in love with a boy. His name was Renly, from the Baratheon noble house in the Stormlands. He had spent a summer at Evenfall on Tarth, learning about the island, its industry and its people. She was fourteen, gawky, already too tall and too freckled, and he was sixteen, black-haired and with vibrant blue eyes that looked almost green in the sunshine. He had an aristocratic form, slim and lithe, was broad of shoulder and fair of countenance. Instead of looking at her with pity or scorn, he spoke to her with courtesy and kindness. Even though every time she looked at him she felt her heart beat faster, he still made her feel comfortable; so much so that she felt able to speak freely. They walked around Tarth together, stealing moments away to explore coves and valleys and meadows. He looked at her strangely sometimes; he was sure he could see the pure, undisguised look of longing and overwhelming love in her face, and how she blushed at a casual touch on an arm. She never dreamed that he would ever want to be with her, but she was still unable to dream about kissing Renly or grasping his hands and resting in his arms. Her feelings for him intensified at a dance which her father (unadvisedly) held on the occasion of her name day. Renly saved her from humiliation from a group of jeering young men by sweeping her off her feet in a dance. It had been one of the happiest memories of her life, to be in the arms of a gallant gentleman and being swirled around and around to the most beautiful music. She felt herself disappear and felt her soul lift. He was perfect. She would love him forever.

The day before he was to leave for Storm’s End, they sat together near a waterfall. He smiled distantly and took her hand. Her heart started to race.

“You know, in these past months I’ve been most happy.”

“As have I.” Brienne blushed.

Renly shook his head faintly. “I must thank you for that. Tarth has been like a beautiful dream, and your friendship is something I will take with me and treasure. But Brienne, what we have can be nothing more.”

She could feel herself grow pale, feel her heart suddenly crack. She nodded. “I – I know. I’m ugly and no one would have me – “

He shook his head vehemently. He paused. “No. That’s – that’s not it, Brienne. You misunderstand me. Just listen. You know how I told you I traveled much this past year all over Westeros. I didn’t tell you that in Dorne, a princess did her very best to seduce me. She was beautiful and rich and charming and was someone any man would be happy to have. She wanted me, but I didn’t want her. Do you understand? I could never want her, or anyone of her sex. Even if she were the most beautiful woman in the world.”

Brienne frowned, at first unable to comprehend what he was saying. He couldn’t want anyone of her sex?

“It’s unusual Brienne,” he said quietly, his eyes darkening, his expression sad. “I am tormented sometimes by my desires. It haunts me. But I know can never fall in love with women. It is a secret that I need to keep with me. Perhaps for always.”
Brienne’s heart softened for him. He was in an impossible situation. She felt a surge of pride in her heart that he would share this with her.

“I understand, Renly.” Her eyes were soft and encompassing. “I thank you for telling me. I shall keep your secret.” She paused, then added, “But I think I will always adore you no matter what.”

Renly laughed. “I’m a lucky man, then.” He squeezed her hand. “Come, let’s go back. Perhaps we can convince Cook to make my favorite apple tarte in honour of my leaving.”

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She missed Tarth. She decided to send her letter right away. When she returned from the post office, she noticed that The Paper Lion was open. In the window was a display of the latest Lyon Grumpkin book, *House of Vipers*. Curious, she went in; a gentle tinkle of bells announced her presence. The store was overfull with books. Shelves were packed in double rows, with more books piled on the floor, chairs, tables and counters, all to overflowing. There was no soul to be seen. She wondered if she could get some medical texts here. She wondered as well, if there was a system of organization in this place so she could find those potential medical texts.

She heard a clinking and some footsteps. From the back, an extremely short man emerged, carrying a cup of milky tea. He stopped suddenly when he noticed her. He raised his brow and looked at her quizzically. He placed the tea down on a table. He walked towards her on stunted legs.

“Are you a customer or are you Brienne Tarth?”

His gaze had a fierce intelligence, though his eyes, one green and the other black, were rather disconcerting. His hair was messy and light blond, and his features were arranged as if they were tilted together. He wasn’t much to look at, but neither was she. However, unlike her, he was impeccably dressed, his expensive dark suit tailored to fit every inch of him. Even the chain on his watch gleamed.

“I am. Brienne Tarth. You must be…Tyrion Lannister? My landlord.”

He bowed and nodded. “Bronn didn’t say much about you last night except to tell me that he would like us to stand side by side; I think that was his way of saying you are extremely tall, and I would look extremely comical next to you.” He smiled crookedly.

She looked down and coloured. Tyrion cleared his throat.

“Well. It’s a pleasure to meet you at last,” he said, reaching out his hand. “You have my sincerest apologies for not meeting you yesterday evening. A family matter arose. Believe me, it was my last resort to subject you to Bronn. I hope he wasn’t too…uh…coarse?”

“No, not at all. Mr. Blackwater was quite considerate. He was quite insistent on carrying my trunk full of books by himself. I do hope he’s not injured?” She smiled slyly.

She reached down to shake hands. Tyrion held her right hand for a second and turned it over as if to kiss it. He paused, noticing the wounds on her knuckles. Reddening, she quickly snatched her hand away.

“I never supposed that being a doctor was a dangerous profession.”
“Yes, well. Let’s just say my fist had an accident with someone’s nose last night.”

Tyrion cocked his head and raised his eyebrows. “I’m sure he deserved it.”

She was uncomfortable with this line of inquiry, and vaguely thought of Septa Roelle and how she would think this conversation was not appropriate for a lady. She looked at her feet, and forced herself to look around.

“Your store is very full…of books,” she remarked, rather pathetically. “Do you sell a lot of volumes?”

“Good lord, no. Maybe some of the new releases, like the new Grumpkin book over there, but I don’t generally get customers, no.” He paused. “As I prefer it.”

“But – isn’t the point – I don’t believe I quite understand.”

He sat in a chair behind a desk, and gestured for her to sit. She looked around her, looked at nearest armchair which was piled with books, and perched gingerly on the edge of its leather seat.

“Well, Dr. Tarth. Imagine you disappoint your father by not becoming a doctor, so you need to please your him with having some kind of enterprise. But you don’t actually want an enterprise because your actual profession is writing immensely entertaining books which are coincidentally doing quite well with the general public. But to protect the family name, you write under an alias. Which is, by the way, quite bad for the family reputation. So you open a bookstore where the books are in no organisable order and is bursting at the seams. You have no employees, save one stuttering boy, and in this shop you open and close for business whenever you like, and you do all this so you can sit in your back office to read and write all day. So it matters not if I have customers or not.” Tyrion opened a drawer and pulled out a bottle.

“Whisky? It’s very good. Well aged.”

Brienne shook her head.

“Don’t mind if I do, then.” He pulled out a glass and poured two fingers of the liquor.

She didn’t know how to react to his rather frank confession.

“Forgive me for spilling fourth. I don’t know what came over me.” He caught her eyes and searched her face. He smiled a crooked smile.

“Have you considered going into psychiatry instead of surgery? You seem to have some strange power that compels people to spill their inner thoughts.” He joked, taking a sip of his drink. “And here I am, ignoring my landlord duties. How are you finding the apartment?”

“It’s absolutely perfect. Just – ideal. Thank you.”

Tyrion nodded. “By the way, there is a woman that comes every week to clean – she can easily do your rooms. And there is a boy that delivers groceries and changes out the ice in the ice box. Just let me know what you need weekly.”

“That’s too generous. Please you don’t need to…”

“Nonsense, Dr. Tarth. It wouldn’t be an inconvenience at all. I insist.”

“Then thank you, Mr. Lannister. You are too kind.”
Tyrion looked at her with a strange expression, lips curling into a closed-lip smile. “My father speaks highly of you, which, if you knew my father, is a rather unusual thing.”

Brienne flushed. “Dr. Lannister has been exceptionally generous and good to me, even since the very beginning of my studies at the Citadel.”

Tyrion tilted his head, narrowing his eyes. “Funny. ‘Generous’ and ‘good’ would be the last words I would use to describe my dear, esteemed father.”

Brienne gave him a puzzled expression, frowning.

“All this time, I’ve been wondering why my father would be so kind towards you. The apartment. The words of caution. But I’m beginning to understand, now that I’ve met you.”

Brienne was puzzled at this man and his words. He stared at her queerly for a moment. It was as if he were trying to figure her out.

“There is nothing special about me, Mr. Lannister, I assure you.”

“Oh?” Tyrion took a deep sip of his drink. “I beg to disagree, Dr. Tarth.”
Brienne jolted awake, sitting up, visions of water and sinking into the deep floated in her mind. The pale face. The suffocation and the heaviness of her limbs. She shook her head, took slow breaths. Slowly, the agonizing feeling faded. It was still dark, the middle of the night. She adjusted her pillows and lay back down. Feelings of guilt and helplessness stuck with her like an invisible twin. She wondered again what she was doing here, what she was doing with her life. The girls she grew up with on Tarth were already married and had babies. But here she was, a stranger in a strange city, on her way to spinsterdom. It was on these white nights, in the quiet hours of the dark, that these doubts invaded her. Sometimes she was filled with an acute loneliness, sometimes a feeling of never being good enough. At these times, her ugliness and awkwardness overwhelmed her – there were no paths in her life save the one she was on right now. No one would fall in love with her, let alone want to marry her. She would be the last living Tarth. In these moments, she didn’t even know if that was the life she wanted, but she felt trapped all the same.

The night seemed to lengthen. She closed her eyes, tried to let thoughts float by. Then: the sound of dragging, scraping. Thick thudding on the stairs. Again and again. There was someone here. The hairs on the back of her neck prickled. Brienne had visions of masked attackers. Should she hide? No. She reached for the steel dagger that she always kept at her bedside, and quietly got up from the bed, moving slowly toward her door. She could almost make out voices, whispering, then a huge crash of something falling to the ground. She startled. A light flicked on in the hallway. She braced herself, tried to remember the lessons that Master Goodwin taught her on Tarth. She threw open the door, wielding the dagger in front of her.

What she saw nearly made her drop the blade.

It was Tyrion, looking worse for wear, standing in front of a large collapsed form. He started, looking up at her with a puzzled frown, his mismatched eyes lighting up as he saw her. He smiled ruefully.

“Ah, Dr. Tarth, I’m sorry to have woken you at this ungodly hour.” He noticed her clenched fist still gripping the blade. “I see you might have been expecting someone more…sinister. But it’s just me and a fool. Well…a fool and a fool.”
He gestured at the heap in front of him, and kicked it a little. The form groaned, blond head shaking. “Tyrion, you bastard….” Then the figure turned his head and looked up. Her breath caught in her throat. She saw a face that seemed to be sculpted with the gods in mind: chiseled jawline, delicate cheekbones, a straight, noble nose, eyes that were deeply green and a beautiful mouth that was currently twisted into a snarl.

“Why brother, have you sent an assassin after me?” He slurred and drawled his words. His eyes widened as he examined her further. Brienne felt his stare dig into her skin. “Is that a woman?”

Brienne stiffened, and felt colour heat her cheeks.

Tyrion sharply glanced at the form at his feet and nodded apologetically to Brienne. “Dear brother, where are your courtesies? You’re being beastly to Miss Tarth.”

“Miss Tarth? Are you sure?” He chuckled, his stare assaulting her. “Speaking of beastly, I’ve never seen such an unfortunate creature. Are those even teats under that voluminous nightgown of yours?” She was suddenly cognisant that she was wearing only a thin, white nightgown with nothing on underneath.

“I’ve never seen anything so monstrous. And freckles! What is this creature?” His voice was mocking and sliding and slurring. Her entire being suffused with shame, self-consciousness, and a flame of indescribable rage.

Brienne gripped her dagger tighter, the white hot anger multiplying through her. Her face twisted and looked murderous. She wanted to slam his head to the ground and stab him a million times.

Tyrion reached down and roughly grabbed his brother by the chin, angrily looking into his eyes. “Jaime. Shut up. Shut your mouth right now.”

His brother sighed, smiled lazily and suddenly slumped.

Tyrion cleared his throat, apparently embarrassed at his brother’s appalling rudeness. “Miss Tarth…er…Dr. Tarth, please forgive my brother. He is, as you can see, quite drunk, and not in his right mind. He’s had some upset earlier this evening, and he’s not himself.”

Brienne nodded, holding her shoulders rigidly. There wasn’t much to say.

Tyrion hesitated, glancing at her. “I hate to ask you this, especially after the abysmal behaviour that my brother has just displayed, but might I humbly ask you for a favour?”

Brienne stared.

“Uh…he…uh, shouldn’t be lying on the floor like this. Could you possibly help me guide him to these rooms?” He gestured to the apartments across from her. “I’m afraid we will need to use these rooms for the night. And I find myself quite unable to bear his weight.”

Brienne felt some of her anger dissipate. Tyrion obviously cared for this rude man, and this crumpled mass of a man was quite pathetic, after all. She didn’t want him to asphyxiate on his own vomit. She felt her doctor’s instinct take over. She set her mouth in determination. She was strong enough.

“Wait here,” she said, and disappeared back in her room. She returned promptly, dagger gone and wearing a blue housecoat.

She kneeled in front of the collapsed man. “Mr. Lannister,” she called. Then, having no response,
shook his shoulder and repeated loudly, “Mr. Lannister!”


Tyrion rolled his eyes. “Oh good lord.”

This man was impossible. She placed her hands on his shoulders, and spoke loudly into his ear. “Ok, Mr. Lannister - ”

“Jaime.” He mumbled.

“Okay, Jaime. I’m going to grab you and sit you up, alright? Then I’m going to help you walk to your room. Are you ready?”

“Wench.”

She hauled him up to a sitting position, using her torso and arms to support him. He grunted at the movement. She could feel his lean muscles under his jacket. He is very…solid, she vaguely thought. His head bobbed down.

“Jaime? Jaime? Now you’ll need to help me, alright? We’re going to get you up. You’ll need to help me use your legs. Ready?”

He raised his head to stare at her face. Brienne scowled.

“Ready, wench.”

Tyrion scrambled aside and quickly opened the door to the apartments, turning on the light.

Brienne placed Jaime’s one arm around her shoulder and the other around his waist. She pulled them to a kneeling position, then exhaled and hauled him up to his feet, her left hand moving to support his hip as he stood. He wavered, and her arms tightened around him.

“Now, let’s walk.” They slowly shambled into the apartment. “Good. Just a little more….” They reached a large bed, covered by a red velvet bedspread. She gently laid him down on the bed. He groaned at the sudden change in position. As she was about to remove her arms from around him and move away, Jaime suddenly grabbed at the collars of her housecoat with both his hands, as if imploring.

“Wait…”

She paused. His hands were gripping her tightly. He looked into her face, into her eyes, as if searching for something.

“Your eyes…” he blurted, “how very blue they are…they…match your robe…” he half-mumbled.

She looked at him with extreme forbearance and gently untangled his hands around the collars of her housecoat. His hands were very warm. She pushed his arms down and rolled his body so he was laying on his side, and used pillows to support his back so he wouldn’t roll over. She sighed and took off his shoes, and tucked a blanket around him.

She turned to Tyrion. “You’ll be staying here?”

Tyrion nodded.
“Make sure he drinks plenty of water when he wakes up” Tyrion nodded again.

“Oh, you might want to place a basin next to the bed just in case.”

“Ah, yes. Good thinking.” Tyrion acknowledged. Brienne made a move to go.

“Dr. Tarth, thank you for your help. I wouldn’t have managed him on my own.”

Brienne nodded. “You’re welcome. It’s the least I could do after all your kindness.”

He shook his head and looked down at his hands. “I also want to apologize again for Jaime’s conduct. He’s not usually like this, I promise you.”

Brienne raised her eyebrows. “I don’t hold you responsible for your brother’s insults. I hope to forget them by morning. Good night, Mr. Lannister.”

“Tyrion.”

“Then you must call me Brienne, Tyrion. Try to get some rest, if you can.”

“Good night, Brienne.”

She closed her door behind her and turned the key to lock it. Anger still lingered in her veins, faintly heating her blood. What a vile, insulting man. What he said was nothing new, to be sure; she’d been hearing those very same insults all her life. At this point, the insults didn’t even penetrate the walls that she had slowly cultivated over the years. But his words tonight, coming from his beautiful mouth, combined with those penetrating green eyes and sharp voice – for the first time in a long time, she was shook to her core. Ridiculous, she said to herself, to let him affect you this way. But she also remembered the strength of his shoulders, the hard muscles she felt beneath her hands as she half carried him. She shook her head.

She forced herself to return to bed and try to sleep. She actually was very tired. Slowly, she drifted off into a vague sleep of seas and the greenest meadows.

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When she awoke early the next morning, all was quiet. She glanced nervously at the apartment door opposite, but saw and heard nothing. Probably sleeping it off, she inwardly sneered. What a ridiculous, horrible man. She headed into the bathroom.

She emerged from the bathroom, skin pink from being freshly washed and wearing her blue housecoat. She gasped, stopped short. Her mouth fell open in shock. There, standing in the hallway was him. She felt her chest tighten and her mouth go dry. Despite the faint redness of his eyes and the dark shadows underneath them, he was devastatingly handsome. He was incredibly tall, only an inch or two shorter than her, and his disheveled and wrinkled clothes gave him a certain Byronic roguishness that was a little irritating, because Brienne was sure she looked like a very tired and very scrubbed giraffe.

He gaped, eyes wide, looking her up and down in an expression of disbelief. Staring at the freckles revealed in the ‘v’ of her robe. Brienne felt herself go very, very red. His expression was pained, this mouth tight. He shuddered, started, and quickly nodded his head in her direction. He strode away with bounding steps, thundering down the stairs and threw himself out the building.
The anger that suffused her person the night before returned in full force. She would have pushed him down the stairs if he hadn’t so quickly run away, seemingly disgusted and terrified at her monstrosity. She set her mouth. Lifted up her head. *Damn him.* She returned to her room.

Slammed the door.

Jaime Lannister. *Jaime.* There was something familiar about that name.

She tried to remember years back, how her father used to talk about Westeros. How he talked about the Lannisters. How he was hesitant and slightly alarmed when he told her about the presence of Dr. Lannister at the Citadel.

Suddenly she remembered. *Aerys Targaryen.*

*A murder.*

*The Kingslayer.*

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading. Kudos and comments are love.
Signs of Infection

Chapter Summary

Brienne faces familiar challenges as she begins her surgical residency at the hospital. Oberyn, as always, surprises. Jon begs.

Chapter Notes

Reminder that I'm not a doctor and probably got the medical stuff wrong. But hey, I tried. BTW, the basement office thing is borrowed from The Knick.

Also, I imagine Jon as one who is silent and brooding to strangers, but when you get to know him, he's quite a funny, though still serious, man.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“The wound looks clean – no blood, no inflammation.” Jon murmured, lifting the bandage to reveal a neatly sutured abdominal incision.

Brienne held the man’s wrist, her other hand looking at her pocket watch. “Pulse at 84. Respirations at 14, regular and steady.”

The man stirred faintly at the touch. “The first twenty-four hours post operation is crucial.” Oberyn looked at the client’s chart. “That’s why we record his vital signs every hour. What are we watching for?”

“Signs of infection. Redness, swelling, pain, a rise in temperature.” Brienne noted.

“We should also monitor the patient’s level of consciousness when he wakes, if he knows where he is, why he’s here....” Added Jon.

“Very good.” Oberyn looked at them, smiling. “As surgeons, we tend to focus only on what happens in the operating room. Just in and out. Most surgeons tend to adhere to this way of thinking. But I am of a different opinion. I feel we have a duty to follow up immediately after the procedure and in the longer-term follow-up care.” He smiled wider when he saw the two residents nod.

Oberyn gestured again to the chart. “Did you know that until just a few years ago we didn’t have a document that recorded a patient’s vital signs at regular intervals?” He looked around. “These days, that would be unthinkable. We are at an exciting time in medicine. New discoveries, new procedures.” He nodded down to the patient. “And we are saving more and more lives.” He glanced at his watch.

“Nurse Tyrell, please redress this man’s wounds. And let one of us know when he regains consciousness.” He spoke to an extremely pretty nurse with brunette curls and doe-like eyes, whose all white nursing uniform was crisply ironed and appeared to have been perfectly fitted to her slim
body.

Margaery Tyrell smiled at the group, revealing dimples. Brienne smiled back, whispering, “Thank you Margaery” as they passed by.

“Come, come, residents.” Oberyn called out, as he led them out of the room. Brienne and Jon exchanged an amused look and followed his graceful form.

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Life as a new resident at King’s Landing hospital was hectic and challenging. Brienne arrived at 6 in the morning to review patient records and brush up on patients’ medical histories. From assessing clients on the main floor to doing more focused examinations for the surgical candidates, to documenting everything, to sewing minor lacerations on people who showed up at the hospital, to assisting in surgery and of course doing anything Dr. Martell says, Brienne and Jon found themselves run off their feet nearly every day. Sometimes they weren’t even able to sit down to eat or take a break. Sometimes they found themselves nodding to sleep while reading and writing summaries of the latest research for Dr. Martell.

Despite the overwhelming amount of work, physical exhaustion and the constant intellectual stimulation, Brienne quickly felt at home and in her element. She trained herself to quickly scan an environment and pinpoint potential problems, to anticipate chaos, if such a thing were possible. She felt extremely lucky to be working under Dr. Martell. He was a brilliant surgeon, unconventional in his methods, but never reckless to the point of risking patient safety. Best of all, she felt that he saw her as she was, and that he recognized her intelligence and potential. Which was more than can be said for the other surgeons and doctors at the hospital.

Dr. Pycelle, for example, patently ignored her when he was in her presence and pretended not to see her when she was in the same room. During her first week, he vaguely announced to the air that “No woman belongs in the hospital except as a patient,” and “The surgery benefits not from a woman’s labile moods, distemper and penchant for dramatics.” Brienne could see Jon’s grey eyes darken dangerously from these pronouncements but she calmed him with a look, briefly squeezing his shoulder.

She was even physically separated from the other residents. To allegedly preserve her feminine ‘privacy,’ the hospital administrator assigned her to a so-called office in the bowels of the hospital, a cavernous basement room with brick walls and no windows, and filled with discarded or broken furniture. Brienne took the better of an afternoon to clean the room and set up a desk and some chairs. She didn’t mind it much. Being relegated to the basement was preferable to the open warfare of sharing a space with the other residents.

Her treatment by the other residents and nurses were to be expected. She knew they resented her and Jon for getting a chance to work with the famous Dr. Martell. However, Brienne was thankful that the antagonism was less overt. Unlike at the Citadel, there were no bets, no calling her rude names out in the open, no mocking laughter in her presence, no public jeering. The hostility was more subtle and insidious. It took the form of not speaking to her, or not sharing medical information about patients, or ignoring her when she asked for help. Nevertheless, the hostile gazes, pitying looks, lips curled in scorn were always present every time she walked into a room. It was only when Dr. Martell was present that the others actually spoke to her. In any case, she was used to it, and resorted to her time-tested strategy of ignoring them. There were actually a handful of people who were kind, like Nurse Margaery Tyrell and Nurse Gilly, and the hospital chemist Samwell Tarly. Even Hyle Hunt, who also landed a residency from the Citadel, was somewhat
kind and even rather apologetic for his earlier mistreatment of her in medical school. Those kind to
her found themselves fortunate. Any kindness she received was returned doubly, with loyalty and
consideration thrown in for good measure.

Not that she had time to dwell over these matters. By the end of the shift she was incredibly tired. It
took all of her energy to walk back to her apartment just ten minutes away. She would even fall
asleep in the bath sometimes and often didn’t even have time to eat before collapsing in bed.
Sometimes she would work so late into the night and was so worn out that she went to her
basement office, dragged out an old cot and passed out.

She saw Tyrion and his assistant Podrick from time to time on her few days off but never when she
was working, for she left at the crack of dawn and often returned late into the night. On some rare
nights Tyrion would stay up, and she could see him scribbling in a notebook through the window
of the bookshop. Noticing movement outside, he would look up and meet her eyes. A nod would
pass between them. A smile. Then Brienne would drag her tired mind and body up the stairs,
dreaming of the warmth of her blankets and the soft give of her bed.

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Oberyn led them to his laboratory, which adjoined his office. As the chief surgeon and due to his
sterling reputation throughout the Seven Kingdoms, he had the financial backing of the hospital to
conduct research and his various experiments. He was working on several projects at the same
time, and needed his two new residents to take up some of the more tedious workload, like reading
the latest medical journals or transcribing data. Brienne admired Dr. Martell; his concentration was
absolute when he was focused on a task; he often spoke his thoughts and musings out loud, always
inviting them to reply, argue or voice their thoughts. This was at first hard for Brienne, who was
naturally taciturn. She often hesitated and stumbled over her words.

One day Oberon stopped her. He gazed abstractly at her, somehow making Brienne feel too seen.
She looked at her boots. He deliberately stepped in front of her, very close. “Dr. Tarth. Brienne.”
He lifted up her chin. His hand was warm on her skin. She raised her eyes to look at him.

“I cannot imagine the struggles you are going through right now as a woman here, in the midst of
such narrow-minded, uncivilized boars. Don’t think I haven’t noticed.” He leaned even closer still,
his eyes moving across her face.

“But you must never be afraid to look those brutes in the eye, never let them think they are better
than you, for they are not. Speak your thoughts. Look them in the eye and dazzle them with your
intelligence.” His gaze was dark and intense. He paused. “That includes me too. I may be officially
your superior, but I say many silly things on occasion.” He smiled, and leaned to whisper in her
ear. “Rarely though. I am almost always right.” He gently brushed his fingers up and down her
cheek. Stepped back. And winked.

Jon, who had witnessed this exchange, had grown pale and still. His grey eyes dark, his brow
furrowed. Oberyn noticed, threw Jon a wide smile.

“We do things differently in Dorne, where I come from. I have lived in King’s Landing for many
years, but I haven’t gotten used the cold formality of you Westerosi of the six kingdoms. We yell
and laugh and act freely. We touch each other. We love freely.” He smiled seductively.

“You both must come to Dorne one day. Both unusual women, and what you Westerosi call
‘bastards’ are admired and celebrated there. In fact, there are no bastards in Dorne, only what we
call children.” Oberyn tilted his head. Jon raised his eyebrows in surprise.

“I have eight daughters, some from different women. My daughters, they are warriors and leaders. They will inherit my lands in Dorne, and all of them will carry my name at my insistence. But I don’t wish them to ever come north of Dorne. There is no real place for such strong women in these kingdoms.”

“I tell you this because you are in this world, which means you will have to fight to be who you want to be. I don’t envy you this path. It is a difficult one.” Oberyn smiled sadly.

“Now, both of you. Tell me what you think of the various methods of vascular repair I’ve been raving on about all afternoon,” he grinned.

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“He was flirting with you!” Exclaimed Jon, scowl on his face.

Brienne snorted, finding this whole conversation frankly absurd. They were lounging in her basement office at the end of a long, but thankfully not too long day. Jon liked to come here to get away from the proper toffs he was living with. He was laying down on the cot, while Brienne sat at her chair facing him.

“He was,” he insisted. “He caressed your cheek. Practically kissed your ear.” Jon pouted.

“Are you insane? You must be insane to think that someone like Oberyn Martell could ever be attracted to someone like me!”

“Someone like you?” Jon frowned, raising himself up on his elbows to look at her.

Brienne rolled her eyes. “Just don’t.”

He opened his mouth to protest. “Jon.” Brienne warned, scowling.

“He’s Dornish, he’s very expressive, it’s nothing personal, he does that to everybody.” Brienne rationalized. She bit her lip. “Still, I didn’t know he had eight daughters.”

“Bastard daughters.” Jon clarified.

“Just daughters.” Brienne insisted. “That was his whole point.”

They looked at each other. Jon closed his eyes, leaned back on the bed and sighed.

A thought occurred to her suddenly.

“Jon, did Dr. Lannister ever talk to you about his children?”

He opened his eyes. “No, not at all. But we did not have a personal relationship. I know that he has three grown children: two sons and a daughter.” He turned his gaze on her. “One of them is your landlord, right? The dwarf?”

Brienne nodded. “Tyrion has been kind to me. Considerate but knowing well enough to leave me be for the most part.”

“Ah, would that I were as lucky. I have idiots bothering me at every corner. They’re inane.” He ran
fingers through his dark curls. “I like quiet, right? Well these gentlemen use up all my silence and then some. I have no peace.” He sighed.

Brienne giggled. “Poor baby.”

Jon scowled. “You’re one to talk. You have your own apartment. Your own building, practically, at night.”

Talk of the night reminded her of a disturbing memory.

“What do you know of the other son, Jaime Lannister?”

Jon furrowed his brow in thought. “He’s a captain in the army, isn’t he? One of the best fighters and commanders there is. But as far as I know he has a bad reputation.”

“Oh?”

“Yes, something my father told me that happened around twenty years ago. A huge scandal. He killed the then cotton industrialist, Aerys Targaryen, known then as ‘The Cotton King’. Slit his throat, they say, all to help Robert Baratheon, who would later marry Cersei Lannister, to take over the fabric industry.”

“That’s…dishonorable! Why isn’t he in jail?” Brienne protested. He remembered that Robert was Renly’s much older brother. She recalled that they did not get along.

“I think…when you have money, and your family has history and is powerful, you can get away with much. Baratheon is the industrial King of King’s Landing now, isn’t he? They say he’s rich beyond belief.” Jon shook his head. “Besides, the Kingslayer was only seventeen at the time, and Aerys was supposedly mean and cruel and maybe even mad.” Jon shrugged. “So goes the way of the world.” He paused. “My father did not like him.”

Jon tilted his head. “Why are you so interested in the Kingslayer all of a sudden?”

Brienne blushed. “Well, I met him the other day…he was with Tyrion. He was horribly drunk.” For some reason, she did not mention how she half carried him to his bed.

“Oh?” Jon raised one eyebrow. “He is supposedly the most handsome man in Westeros. Did you…uh…notice that?”

Brienne certainly did notice, but she wasn’t going to admit that to Jon. She remembered instead his mocking look and insulting words.

“He’s a vile man. The most unpleasant human being I have ever had the misfortune to meet.”

“Why Brienne, such words! You’re usually very kind. He must have made an impression on you to inspire such ire.” Jon joked.

Brienne sighed. Sat up and started gathering her things in her bag. “Look, I’d better go.”

“No, don’t go. Or better yet, take me home with you.” He reached out to clutch her right hand.

“Jon.”

“Please. Save me. Take me home.” Jon widened his eyes, half-begging but not letting go of her hand just yet.
“You are insane. Are all men insane?” Brienne quirked her lips.

“You know Tyrion wouldn’t mind.” Jon protested, employing those pathetic, adorable eyes. Brienne raised her eyebrows. “Word is, he is quite the connoisseur of the soft houses of silk street.”

“Ugh, Jon.” She pulled her hand out of his grasp, shaking her head. “That is something I did not want to know about my landlord.” Still, she supposed Jon had a point, Tyrion wouldn’t care if she brought a man to her home. He wasn’t her Septa, after all. She shook her head again to clear it. *Let’s put those silly thoughts away,* she said to herself.

She put on her cloak and opened the door, pausing to call out to Jon. “Lock the door on your way out, will you?”

Jon groaned and rubbed his face. “I just want peace,” he moaned dramatically into a pillow.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading. Comments, ideas, constructive criticism are welcome. Kudos if you like!
The bell on the door jingled. As usual, Tyrion was nowhere to be seen, but a round, dark head peeked over from a book shelf. The young man, about fourteen years of age, was on a stepladder, books clutched on both arms.

“Oh hello, Podrick.”

Podrick nodded, made as if to bow, and nearly toppled as he lost his balance.

“Whoa, steady on,” Brienne ran forward to stabilize him. “Watch out now, Pod.” She took the books away from him, placing them on a shelf nearby. “Doing a little organizing?”

“Yes, Dr. Tarth, miss. Tyrion said I should try to get this place into shape.”

“And how’s that going?”

“Well, my lady doctor, I move things in say, alphabetical order, or by subject matter, but Tyrion often moves the books around again. Or gets more books. I would say that it’s not going particularly well.” He looked mournful.

Brienne giggled, then looked at him sympathetically. “I’m sure you’ll make headway out of this mess one day. You might want to talk to Tyrion about getting rid of some books, perhaps by selling them?”

“Now why would I want to do that? Customers would disturb my work.” said Tyrion, as he emerged from the back room, carrying two glasses of red wine, one of which he offered to her. She hesitated. It was barely afternoon.
“Come, take it. Please don’t make me feel like an alcoholic. Drink with me.”

Brienne nodded, smiling. Took a sip. It was good. Tyrion grinned.

“Well.” Brienne leaned forward. “I want to be a customer and buy a book today. I was thinking *The House of Vipers*? Have you read it? I do love his other books.”

Tyrion laughed, and Pod let out a embarrassed giggle. “Well, dear doctor Brienne, I own this bookstore, so of course I’ve read the latest Lyon Grumpkin book. I’m actually intimately acquainted with the text, as I spent hundreds - or is it thousands - of hours writing the damn thing.”

Brienne gasped, speechless for a moment. “What, you are telling me you are Lyon Grumpkin?”

Tyrion nodded, eyes sparkling.

“You. Are. The famous novelist Lyon Grumpkin? Author of *The Last Heart*? *The Forbidden Keep*? *The Factory of Mirth*? Her eyes were huge. “I love your books!”

“Oh!” Tyrion laughed. “Flattery will get you everywhere.” He winked, and picked up the grey volume of *The House of Vipers*. “Here. Take it, read it, and tell me what you think.”

Brienne nodded vigorously, reached for her pocketbook. “How much…?”

“For you? Nothing. It’s not every day one gets to have an in-house surgeon.” He nodded. “And I owe you immensely for that time. With Jaime.”

Brienne bit her lip.

“I insist. Please”

Tyrion invited her to eat with him and Pod. He asked Pod to go to the restaurant next door and bring back food. (“They like doing that for me, saves them from listening to my tedious stories,” he’d remarked.) They ate in the back room, with Tyrion telling her that while his alias is quite established in the general public, it is an open secret amongst his family, none of whom approve of his *scribbles*, except for Jaime. Brienne peppered him with questions about his books' heroes and heroines and wondered if they were based at all on real people (Tyrion had to disappoint her on that account, as all of his protagonists were works of the imagination). Brienne shared a bit about the challenges of resident life, and how difficult the hours were. At one point, Pod burst into song, singing a sad but lovely ballad. Brienne felt warm to her very toes, the wine working its way into her blood.

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Well, Tyrion thought, *this is surprising*. The giantess was sitting at his small table in the back of this bookshop and she was laughing. She looked happy. She was drinking. All impossibilities, he’d assumed, when he first met her. She had been so prim, so controlled, so hampered and so awkward that he never thought that the first of her walls would crumble that easily. Pod too, was more relaxed than he’d ever seen him. The young man admired her, he thought. *He didn’t admire me*, Tyrion thought wryly.

In truth, Tyrion was surprised at how much he liked the doctor. He was disinclined *not* to like her,
not to like her at all, from the warning that father gave him about her in his letter, how he was to treat his precious protégé with respect, to make her comfortable but avoid his vulgarity and sarcasm. He remembered scoffing at those commands, wondering why father was being so protective of this new tenant. Upon meeting the dear doctor Brienne, many of his questions were answered. She was plainly ugly – so was he, Tyrion thought – but ugliness is less easily forgiven in a woman than in a man, as he knew from his own experience. Physically, she was all things a woman should not look like (and if he were honest with himself, she was the very last person he would be actually attracted to, despite his own ugliness), and her attitude bore the marks of those wounds. Still, her deep blue eyes were unusually lovely; probably the most beautiful he’d ever seen, and he’d seen very many, many beautiful women in his time (and had them too). It occurred to him that those eyes were dangerous – especially to the wrong man.

Nevertheless, one could say that her unfortunate looks were overcome by her – what? He struggled to find what it was that was so compelling about her. She had an iron in her soul, a steadfastness and belief of her own person. Although she stammered, she blushed, she looked down a lot, she slouched, one had the impression of a character that was strong and rooted and would somehow save you from damnation. Tyrion smiled and gently shook his head. What was he doing, waxing rhapsodic about this strange creature? Well, he mused, he actually did need saving.

He refilled her cup. He had a notion that he wanted to see how dear Dr. Tarth would be drunk. She was now laughing at one of his jokes – one of the very, very, milder ones – and the sound was surprisingly – lilting and musical and infectious and so very loud. He inexplicably felt himself compelled to join in, along with Pod who was holding in his stomach, and dear god, he realized, the joke wasn’t even that funny.

“I see my invitation to this intimate soiree was lost in the mail.” Jaime declared, leaning against the door frame and looking at their three joyful faces. He was smiling, but it was his wolf-like smile that was far from relaxed. Tyrion wondered if something had happened with Cersei. Again.

The laughter in the room stopped. Tyrion watched Brienne’s face transform in front of his eyes: open-mouthed laughing and sparkling eyes in one moment and in the next an immediate closing and compression of her lips, a sudden weariness in her gaze, the wall come up again in her face. The faint pink flush that smudged her cheeks became a blazing brick red. She lowered her eyes, shoulders tensed.

“Jaime! How lovely it is to see you again.” His brother was staring at Brienne, his eyes carefully examining her face.

“My dear brother. You may not remember, but this is Dr. Brienne Tarth. You two met, after a fashion, the other night. She practically saved you, in other words.” Tyrion was trying to signal to Jaime, just be nice for once. He hoped Jaime wasn’t in one of his self-destructive moods.


Brienne looked up, her eyes fiery. If looks could kill, Tyrion thought.

All of a sudden, Jaime let out a laugh. A bitter, injured laugh.

Brienne suddenly stood up, knocking over her chair. She winced at the sound that it made falling. Her hands were clenched into fists at her side.

“It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance. Officially.” Jaime smirked and bowed.

Brienne nodded. Very obviously trying to control the inferno that was going on inside her.
“Jaime, what are you doing here?” Tyrion said impatiently.

Jaime glanced briefly at his brother. “Father is back. He has summoned us to dinner next week.”

Tyrion groaned. Jaime looked over at Brienne again.

“And he has sent me here to give these invitations,” Jaime reached into his jacket pocket and drew out two small envelopes, “to Dr. Tarth, and a Dr. Snow, whom I actually don’t have the acquaintance of.”

Brienne looked at Jaime’s hand offering the envelopes to her. She slowly took them, not looking at his face all the while. And being very, very red.

“I’m assuming, Dr. Tarth, that you know the party of which the invitation is addressing? A fellow doctor? A Northern bastard, I assume?”

At those final words, Brienne’s face turned utterly murderous, and she stormed off the back door and stomped very loudly up the stairs. They heard her slam the door to her room.

Jaime chuckled. Tyrion threw him a sharp glance.

“Was that necessary?” Tyrion shook his head. He looked over a Pod, who was blank with discomfort.

“Pod, the dear doctor has left her book,” Tyrion handed it to him. “Will you please return it to her, and…well, comfort her, if you can, to the best of your ability?” Pod nodded. “Then you may go.” Pod glanced suspiciously at Jaime, then left the room.

“She’s not the sort that needs comforting, dear brother.” Jaime said. “Besides, I believe I was utterly civil to the wench.”

“I don’t know what has gotten into you, Jaime, but you’ve been ghastly to her. Is it Cersei? What has she done now?” Jaime’s mouth tightened at the mention of their dear sister’s name.

“Why must you assume that everything has to do with our sweet sister?”

“Because everything you do or feel has to do with our dear, lovely sister, that angel of a woman.”

Jaime rolled his eyes. He cleared his throat.

“Since when have you become good friends with the wench? It seemed like I interrupted something there.” Jaime raised his eyebrows.

Tyrion threw him a bemused look. “I believe we bonded over taking care of a very mean drunk.”

“I wasn’t that drunk.”

“She had to practically carry you to bed.”

“Nonsense.”

“You said some very terrible things, you know. I thought she was going to stab you.”


Tyrion paused. “Or maybe you actually wanted her to carry you to bed? Like a damsel in distress?”
Jaime snorted. “What rot. She is truly the ugliest creature I’ve ever seen.”

“And yet?” Tyrion looked archly at Jaime.

“And yet, nothing.”

Tyrion sighed. “As it happened, you did interrupt something. We were having a lovely dinner, and I was trying to see if I could get Brienne drunk. For experimental purposes, of course.”

“You call her Brienne?” Jaime asked sharply.

“We are on a first name basis.” Tyrion smiled. “She insisted.”

Tyrion smiled slyly. “She likes my books.” He tilted his head. “No, correction. She loves my books.”

Jaime scoffed. “That’s what it takes to win you over. You are indeed, so very shallow.”

“And you are very rude and horrible and uncivil.” Tyrion frowned.

“Now, thanks to you, I will have to repair again the damage that you caused. You realize that it’s quite difficult to gain her esteem? She is quite a creature.”

“Father’s creature.”

“I think…not.” Tyrion paused. “I believe she belongs solely to herself. Which is not something I could say about you….”

Jaime made a face at his brother’s words.

“…or any of us Lannisters.”

Chapter End Notes

Please kudos if you're enjoying this story. And I welcome all comments. Thank you.
A Very Lannister Dinner

Chapter Summary

Brienne and Jon find themselves surrounded by Lannisters.

Chapter Notes

Well, this is probably the longest dinner party ever. I hope it's more entertaining than boring.

As the story progresses and the plot gets more complex, I will likely be posting a couple times a week rather than daily.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

As soon as Brienne and Jon stepped into the foyer of Tywin Lannister’s luxurious and well-appointed apartment, Brienne knew she’d made a mistake. She was instantly overwhelmed by the surroundings: red brocade walls, gilded golden cornices, ornately carved wooden furniture, and gleaming inlay parquet floors. Her nerves jingled, she felt heated and nervous. For some reason, they thought that this was going to be an informal dinner, but then she saw the bouquets of flowers on every table, the immaculately dressed butlers, and a glimpse of the very fancy dinner table on which gleaming silver cutlery and sparkling crystal glasses were carefully laid out. The whole thing reminded her of the interminable parties her father hosted at Evenfall Hall where as a girl she was forced into unflattering dresses and made to greet and curtsy the guests, all the while trying to ignore their stares of the apparition of this monster child. This will be painful, she thought. She looked over at Jon, who held his shoulders stiffly. He had grown up at Winterfell, a stately home, but she knew about his discomfort at such events because he was never entirely welcome due to his base-born status. He often ended up sitting with the help than with his family and their guests at the main tables.

The butler led them to the drawing room where a small group had gathered. Tyrion stood next to the piano, a tumbler of whisky in his hands. Next to him was a towering, immense man, with a ruddy complexion, unruly black hair and striking blue eyes. He must be Robert Baratheon, Brienne guessed from the similarity to Renly’s colouring. Jaime Lannister sat on a gold settee at the other end of the room, nodding and quietly conversing with one of the most beautiful women Brienne had ever seen. Given her soft, golden hair, green eyes, sculpted mouth and fine cheekbones, she guessed this was Jaime’s twin sister, Cersei. Cersei Lannister wore an exquisite red silk gown embroidered with thousands of beads; the silk flowed across her full chest, tiny waist, and skimmed the curves of her slim hips. She enhanced her beauty with glittering rubies at her ears and throat. Brienne winced. She knew immediately that she was underdressed. Severely underdressed. She wore her best outfit, which happened to be a high collar, button-up grey linen day dress without any lace or adornment. It was also the outfit that she wore to her Uncle’s funeral some years back. Not exactly a party dress.

Tywin Lannister walked towards them and shook their hands.
“Dr. Tarth, Dr. Snow. Welcome.” Tywin smiled a closed-lipped smile, looking them both over. He had not changed since she saw him last. He was never warm, but always polite; and to her, always thoughtful, and she thought, kind.

“Dr. Lannister. It’s good to see you in King’s Landing. Have you been back long?” Brienne asked, attentive and eager.

“Only a week or so. The Citadel was difficult to leave, but it’s good to be back amongst family again. Of course, I shall need to see to affairs at Casterly Rock before long.”

“I’m sure they miss you at the Citadel,” Jon politely supplied.

“Are these your protégés, Tywin?” Robert Baratheon boomed, as he strode towards them. “One’s a woman? Gods, what will they think of next!” Brienne raised her eyebrows at the comment, but she found no malice in the unrestrained smile that filled Robert Baratheon’s handsome, broad face.

Tywin’s mouth tightened. “Robert, may I present to you Dr. Brienne Tarth, and Dr. Jon Snow. They are currently surgical residents at King’s Landing Hospital.” He turned to the two. “This is Robert Baratheon, my goodson.”

“Egads,” Robert let out an astonished yelp. “Jon Snow! You’re Ned Stark’s boy!”

Jon looked surprised, then coloured. He nodded. “I’m his bastard son.”

“Yes, I recall something of that. Bastard or no, you have the look of him through and through.” Robert stepped closer to Jon, examining his face. Jon squirmed. “I was sorry to hear of his death. You know, son, I was a great friend of your father’s when we were young. Back when I was strong as aurochs, not like now,” he said, gesturing to his corpulent belly, laughing. Jon smiled uncomfortably, giving Brienne a private, pained look.

“Robert, come, let’s share Dr. Snow for now. I, for one, have not had the chance to meet him.” Tyrion said as he approached them, with two glasses of wine in his hands. “I’m Tyrion. I ply people with alcohol.” Brienne and Jon took the wine from him, grateful for any distraction.

Tyrion, amusement in his eyes, glanced at Brienne. “Brienne has told me much about you, though I wonder why she hasn’t dragged you to our little bookshop – well, my bookshop and her domicile, for you see, Brienne and I have become fast friends.” At this Brienne couldn’t help by roll her eyes. “She keeps me from drinking alone, and I distract her with jokes, and even make her laugh every once in a while.” He paused at Jon’s serious face. “I imagine I can do the same for you.”

“Tyrion. It’s a pleasure to meet you as well. From Brienne’s stories about you, it feels like I already know you.” Jon smiled kindly. “As I live at the hospital, I find myself there all the time. Rarely do I get to escape and socialize like this evening.”

Tyrion nodded. “Still, you must come visit. Brienne doesn’t mind, do you, Brienne?”

“Of course not,” she replied.

“I believe your sense of propriety has been twisted by your nightly pursuits, little brother.” Cersei Lannister appeared next to them, a red and golden confection. Her eyes were jagged bright green points. “I must defend the honour of a highborn lady such as Miss Tarth. A man visiting her alone? Going into her rooms?” Cersei shook her head. “You have been away from society too long.”

Tyrion tensed at the appearance of his sister. “Ah dear sister, I forget myself; of course you have been a paragon of virtue in your exemplary life.” Cersei’s mouth twisted in anger for a moment,
then quickly smoothed into a pleasant half-smile.

“Miss Tarth.” Cersei turned her brilliant emerald gaze on her. “Pleased to make your acquaintance. Indeed, your…reputation has preceded you. I absolutely had to leave my babies at home to meet this new creature that has gained so much rare praise from my beloved father.”

“Cersei,” Tywin gave her a stern look.

“A lady surgeon! The first of her kind! And such an example!” She narrowed her eyes, letting out a short, musical laugh. “I understand it, now that I’ve…seen you. I dare say that life must have been difficult for you, do be so…unusual and set apart from normal women?”

Brienne felt blood rush up her neck. Cersei laughed louder, “You can’t even blush prettily!” And with that, she sauntered away, the silk of her dress swaying around her hips.

“Ignore her.” Tyrion touched her elbow and led her to a seat, then walked towards his sister. Jon, awkward and self-conscious, gingerly sat next to her on the divan.

“This is horrible.” Jon leaned towards her and whispered in her ear. Brienne sighed.

“It is as I expected,” Brienne whispered back. “I’m sorry I didn’t warn you.”

She looked up to find Jaime Lannister standing in front of them, his gaze neutral but assessing. She raised her eyes and stared back, defiant. He was even more elegant in his tuxedo that was cut to perfectly to reveal his lean but muscular body. His complexion was golden and pink and his eyes were a vibrant, living green.

“Dr. Tarth. How wonderful it is to see you again.” He bowed, then turned to Jon. “Dr. Snow, pleased to make your acquaintance. I knew your father slightly from the Riverlands campaign. He was an honourable man.” Jamie and Jon shook hands.

“Thank you, Captain Lannister, for those kind words. I strive to be like my father in all that I do.” Jon replied.

Jaime tilted his head, pressed his lips together as if to stop a thought. Brienne couldn’t help but scowl at him. Jaime smiled and looked amused when he saw her expression. He bowed again, then retreated to rejoin his twin sister, standing close to her and whispering in her ear. They both turned to look at Brienne. Cersei let out a ringing, melodious laugh.

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Dinner was an intricate affair of six courses, although Tywin insisted that this was simpler than the dinner parties they normally had. Tywin sat at the head of the table, and Brienne was placed between Jon and Tyrion, while Jaime was seated between Cersei and Robert. At first, the conversation flowed smoothly, with Tywin talking about their time at the Citadel and inquiring about King’s Landing Hospital and their work with Oberyn.

“Oberyn Martell?” Robert exclaimed, as he spooned mouthfuls of creamy soup into his mouth. “Has he been behaving himself in King’s Landing then?”

“Behaving?” Jon inquired, confused.

“He’s been quite an inspiration to work with. His approaches to surgical problems and pathology are new but quite ingenious. He’s been very kind and patient to both of us.” Brienne’s eyes lit up as she spoke.
Cersei sneered. “Oberyn Martell? They say he would sleep with anyone.” She paused, looked Brienne up and down, and said, “Even a great, big…woman like you, I imagine.”

Jaime glanced sharply at his sister. Jon tensed beside her.

Tywin cleared his throat. “Martell is one of our best surgeons. It’s unseemly to spread gossip like a fishwife, Cersei. I recommend you dull your tongue tonight, as you can see, we have guests.” He looked pointedly at his daughter, his eyes edged with unspoken admonishment.

Cersei smiled sweetly. “Of course, dearest father. I mistook rumour for fact, as the stories of his seductions are quite numerous.” Tywin shot her a warning glance.

Jaime stared at his venison course, oddly silent.

Jon cleared his throat.

“Captain Lannister. Will you be in King’s Landing long? Or do you have a deployment in the future?” Jon asked, relieved to change the subject.

Tyrion laughed. “No one knows where Jaime is going to be, or for how long. In fact, he just returned from Lys.”

Jaime nodded at his brother. “This is partly because there are wars all the time all over Westeros, even little ones you’ve never heard of. But I plan to stay in King’s Landing for a while.”

“I would hope that Jaime will come to Casterly this time. To learn his duties as the future Lord of Casterly.” Tywin announced.

“Father, my chances of being Lord of anything are dreadfully slim. Not to mention I find Lordships a dreadful bore. And who knows, father, I may die in the next war I engage in. At least, one can hope.” Jaime smiled sarcastically.

Tywin glared at his grinning son. “I would hope that one day you would forget about playing your games of war, and settle down. Find a proper wife, take Casterly Rock, which is your birthright.”

Jaime laughed, shaking his head. “Father, and here I thought you had no sense of humour.”

“In fact, I plan on staying in this city as long as I’m able to. After all, I have need to spend time with my… family.” Jaime smirked.

“Here, here!” Exclaimed Robert, raising his glass and emptying his wine.

Tyrion raised his eyebrows.

Cersei smiled a secret smile, and reached out to squeeze her brother’s forearm. “Jaime’s very presence has been such an asset around the house. He plays with Tommen and Myrcella, and is such a comfort to me in my times of distress. It is so good to have such a supportive brother around whenever I have need of him.”

Jaime frowned. Tyrion smirked, and Tywin looked thunderous. Robert poured himself a glass of red wine, paused, then refilled his wife’s empty glass as well. He grinned.

“It’s a shame you aren’t interested in hunting, Jaime. We could have great adventures together in the wilds! Still, I do feel better leaving my poor bored wife on my trips now that you’re around to entertain her.”
Jaime’s face was tight, mouth compressed.

“You’re lucky to have such a devoted brother, Mrs. Baratheon.” Brienne offered, a little puzzled at the suddenly tension-filled atmosphere of the room.

Jaime looked slightly flushed as he stared at his plate. His gaze darted to Brienne, then quickly away. He took a tiny bite of food.

“Indeed. I consider myself one of the luckiest women in Westeros.” Cersei smiled like a satisfied cat.

Tyrion guffawed.

“I say, Dr. Tarth, did you ever come by my younger brother Renly? I recall something about his visiting your island of Tarth some years back.” Robert smiled widely, seemingly unaffected by the continued discomfort in the room. “Ah, here’s the cheese.”

Brienne nodded eagerly. “Yes. He did visit Tarth for a few months when I was fourteen and stayed at Evenfall Hall. He was incredibly kind to me, and told me of such adventures he’d had while traveling. He helped me a great deal, I think, for he encouraged me to think about what was possible in life, to think beyond the conventional.” Brienne’s eyes beamed, and she couldn’t help the broad smile that filled her face.

“Dear gods, she looks exactly like a horse when she smiles.” Cersei muttered to Jaime, loud enough for all to hear.

Brienne felt her gut twist and felt her face crumble.

“Nonsense!” Tyrion exclaimed. “Brienne’s smile is by far the most beautiful thing in this room. That includes you, sweet sister.”

Brienne blushed, checking to see if Tyrion was mocking her. But he held her eye, his expression one of sincerity. It was nonsense of course, but she felt her spirits lift slightly.

“Yes.” Agreed Jon, looking at her and reaching to briefly squeeze her hand. “I wholeheartedly agree.”

Jaime cocked his head, his eyes moving back and forth from Jon to Brienne.

Finally, the last course had been served. It felt like the longest dinner Brienne had ever participated in. She was exhausted, finding herself holding her breath at various times throughout the dinner. She had never experienced anything like it. Were all families like this? She made a mental note to ask Jon later.

After dinner, Tywin led Jon and Brienne to his office and they talked extensively about the medical work they were doing. Tywin outlined his own research that he hoped to do back in his lab at Casterly Rock. Brienne relaxed, as she always did when discussing medicine. The respite was fleeting, however. They all joined the rest of the party for after dinner drinks in the sumptuous parlour which held a roaring fire and many comfortable looking armchairs and divans.

When they entered the parlour it was evident from Cersei’s flushed and angry face and Robert’s thunderous air that the married couple just had an argument.

Tyrion immediately handed them some whisky. “I supply drinks,” he murmured.
Brienne witnessed Cersei’s face again settle into a pleasant expression, although Robert’s face remained dark.

“Dear Miss Tarth-”

“Doctor Tarth, dear sister.” Jaime unexpectedly reminded her. Cersei shot thunderbolts at Jaime, whose countenance remained one of detached amusement.

“Dr. Tarth, I just had the most wonderful idea.” Cersei smiled angelically. “You must come to our son Joffrey’s eighteenth name day ball! There will be food, drinks, the most sublime music and of course dancing.”

Brienne paled. It was the last thing she wanted to attend. She had visions of her own disastrous ball and the mocking of men. “Mrs. Baratheon, I don’t believe-”

“Nonsense. You are a representative of House Tarth after all. It’s extremely important that you come. I wish I’d thought of it earlier. I will not take no for an answer.” Cersei smiled charmingly, her rosy lips forming into a mock pout.

“It’s in a moon’s time, you see, so you may not have enough time for a proper ball gown to be made. Still,” Cersei looked at Brienne’s outfit in distaste, “Given what you’re wearing tonight, it may not even be a concern at all.” She tilted her head. “However, it would not do to come looking like you’re attending a funeral. Or dressed as an undertaker. I suppose you can wear some other colour. Any colour? Save Lannister red or gold of course.”

Brienne was speechless, and opened her mouth again to refuse, shaking her head.

“I must insist, Dr. Tarth. You must come. Will you?” She smiled again. “Of course you will. I shall send over the invitation to my little brother’s bookshop on the morrow.”

“Oh,” she turned to Jon, her smile brittle and glittering, “I’m afraid I cannot extend an invitation to your own person, Dr. Snow. I’m sure you understand the importance of having legitimate houses and guests there.”

Jon’s face constricted, but he nodded. Brienne felt a flare of anger and opened her mouth, but was stopped by Jon’s very somber glance directed at her.

Cersei gracefully rose, gesturing to Robert to get up. “Now I’m afraid we must be leaving. I must go back to my Tommen and Myrcella. Children need their mothers so, don’t you agree, Miss Tarth?”

Brienne was aware that Cersei very deliberately pronounced the title of “miss,” but she was more stung by the allusion to her own dead mother, though she supposed that it could have been accidental. After all, the Lannister siblings also lost their mother early.

Cersei and Robert said their goodbyes, with her smiling and calling out to Jaime, “I will see you at home soon, dearest brother.”

It was a tiring evening. She thought that she did not want to spend any more time with the Lannister family as a whole ever again. However, she was surprised that Jaime Lannister wasn’t the cruel self she knew him to be from their previous encounters. She supposed that one good quality about him was how devoted he was to Tyrion and especially to Cersei, despite her overt meanness. The fact that Jaime mostly ignored her was a blessing; she thought that she would’ve fallen apart if he attacked her looks again.
She and Jon made their apologies to leave, and Tywin insisted on them being driven back in one of his carriages.

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Brienne was perplexed at how it happened. One moment she and Jon were waiting for the aforementioned carriage, but when it arrived, instead of a driver, Jaime Lannister rode up in his own carriage, apparently intending to drive them home. He said little, but tipped his top hat at them, looking altogether too dashing.

“Come in,” he drawled, “I’m going your way.”

“You are driving us?” Brienne asked, frowning. Jon threw her a quick look.


Brienne and Jon looked at each other, and seeing no alternative, shrugged and got in.

“It’s a beautiful night for an open carriage ride, is it not?” He called back at them with a smile.

Jon called back in agreement. Brienne remained stubbornly silent.

“Tell me, Dr. Snow,” Jaime looked back. “Should I send you to Brienne’s apartments, or-”

Jon coloured. “To the hospital, if you will.” He added, “Brienne and I are not – are not – together,” he murmured.

Brienne squirmed. Jaime raised his eyebrows in response and smirked.

Thankfully, the rest of the ride was spent in blissful silence. Jon got out at the hospital, clasped Brienne’s two hands together and kissed them goodbye. He nodded to Jaime, then sauntered towards the hospital. Jaime stared after him for some moments.

He turned in his seat to face her. Smiled mischievously. “Wench.”

Brienne looked up sharply. “My name is Dr. Tarth.”

“What? Are we going backwards? I thought we were already on a first name basis, Brienne.”

“What do you want, Captain Lannister?”

“Jaime.” His eyes shone in the moonlight.


“Left your manners at my father’s door, I see.” He raised his left eyebrow.

“As you apparently left your civility,” she countered.

“Woman, I’m trying to get you to come up to sit beside me in the carriage,” Jaime said in an exasperated tone.

Brienne frowned. “And why would I do that?”

Jaime grinned, showing all of his gleaming, straight white teeth. *How are his teeth even beautiful?*
Brienne thought, “It would save me from an aching neck from having to turn around to talk to you all the time.”

She snorted. “Perhaps you shouldn’t talk…?”

He leaned towards her. “Oh wench, I know you missed me talking to you during that unbearable dinner party.”

He held out his hand. “Come now.”

“No.” She crossed her arms, annoyed.

He leaned back and rubbed the back of his neck. “For a doctor, you don’t seem to care about protecting a patient’s health.”

“You’re not a patient.” She said dryly.

“But I will be if you force me to turn my neck constantly to talk to you.” Jaime pouted, widening his eyes. “I already feel an ache coming on, wench.”

He really was...infuriating, even when he wasn’t being deliberately insulting. His teasing manner also unnerved her. He was persistent, and seemingly wouldn’t take no for an answer.

“Oh, fine!” she said angrily, quickly climbing over the carriage to sit beside Jaime with ease.

Jaime laughed. “I was about to help you down and help you climb up….”

“Shut up, will you?” She scowled. Jaime laughed harder, clutching his stomach.

“Just what is so amusing?” Brienne glowered.

“You are, wench.”

“My name is – “

“Brienne. Brienne. Got it.” With that, he signaled the horses into a gentle trot.

The ride was supposed to take five minutes at most. But Jaime turned the carriage left when they were supposed to go right, and drove the horses away from her apartment.

“Captain Lannister.”

“Jaime.”

“What are you doing? You’re taking us the wrong way!” Brienne’s voice was indignant.

Jaime looked over at her and grinned. “Come, wench. I’m taking you on a tour of the city. I’m positive you haven’t seen much outside the hospital and that cozy little apartment of yours.”

“I’m not here for you to take me hostage and-” Brienne could feel her skin prickle as currents of anger shot through her.

“I demand you turn around!” Brienne insisted.

He threw his head back and laughed, a dangerous gleam in his eye.

“Oh wench, how you do amuse me.” However, he stopped the carriage. Brienne looked around.
There were overlooking Blackwater Bay, the waters dark and glimmering with moonlight. She could see the ships and boats, big and small, peacefully nestled in the harbour. The sky was black and the moon showed its full, bright face and the stars seemed to blink at them. The waters reminded her of Tarth and she felt a sharp longing for home. For her father.

Jaime was looking intently at her face, a strange expression in his eyes. He smiled sadly.

“I always think that it’s only at night that King’s Landing seems beautiful.”

“It really is,” she breathed.

“Looking at the stars and the moon makes you forget certain things…” Jaime’s voice sounded like it was out of a dream, as he looked up into the sky.

They were silent for some minutes. She could see his profile in the dark, beautiful and almost otherworldly. She could sense his nearness, the heat of his body and her own proximity as she sat next to him. Here was a man who was awful and powerful and at times menacing to others, but strangely, she sensed no danger from him. Still, it seemed his instinct was to deliberately insult and mock, as if it were a natural way to be.

Brienne turned to Jaime and gave him a puzzled look. “You seem different tonight…I can’t figure you out.”

Jaime turned his face to her, with a bemused expression.


Brienne blushed. “Why, yes, to be frank. And I thought I hated you…”

“And now you love me?” Brienne started in surprise, shaking her head vigorously. Jaime laughed. “No, wench, I’m only japing.”

His face darkened. “I know you hate me, and you have every right to do so. Most people do – that or they fear me. The *Kingslayer*, they call me when my back is turned.” His voice was bitter.

Brienne twisted her hands in her lap.

“But you did a dishonourable thing! You killed an unarmed man. Don’t deny it.” Brienne suddenly remembered and shivered.

“Yes. Yes, I did kill him. The man I was supposed to protect, in fact.” He turned away from her, and abruptly grabbed the reins and set the horses to a trot.

He was silent, his face shuttered tight, his jaw clenched. He drove them quickly through the city, a far cry from their initially meandering way. Soon enough, they arrived at her apartment.

She slowly climbed down from the carriage.

Brienne turned to him, her eyes trying to find his. “Jaime -”

He finally turned and looked down at her, his eyes brittle as glass, his face suddenly full of anger.

“You *should* hate me,” he spat out.

Brienne raised a hand in protest, and tried to say something. “Jaime…”
“I’m not a good man,” he whispered fiercely, looking away and shaking his head.

He swiftly drove away, leaving her on the street, staring after him.

Chapter End Notes

As always, thanks for reading. I would love to hear what you think.

Kudos if you like the story.
Sweet Sister, Sweet Brother

Chapter Summary

Jaime returns to find his twin Cersei in his rooms.
(Warning: explicit sex scene and sibling incest.)

Chapter Notes

I know, I had to go there. I had to explore the incest and Jaime and Cersei's very twisted dynamic. The chapter is Jaime POV, so we get to see inside his head of his, his foolish, delusional head. Sigh.

The sex scene is somewhere in the middle, if any of you want to skip it. In the end he does think about what happened in the dinner party and about Brienne.

I'm in no way a J/C shipper and will always be a Braime in my heart. But, yeah, sorry.

The rating has been changed to Explicit.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Upon his return, he found Cersei pacing in his room, a glass of red wine in her hand. He could tell she was furious, her cheeks flushed pink and her lips pressed together. The way she strode back and forth across the room made the cream silk and lace of her close-fitting nightgown undulate sensually around the curves of her hips. Despite his annoyance, Jaime felt his blood warm at the sight of her.

“Sister, what a surprise. To what do I owe the pleasure?” Jaime remarked mildly.

“What took you so long? I’ve been waiting for you!” Cersei pouted, her green eyes blazing. “Robert passed out from drink ages ago. The children are asleep. I’ve been here forever, Jaime.”

“I drove our guests back,” he replied, glancing down at her face. Jaime unexpectedly recalled another pair of eyes, looking at him in the moonlight, and how light seemed to emanate from those large blue depths even in darkness.

“You drove that cow home?” her eyes narrowed into slits. “I can’t believe father invited that slack-jawed monster and that horrible bastard to a family dinner.”

“Must you be so discourteous? She has done nothing to deserve your ire.” Jaime rolled his eyes.

“Her very presence irks me. Did you see the way she was dressed? Like a prim funeral director. And those cow eyes of hers, so slow and dimwitted.” She emptied her cup of wine.

“She is quite…hideous in appearance, and even bigger than I am, which is quite…rare,” he
remarked evenly.

Cersei’s eyes blazed at his words. “Such a freak, an abomination,” she hissed. Her face glowed prettily with rage. “That’s why I invited her to Joffrey’s ball. Can you imagine that sow in a ball gown? She’d be the evening’s entertainment!” She giggled girlishly, her round, full breasts undulating under the whisper-thin silk.

Jaime found himself recoiling at his sweet sister’s words and malignant giggle; all the while, incongruously, his body was heeding her invisible siren call. Gods, she was ravishing when she was angry. He felt a perverse need to shove her against the wall and take her right then. He tried to clear himself of those thoughts – for now.

“Why are we having the ball? It’s hardly the thing Joffrey would enjoy.” He looked at her wonderingly. “Besides, shouldn’t you be trying to get him under control? I’ve heard tales of him-”

Cersei eye’s flashed with rage. “You will not say another word about my son-”

“Our son.”


He stared at her unbelievingly. Was she so delusional? Joffrey was, simply put, a terror: short-tempered, demanding, whining, and brutally violent when he did not get his way. Jaime shuddered when Robert told him about Joffrey killing a cat when he just was a child. He just got worse as he’d grown older. No, Cersei was right: Joffrey wasn’t his son; after all, she had never let him be around the boy. Still, he puzzled at how twisted he ended up being. Robert was a fine enough father, he supposed, though absent and indulgent. At the back of his mind he thought of his and Cersei’s relations, how a brother and sister together perhaps produced a true monster. How his son was born of an abominable sin.

He shook his head. He then remembered moments of the dinner: his father’s warning looks at Cersei, Tyrion’s raised eyebrows, his own disbelief at hearing her words, the stress and agitation that hung heavy in the air. Brienne’s puzzled frowns.

“You were quite appalling tonight, Cersei. What’s gotten into you?” He remembered her insults, and how she very strongly hinted at their own sexual relationship. “How I administer to your needs? You were reckless, especially around Robert.” They were taking more and more risk. Her display tonight, in front of strangers, no less….

Cersei scoffed, her face twisting, eyes bright. “Robert’s a dolt, and has always been. He has no clue and wouldn’t even believe it if he caught us fucking in front him. He would probably assume it was one of his drunken hallucinations, lord knows he has many of those.” She laughed. “To think, he was so thankful that you’re here to entertain me while he’s away hunting! The fool! I had to bite my tongue back from bursting into hysterical laughter.”

She smiled a vicious, victorious smile, lowering her eyes. When she lifted her gaze back up at him, he could see desire in her eyes. His skin prickled. She slinked slowly towards him, looking him up and down.

“I wore this for you, dear brother, I know you love seeing me in white.” She looked down at her nightgown and smiled a sly, knowing smile. She was so close to him now. He gulped, his mouth suddenly dry.

“And I love you in a tuxedo, dear brother,” she cooed, her hands caressing his shoulders and down
to his chest. His breath caught in his throat.

“You’re not mad, are you, Jaime?” She whispered in his ear, her breath hot on his cheek and smelling of wine. He nestled into her neck and was surrounded by her perfume of jasmine and spice. She pulled his jacket off him and threw it to the floor.

“Cersei,” he murmured. She was removing his bow tie, and started to unbutton his shirt. He could feel lust coursing through his blood, his cock half-hard and twitching.

“Robert’s dead to the world, the children sleeping a sweet sleep.” Cersei’s warm hands roamed over his chest, pressing his now pebbled nipples, and slid down the firm muscles of his abdomen. “Don’t you want me, brother?” Her hand slid lower and lightly traced the bulge of his engorged cock. He groaned. She pressed herself to him, her breasts and hips swelling against him. Her hand pressed harder at his straining cock and squeezed. He moaned even louder. “Don’t you want to fuck me, brother?” She looked up at him, her eyes dark with lust.

He couldn’t think. He just wanted, wanted his sweet Cersei. His hands suddenly grabbed her, pulling her even closer so her body could feel how desperate and hard he really was for her. His handsroamed her back, her hips, her shapely ass. He ached for her. “I always want you, Cersei. I always want to fuck you.” He lowered his head and pressed his lips to hers, forcefully. Her mouth was equally demanding, opening at the slightest swipe of his tongue. He felt himself sinking, helplessly lost in her kisses. Her body was so yielding and soft as he drew her even tighter. She moaned into his mouth. She feverishly took off his shirt and undershirt, her eyes greedy at the sight of his golden chest and muscular form. She sucked at his right nipple and bit. He cried out at the pleasure and pain. His hands caressed her round breasts, and wanting more, he grabbed the front of her nightgown and tore it open, the lace and silk ripping, freeing her full, heaving breasts and revealing their dark pink, stiff nipples. She was so beautiful. He wanted her. He easily lifted her, her nightgown pushed up, her legs straddling his hips as he walked them to his bed. This cock in his trousers strained as they rubbed agonizingly against her mound. He threw her on the bed. She sat up and started frantically unbuttoning his trousers and hurriedly pushed them and his smallclothes down, thankfully freeing his springing, torturously hard cock. She stroked up and down his long length, so, so expertly. He bit his lip to keep from moaning too loud. He looked down at her. She looked hungry; she licked her lips. He groaned. He pushed her down on the bed and pulled up her nightgown. He was frenzied with lust. He couldn’t wait any more, he thought, lowering his body between her legs, his cock engorged and leaking. He had to have her now. He roughly shoved into her with one hard thrust. She gasped. He moaned into her golden hair, helpless. She was so warm and wet, always so wet and ready for him. He never had to prepare her for fucking. He started thrusting into her fiercely, her small body jostling with every stroke of his cock, her breasts jiggling as he pumped frantically into her. This. This, this was bliss. She moaned and clutched at his shoulders and back, her nails raking him in her passion. She moved with him, desperate and violent. They were always meant to be like this, fucking. Together as one body. Taking all of the pleasure in the world, taking what was theirs.

“Cersei,” he moaned, “You’re mine. You’re mine. All mine. Tell me.”

“Yes, Jaime,” she wailed, “I’m yours, brother, yours, all yours.”

She writhed under him, moaned. She was close. He put his fingers in between their juncture, pressing and circling her nub. She gasped, bucking up harder at him until she broke, her eyes closed tight and crying out in pleasure as he felt her cunt squeeze him over and over. He felt her grow even wetter as she came. It made him wild. He lifted her hips with both hands and pummeled desperately into her, until he felt himself disappear into her and explode into a thousand pieces, exquisite pleasure undoing him fully. He felt hot bursts of his seed shoot into the depths of her cunt
with his final thrusts as he shuddered and shouted out against her shoulder. He collapsed fully into her, overwhelmed with his orgasm.


Exhausted, he rolled off her as she shifted from beneath him. She sat up on the bed.

“No, Cersei, sister, stay.” Jaime wrapped his arm around her body and pulled her back down. He embraced her, pressing his body against her back, wrapping his arm around her chest. He kissed her head. “Stay with me a little.” He tightened his arm, pulling her even closer.

“Jaime,” Cersei’s voice was firm. “Must you do this every time? You know it’s impossible.” She squeezed his arm and untangled himself from her. He felt a flash of anger. She never stayed with him after they fucked, not even for a few minutes. He already missed her.

“But I love you,” he protested.

Cersei smiled down at him. “I love you too, sweet brother.” She fussed at her nightgown. “But we can’t take the risk.”

She frowned, looking down and examining the collar of her nightgown. “Why did you have to rip this? It’s Dornish silk and Myrrish lace! I’ll never be able to get it fixed.”

Jaime felt a twinge of annoyance. “I’m sure Robert can buy you another.”

Cersei rolled her eyes. “You’re always so difficult after we fuck.” She got up, put on a robe that she had earlier left on a chair. She started to leave, but paused, returning back to him. She smiled sweetly and gave him a kiss on the cheek. “Thank you, sweet brother. I needed that.”

Jaime, flooded with need, clutched at her hips and waist, trying to pull her down on top of him. She resisted with a displeased cry. “Jaime, no. Get your hands off me,” she hissed, pulling herself away. She briskly got up, opened the door quietly and after looking around, swept out the door.

Jaime let out a frustrated, angry groan, throwing a pillow against a wall. Any bliss he had felt during their fucking (and in his mind, it was always ‘fucking,’ nothing else) had all but disappeared. The pleasure was always temporary, their happiness always short-lived. He couldn’t deny that it was heaven when he fucked her. He felt whole, completely together, perfectly with her when he was moving inside her warmth. He sighed. He always missed her cunt when she was away from him. Hells, he missed her cunt even when she was in the same room as him.

She’d always said to him, “We shared the same womb. We’re the same person. You are me, I am you. We belong together. Always.” She said that to him over and over, and he repeated it to her over and over until he believed it to his very bones. When she said that to him before the very first time they fucked, when they were barely teenagers, it all made sense. He knew rationally, even when he was thirteen, that it was wrong to sleep with your sister, but they were twins, and it made sense that they were meant to be inside each other. What they did never felt wrong. It always felt right and perfect and good. He always remembered that sweet, angelic girl, so shy and giving of her body, and so hungry and demanding for his. They were each other’s first and only. Their three children were beautiful, pure Lannisters. She was insistent that any children she’d have would be his and not Robert’s. Over the years, he asked her to marry him many times, to run away with him just as often. They belonged together, always. But she always dismissed him with a laugh, calling him too “romantic”.

They had been together for over twenty-two years now. Fucking. In love. Always entwined. Over
the years, she had changed, gotten harder, meaner. He was sure he had changed too. He frowned.
He couldn’t argue that they often quarreled more often than not. It seemed like he always wanted
more from her. Sometimes it was so unbearable to be around her that he’d arrange himself to go off
to war to some gods-forsaken place just to escape. She was impossible, demanding. The only way
they made each other happy was in the bedroom, when he was inside her. Even so, he believed that
he could never do without her. She was the only one for him. In fact, he was never even tempted
by any other women, even while he was away, and even when the most gorgeous, seductive
creatures had repeatedly draped himself naked onto his lap. And Cersei could never do without
him, he was certain. She needed him desperately, needed him to fill her, to make her whole. After
he returned from his long bouts away, the way they came together still amazed him. They were
insatiable for each other. Explosive. True, she had married Robert for the family, but she barely
fucked him, besides. He was too busy with his whores. She loved him as much as he loved her, of
that he had no doubt.

He tried to rest, close his eyes, but he found his mind wandering. To Cersei. To the dinner party.
To father and Tyrion. To Brienne. The wench, he thought, a smile creeping onto his face.
Everything about her was hilarious. He’d never been so amused by someone. He thought of the
way she sat so stiffly at the dinner table, her dress buttoned all the way up to her neck. Her endless
scowls, expertly directed at him. Gods, she was ugly. Hideous, even. Cersei had the right of that,
even though he couldn’t whole-heartedly agree with her at the time. Still, the more he saw her, the
more he found her ugliness less…distracting, he supposed. He didn’t find himself as repulsed by
her broken, crooked nose and big, thick lips, that broad, thick body, corded with muscle. He
supposed he could get used to any ugliness. However, what he never got used to were her big, blue,
endless eyes. They were astonishing, and they stunned him every time he looked into them. He
found himself somehow at a loss for words when he held her gaze. Their power was astounding.
He also recalled being in her arms, when she half carried him when he was too full of drink. He did
not remember much of that night, but he remembered her arms, her raw strength, her impossibly
blue eyes. He had also been surprised at seeing her so suddenly the next morning, how she
emerged, fresh from her bath, her skin glowing and pink, her hair wet, and he remembered how his
eyes were drawn to the triangle of flesh below her collarbone, tantalizingly revealed by her robe.
How she was freckled. He laughed to himself. Oh she was endlessly amusing, all right.

He thought again about her dress tonight. A grey, formal thing, the high collar buttoned right up to
her chin. As if she was trying to hide the elegant, full curve of her thick neck. When he looked at
her from across the dinner table he had a strange impulse to rush over to her and start undoing
those tiny pearl buttons at her neck. He felt, vaguely, that she needed to be unrestrained, whatever
that meant.

More moments came to him. How when he came upon her, Tyrion, and that boy Pod at dinner, and
how she was laughing with abandon and he’d been struck speechless at the light that emanated
from her, the joy that he had rarely – if ever – seen on any grown person. And the sound of her
laughter stirred something in him; her laugh was wild and free and so infectious. He recalled how
surprised he was at the sight, and how his only reaction was, of course to mock and insult. He
thought of that with regret now. And tonight she smiled again, a brilliant smile, and he had that
same strange feeling inside him, and yes, she did look a bit like a horse, as Cersei unfeelingly
observed in front of her, but Tyrion had called her smile the most beautiful thing in the room, and
somehow he felt that it was right. Entirely right. He puzzled at how someone so ugly could be
beautiful.

He narrowed his eyes. That Jon Snow also agreed about her beautiful smile. He recalled him
squeezing her hand at the dinner table, kissing her hands as he said goodbye in the carriage tonight.
How he earlier observed him leaning into her ear and whispering and she turning her head to
whisper back and for a moment it looked like they were about to kiss. He felt himself strangely
unnerved at the thought. Jon had said they were not “together” but they were both squirming and looking down and he wondered briefly if it meant that they weren’t together “yet”. Had Snow tasted those full, plump lips? Humph. What did it matter after all? Jaime shook his head to clear it. What did he care? He never supposed any man could be in love with such a hideous creature (and here he couldn’t help but compare her to his beautiful, perfect, infinitely more desirable twin). Surely it wasn’t possible?

He smiled at himself. It was so utterly delicious to provoke the wench. It was so easy. Just a mocking glance, a jibe at her looks, a stare at her non-existent teats, that was all it took to get a glare or scowl, or better yet, an insult in return. She really made his blood sing. When in her presence he almost couldn’t help prodding her. It was great fun. It was an impulse tonight, but he couldn’t help leading their horses astray when he was driving her home. Even the thought of Cersei in his arms didn’t make him rush to his sweet sister’s side. In any case, he was immensely glad that they had gotten rid of that morose Jon Snow first. He laughed as he remembered her indignation when she realized he was driving in circles. A part of him wanted to drive on forever, he admitted to himself.

He freely acknowledged that he found her fascinating. And intelligent. And ah, good. Too good, in his opinion. Now that was a trifle annoying. He was sure that she was judging him all the time, calling him Kingslayer in her mind. Didn’t she call him dishonourable when he drove her back? He felt annoyed at the memory. But something strange happened in the end of the night, how she didn’t seem to hate him as much. He wondered why; he’d been beastly to her, the worst. He couldn’t stand the thought of her not hating him, somehow.

Enough.

He forced himself to turn his thoughts to Cersei, how lovely she was tonight, how sweet that she had waited for him in his rooms, how beautiful she was, how she melted in his arms, how she said she loved him. Cersei. It would always be Cersei. Being with her was bliss. Being inside her was like forgetting himself. Slowly, he willed himself to close his eyes. He pressed his nose into the pillow and inhaled his sister’s perfume intermingled with the scent of her cunt and of them fucking. It was a sweet smell to fall asleep to. He drifted, lost in the beginnings of sleep. Lost.

Chapter End Notes

I would love to hear your thoughts about this weird chapter.

Thanks for reading and the kudos!
Margaery Tyrell looked over the contents of the wardrobe skeptically, randomly touching fabrics, examining the shape of the garments critically. She had the tiniest bit of a frown on her plump, rosebud lips, and her dark-lashed eyes were narrowed into a squint.

"Is that it?" she said, turning to Brienne, who was sitting with her spine ramrod straight on her bed.

"Is what it? You asked to see my clothes, and well, here they are." Brienne considered. "Oh, I think I have a box of hats stored somewhere." She was beginning to reconsider asking the two women for clothing advice.

"Gilly, can you believe this?" Margaery turned to the round-faced girl, who was standing next to her. Gilly widened her eyes and shrugged. Margaery twirled back to Brienne, eyes alight.

"Brienne, you have nothing. Your clothes take up only half the closet! Not to mention, your clothes are all the same. Long dark skirts, white men’s shirts! A hideous plaid skirt suit! This grey, high-necked funeral dress!" Her voice rose higher and higher in pitch until she ended with an exhausted squeak.

Gilly nodded soberly, sitting herself down beside Brienne. "Your clothes are rather sad. Even in the North, they would be...mournful."

Brienne shook her head in protest. She was more than beginning to think that this was a very bad idea after all. "I’m a doctor. I need to wear something that is functional and lets me move. Plus, I like to blend into the background." Besides, Brienne thought to herself, plain clothes suit a plain person like me. She would look like a fool in the kind of flouncy, lacy things that Margaery and Gilly were currently wearing. Those clothes were made for delicate people, and she was as far from delicate as you could get.
“Lord help me. You are a lady doctor. You’re well over six feet tall. You will never not be noticed.” Margaery made a gesture as if to implore the heavens. Brienne thought she was being quite dramatic. “Brienne. I wear my white nurse’s uniform when I’m at work, I don’t wear them out in social situations! You need different clothes for outside of work. For when you go to the theatre, or out riding, or….”

“Well, I think she’s doing the right thing by asking us for advice,” Gilly reasoned. “We just need to ease her into it.” She gave Brienne an encouraging smile.

“Look,” Brienne said, “I just need to know what to wear for the Lannister Ball. Cersei was quite… insistent on me fitting in.” She recalled the woman’s barely contained malice and mockery that night. “I just don’t want to be…laughed at.”

“No one will laugh at you. And that Cersei is a terrible person. You shouldn’t listen to what she says as a general rule, but in this case she’s right. You do need something that will fit you and that you’ll feel good in. The Lannister Ball is an extremely important occasion. My seamstresses have been working on my dress for well over three moons.”

“You’re going?” Brienne was relieved. At least she’ll have one ally there. “And you, Gilly?”

Gilly shook her head. “Thank goodness, no. I wouldn’t ever want to. Besides, I’m not highborn enough to be invited.”

“Jon wasn’t invited either. In fact, Cersei said to his face that he wasn’t invited because he was a bastard.” Brienne fumed at the memory. She knew it was unladylike to punch someone, let alone a woman, but she had been sorely tempted at the time.

Brienne was struck with something. “Wait, did you just say that you’ve been working on your dress for three moons?”

“Well, my team,” Margaery clarified.

“Oh gods.” Brienne started to feel the beginnings of panic. “I’m going to be humiliated, aren’t I? Everyone’s going to laugh at me, a cow wearing pink and lace. That’s what she wants.”

Margaery laughed, while Gilly rubbed her shoulder in comfort. “Why, what do you think we’re here?” Margaery declared. “We’ll handle your gown first, then the rest of your wardrobe.”


“Brienne. Allow me to put this in terms that you will understand. If your clothes were a patient, she would be one that’s dying. Imminently.”

“Dying?”

“I’m afraid I have to agree with Margaery here; your wardrobe is taking its last gasps.” Gilly smiled sympathetically. “It’s time for major intervention.”

“Luckily we are here to help!” Margaery grinned.

Gilly let out a girlish squeal.

Brienne’s stomach coiled. She was extremely nervous about the gleam in Margaery’s eye. And Gilly’s squeal. Is this what female friends are like? Truthfully, it had taken all her nerve to approach the two nurses when they were on dinner break the evening before. Brienne had never
actually had women friends before - she realized that her closest friends were Jon and Robb from medical school. She never even knew her own mother and grew up around men or boys. No wonder she was weary. But she had worked side by side with Gilly and Margaery for almost three months now, and they never mocked her or made fun of her looks or silences. In fact, she actually found herself liking them. They were actually kind, even though Margaery could be a little self-absorbed and over enthusiastic. Even her beauty which so intimidated Brienne in the beginning had faded to just a Margaery-ness.

But right now Brienne felt like she was in the middle of a hurricane. A hurricane of Margaery, with Gilly’s solid presence holding her to earth.

“Come, come,” Margery pulled Brienne off the bed and pushed her towards the door. *How was her thin little body so strong?* “We have places to go. Luckily my driver is already waiting outside.”

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The thing about Margaery that people often forgot is that she was rich. Insanely rich, having come from the old, wealthy aristocratic Tyrells of Highgarden. What she was doing, in King’s Landing, working as a nurse, was something that only Margaery could explain. She wanted more from life, she wanted adventures! She wanted to meet new people. But there was also a tender heart inside of her that wanted to help others. Being a nurse made her feel good. She liked that she was useful and could ease a patient’s discomfort or pain. She liked how adoringly the young patients (well, especially the young, handsome ones) would gaze reverently at her as if she was some kind of angel. She secretly really liked being regarded as a heavenly presence. A small part of her protested that she was doing this for the vanity of it, but nursing was actually hard work. It was exhausting and the smells were weird and sometimes it made her retch. But it was something she liked to do. For now, at least.

Her grandmother Olenna thoroughly approved of her embarking on a career. Idleness was something grandmother could not abide. She also thought, and Margaery agreed, that her being in King’s Landing would be the perfect place to find a matrimonial match. Decades ago, she would have been placed in an arranged marriage, but both Highgarden women fervently believed that such a thing was rather old-fashioned. They were in a new century, after all. Time to shake the world and see what eligible, rich, highborn gentlemen fell out. She was yet young at twenty-two, and she had all the time in the world to gain experiences.

She looked across the carriage to Brienne, who looked a little overwhelmed and scared. She was staring intently out the window, as if planning an escape as they traveled through the busy streets. Her heart went out to the woman, although she was smart enough not to show any pity in front of her. She didn’t feel pity because of Brienne’s looks, but because she grew up motherless and in an existence utterly devoid of women. For Margaery, who was ever surrounded by female cousins and aunts and dear bosom friends since girlhood, such an existence was unthinkable. No wonder she had no proper clothes. Margaery was frankly appalled at the types of clothes Brienne wore, which consisted basically of uniforms. *Uniforms do not a wardrobe make!* And she would do her very best to remedy that problem this afternoon, by force if necessary. Though she thought that the fact that sensible, soft, wonderful Gilly was also here was an asset, as she would smooth out Margaery’s too enthusiastic corners and soften her sheer force of will.

Brienne was already a formidable woman. Margaery was actually in awe of her. A lady doctor who was smart and so kind and a little too humble. But she knew that when she was pushed, Brienne
pushed back. Hard. She had already seen instances of that in the hospital – she treated the nurses like they were human who were able to think, not like elevated housekeepers like most of the doctors there. Brienne even defended her and Gilly and the rest of the young nurses from harassment from doctors who wanted a kiss, a date, or much worse. There was even a rumour that when she saw a man inappropriately touching a young nurse, Brienne physically pushed him away, grabbed him by the collar and threatened to geld the man. Margaery smiled. She didn’t know such a woman existed before Brienne. She’d always thought that a woman’s power was her in beauty, her love, her flirtations and her promises of kisses - this was what she was taught. A woman’s power was over men, and later her children. A woman’s brain was for manipulation, to make others think they want something that you actually do. But in Brienne she saw a warrior of old. The force, the strength, the power over the world. And yes, even the beauty that even went beyond her plain and coarse features. Margaery wanted to show Brienne that she could be majestic. She thought that it would be lovely to see that force unleashed upon the world.

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Mistress Nysterica moved with swift, efficient movements, holding out a measuring tape, lifting an arm, adjusting a hip. Although she barely stole a glance at Brienne’s near naked body, she had gathered Brienne’s measurements in mere minutes, her expression neutral. Brienne was grateful for this, because she half-expected the Mistress to gape at her massive shoulders, her muscular torso, her flat chest, her large hips. But she did not treat her like a monster. Far from it. She felt like she was being objectively processed by a fantastical new-fangled machine.

Measurements done and after Brienne got dressed, she was led to the main sitting room, which was filled with plush but utterly elegant cream coloured furnishings. There, Gilly and Margaery lounged with glasses of wine in their hands. Brienne could tell that in addition to herself, Gilly was unused to such a luxurious environment. Both of them looked a little nervous. Mistress Nysterica smiled kindly, and asked what they wanted.

“Well,” Brienne began, “I need a dress for a ball at the home of a prominent family-”

“A ball gown for the Lannister Ball,” Margaery clarified. “She needs that, and also five day dresses, two or three evening dresses including one spectacular one, three suit dresses, skirts, shirtwaists, riding suits. A wardrobe that befits a highborn lady doctor.” Margaery looked an astonished Brienne. “Hmmm. Maybe also add a few trousers, yes like a man’s but fitted for the woman, suit jackets, oh and of course coats and cloaks. Small clothes? That will do to start.”

Brienne turned to look sharply at Margaery, shaking her head. “Margaery, no, this is absurd. I can’t bear the expense.”

Margaery smiled, “The cost will be placed on my tab. I spend so much on clothes every season that this isn’t even a drop in the bucket!”

Brienne shook her head resolutely. “I cannot accept-”

“Brienne, it is done. The order is in. I can’t cancel it now. Please, Brienne, you’ve helped me so much at the hospital and it would hurt me so much if you refuse this little favour from me!”

“Little favour?”
“Yes, little. If I can’t help a friend using my wealth, what use am I? Please, Brienne, it would break my heart if you said no!” Margaery’s eyes filled with tears and her chin started to tremble.

Gilly jumped in, “It would be doing Margaery a service to accept. I know it would hurt her dearly if you rejected her offer.” She took Brienne’s hand calmly. “Just indulge her?”

Brienne sighed. It was apparent she was not winning this. “Fine, I accept.”

Margaery clapped her hands in delight.

“But I have conditions.” Brienne insisted. Margaery pouted. Gilly looked interested as she sipped her wine.

“The clothes that you make for me, Mistress Nysterica, need to reflect who I am. Because look at me. I’m no beauty. I deserve plain clothes. I would not wear clothes that mock me.” Brienne declared.

The Mistress looked at her oddly and nodded. “I do not make clothes that mock the wearer, my lady. But I agree that simpler lines and less adornment may suit you best.”

“And I will need that gown first. The rest can take much longer.” Brienne didn’t care much about getting the rest anyway. She paused, remembering, “Oh, I’ve also been told I’m not to wear red and gold.”

Margaery rolled her eyes. “Good lord, Lannisters. They’d think they invented those colours.”

The Mistress, nodded, her expression thoughtful. “Yes. I’m picturing you in blue, to match your eyes.” She stared into Brienne’s eyes, as if searching for something. Brienne felt herself starting to blush. “Yes,” Mistress Nysterica said softly, “I think I know what you’ll need. Just trust in my skill, one professional to another.”

Brienne could not argue with that.

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Later that week, Brienne sat in the corner of the hospital cafeteria with Margaery during their meal break. Brienne was trying to concentrate on eating when she looked up and caught Margaery looking very, sprite-like, an alarming note of mischief in her eye. Her smile grew wider when she noticed Brienne looking at her.

“Yes?” She tried to steel herself for the horror that was to come.

“So I heard from the dressmaker.” Margery began. Oh, that. Brienne grimaced.

“She wants you to come for a fitting next week.” Brienne groaned at the news.

Margaery playfully pursed her lips, revealing cute dimples on either side of her cheek. “And I was thinking, since I also have to do a fitting, and the team is supposed to come to my place anyway, why don’t you come over to Rose House so we can do our fittings on the same day?”

“Margaery…”
“I’ll send a carriage over, say, Saturday next? It will be so quick, I promise!”

“Can I come?” A deep familiar voice asked. Jon plopped himself next to Brienne, tea in his hands, smirking. “What exactly are we doing?”

“Oh!” Margaery squealed. “This would be perfect. Jon, yes! Brienne is going to have a fitting for her Lannister ball gown. We need to have a man’s opinion. And you can have a decent dinner. Our cook is very good, we brought her over from Highgarden….”

“No, no, no. This is getting out of control. Jon doesn’t want to come. He’d be bored to death. He doesn’t want to be around women all day!”

“I would love to be around women all day,” Jon declared happily. “That means I’ll get to finally see Brienne in a gown, right? I’ve never seen her wear anything other than…that.” He gestured to what she was currently wearing, her usual black skirt and white men’s shirt.

“Jon.” Brienne scowled at him.

Jon laughed.

“I promise you won’t be bored, Jon. Honestly, it would be a real boon to have you there. Besides, my brother Loras is in town, so Jon won’t be the only man there. Besides, grandmother is absolutely insistent on meeting the both of you. I have told her all the stories about you.”

Jon tried to give Brienne an apologetic look but could not quite dampen the eagerness in his dark grey eyes.

Brienne closed her eyes and sighed. How was it that she was always ambushed when Margaery was present? How was it that Brienne always agreed to do something Margaery wanted without even explicitly agreeing to that very thing?

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for sticking to this story so far. I know it's not the typical JB story but I'm grateful you guys are reading. I'm certainly enjoying writing it (even the terrible bits).

Consider clicking the heart for kudos if you like this story. Or even better, please comment.
Stitches and a Very Good Night

Chapter Summary

Brienne encounters hostility at the hospital and shows off her cooking.

Chapter Notes

Another happy chapter before things take a turn to the darker aspects of the story. Finally we get a Jon POV! And the last section was such fun to write. Everyone gets drunk!

Note: this chapter as come medical stuff: injuries, bleeding, etc. Nothing too graphic.

I've been loving the feedback so far. Thank you and keep them coming!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“How are yours more perfect than mine?” Brienne frowned, looking at the even stitches that Jon placed on the pig’s foot. They were practicing Dr. Martell’s new method of joining tissue. He leaned over to her side and closely examined her own pig’s foot.

“I see no difference.” Jon shrugged. It was the truth, both set of stitches looked identical to his eyes. But she always seemed to see things that he didn’t. He looked again, closer. Maybe her gaps between sutures were a bit less regular? He wasn’t sure. He was actually confused at this point.

Brienne scoffed. “Liar.” Jon pretended to be affronted, clutching his chest. He couldn’t help but smile. There was something so funny when Brienne turned her signature annoyance into playfulness. To the rest of the world, she was buttoned up, all serious and scowling, but over the years, he had observed her protective walls that she had put up around herself lowering bit by bit in his presence. He too, felt his own defenses lower in return. He had a vague sense that this friendship they had, this mutual trust, was a rare and precious thing that need to be preserved.

“You wound me, woman.” Jon announced dramatically.

“It must be your small hands. Your teeny-tiny hands that can make such perfect stitches.” Brienne said dryly. Her face was still for a moment before she burst into giggles.

The sounds that came from her mouth were so ebullient, bright and unexpectedly girlish. Something inside him lifted at the unexpected sound and Jon found himself giggling along, even though he never giggled. He looked into her eyes, which were practically beaming at him. No one would ever think her ugly if they saw her like this, the thought popped in his head.

“If you must know,” he remarked, “I have fantastically elegant hands. These long fingers,” he said,
holding his right hand in front of her face, “Are practically magical. You have no idea what they can do.” He wagged his eyebrows suggestively.

Brienne laughed. “Yet, they’re still smaller than mine.” She held up her own hand and touched it to his, measuring, side by side. His was slightly smaller, true. He could feel the heat of her hands against his. He felt a twinge in his chest. “See? My hands are massive.” She paused. “Oh.” Brienne lowered her eyes, abruptly frowning.

“Hey.” Jon entwined their fingers together, and pulled her hand to his lips in a feather-light kiss. She closed her eyes briefly. Here it was, the thing that plagued her, the thing that made her the mockery of the world; the taunts scarred her deeply, Jon thought.

“I’m ridiculous,” she murmured, opening her eyes and looking at him sadly.

“Brienne. You’re unique,” he said softly, still holding on to her hand.

“I’m a freak.”

“No. There is no one like you.” He slowly let go of her hand, feeling his face grow a little too warm. Brienne reached out and rubbed his shoulder. He again felt the heat of her hands through his shirt. He had the thought, again, of how similar the two of them were. How they both had their sensitive spots: she her looks and how people reacted to it, and he his bastard status. But he knew that it was more to that too, a kind of loneliness at their core that came from being abandoned and attacked by others, and the defensiveness and self-preservation that drove them to be good, to be better than everyone.

“You’re too sweet.” She smiled tenderly at him, her expression full of affection. Jon found himself barely able to look into her eyes; there was something too potent about them just now. He felt the strange pull of those clear eyes and simultaneously felt a need to pull himself back. Like many times in the last few months, he felt himself on the edge of something; whether that something was dangerous or marvellous he did not particularly want to know.

He shook his head, slowly moving away from her and returning to his chair. “We should get back to this,” he said, gesturing to the pig feet before them. There’s also the inverted stitch that we’ll use for the vascular join that we need to do.”

“Dr. Martell sent us these specifically to practice that stitch.” He reached into a nearby basket and pulled out a bunch of large, purple grapes.

“Grapes?”

“Special Dornish grapes. Their skins are thicker than the usual and have the same quality as arteries and veins, if you can believe that.”

Brienne looked at their tools, and took out two tiny hook-shaped needles with forceps. “Here’s yours,” she said, passing him one.

Jon grinned, and felt himself settling back into his usual, settled self. “Now we can really see whose stitches are better, large hands or no.”

Brienne narrowed her eyes and smiled crookedly. “Oh, it’s a challenge, all right.”
Later, Brienne was assigned to the main medical ward, where she worked alongside other doctors and nurses, aiding the general public that came for help. She mostly enjoyed these shifts, as she often worked with Gilly and Margaery, who were efficient and incredibly kind to the patients. She was expecting the usual parade of sick children, men who got into fights, heart attacks, and household accidents, but the afternoon was an unusually busy one; unexpectedly, bodies were being carried in on stretchers from a construction accident several streets away. All was confusion and chaos; dead bodies were unknowingly being placed amongst the dead, blood was dripping over the floors, and above all that, groans and screams of the injured. They needed all hands on deck; even Dr. Martell and the other senior doctors were called down to help. Margaery and Mr. Martell immediately took charge, Margaery dividing the floor into sections and assigning staff to each one, while Dr. Martell assigned a triage system where the more injured (but not actively dying) were seen to first. They had to prioritize those they could actually save. They quickly asked the porters to take away the dead to the morgue.

Brienne spent her time desperately trying to staunch bleeding wounds and stitching up cuts and lacerations; most her patients were already unconscious from pain. The more serious cases – those with punctures to the lungs, stomach or other major organs – would need immediate surgery. Martell arranged ad hoc operating rooms to be created, and assigned senior surgeons on each case. Gilly took care of the records, making sure each patient was identified when possible. Even the hospital chemist Samwell Tarly came upstairs and helped Gilly out with the recordkeeping, dutifully following her with a pad and pen in his hands.

Jon and Brienne separately moved from patient to patient, assessing their injuries and checking on their status. Then, Brienne heard the irritated voice of a burly man in his forties who was sitting on a cot, holding a forearm with a wide and bloody cut on it. He looked very frustrated and irate, yelling for staff and grumbling when he wasn’t immediately attended to. Brienne approached him after washing her hands and after she had finished with another patient.

“Hello, Mister…”

“Trant.” He gave Brienne a hostile gaze. “Who are you? I need a doctor, not a nurse. Doctor!”

Brienne looked at him calmly. “Mr. Trant, my name is Dr. Tarth. I am a doctor.”

“But you’re a freaking woman! There aren’t women doctors!” He raged.

“Then I’m your first. Now, let me look at your arm.” She reached out to touch it.

The man visibly flinched, even though she hadn’t touched him yet, and hunched his body protectively. “Hey!” He yelled to the ceiling. “Can someone get me a real doctor? I don’t want this godsdamned woman laying her cursed hands on me!”

Brienne sighed. It was not the first time she encountered this. She looked down on him sternly.

“Mr. Trant. As you can see, we are quite busy. I will need to look at that cut.”

“I need a real doctor here. Not this woman quack!” He protested loudly. He continued to turn away from her attempts to examine his arm.

“Is there a problem?” Oberyn appeared at her side.

Brienne shook her head and gave him a knowing look. “No, Dr. Martell, it’s fine. I just need time to talk to him.”
The man saw the male doctor and exclaimed, “Ah, finally a real doctor. Please, I need help.”

Oberyn nodded. “This woman here,” gesturing to Brienne, “Is a real doctor. She’s also a surgeon and can make quick work of that nasty, deep cut of yours.”

“But-” The man objected.

“If you won’t work with a female doctor, I’m afraid there’s no one else to help you.”

“But-”

“You have choice to make in the next ten – no, five seconds. It’s either her or nothing.”

“But-“

He looked concernedly at the man’s wound. “Oh dear, I hope it won’t get infected. There is so much bacteria around. You should definitely get that seen to, if I were you.” And with those final words, Oberyn nonchalantly walked away.

The man rubbed his head, closed his eyes. Anger had gradually turned into fear. He looked again at Brienne and at her exasperated expression. He looked down at his wound.

“Okay.” He said.

“Okay?”

“Please, if you would, doctor.” He managed to say, through clenched teeth. He held out his arm.

“All right.” She inwardly sighed, but nodded all the same. She got to work.

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Brienne flitted around nervously in her apartment, looking around quickly and compulsively straightening a cushion, smoothing her bedspread, rearranging her books. She had taken an armchair and two dining chairs from the opposite apartment to make sure there were enough seats. She straightened the dining chairs now, then the plates and cutlery, refolded the cloth napkins. She checked the pots slowly simmering on the stovetop. She checked the oven. Then opened and closed the icebox. She took out three tapered candles, stuck them into pewter candlesticks that had come with the room, then placed them on the table. For the atmosphere, she thought.

It was ridiculous to be nervous. These were her good friends, ones she saw all the time. She’d eaten with each of them numerous times. But in truth she’d never cooked dinner for people at her own apartment before. Heck, she’d never really lived in her own apartment before. On Tarth, she often helped the cook prepare meals so she learned how to cook relatively well, but she’d never put on a dinner party before. No, this wasn’t a dinner party, she decided. Just a simple meal between friends. Just cooking for her very good friends.

There were three sharp taps at her door. Brienne squeaked. She ran to the mirror to check her face and hair, smoothed her skirts, and opened the door.

Tyrion had his hands full, holding two bottles. And there stood Pod.
“Whisky and gin,” said Tyrion, walking in. “I didn’t know which you preferred.” He set the bottles on the table. “Courtesy of my dear old father and his very stocked cellar. The best of the best.”

“Tyrion!”

“Don’t worry, Brienne, he’d never miss them. He is well supplied that mausoleum of his.” He plopped himself down at the settee near the window.

“Miss...lady…doctor Brienne….” Pod blushed, thrusting a large pie in her direction. “It’s cherry and strawberry. The pie, I mean. For you.” He continued to stand awkwardly in the doorway.

“Oh, thank you, Pod. It looks delicious. We’ll have it for dessert tonight.” She paused, realizing he still hadn’t moved. “Come in and have a seat.” Nodding nervously, he walked in a sat in the borrowed armchair from next door.

“I’ll finally get to spend time with your Jon Snow.” Tyrion remarked, grinning.

Brienne shook her head, smiling. “He’s not my Jon Snow. But I dare say he is one of my dearest friends.”

“Ah, friends are especially important. Especially dear friends,” said Tyrion with a sly expression on his face.

“It smells very good here, lady doctor Brienne.” Pod ventured.

“True, the smells remind me a little of the east. What are you cooking?” Tyrion sat up, curious and sniffing the air.

A firm knock on the door. Brienne walked over and opened it. There was Jon, his dark curls worn loose for once, the thick locks falling around his head a dashing way that reminded her of the old romantic poets. He was smiling shyly and was so very handsome in a freshly pressed dark blue suit. Her heart softened to see that he had made an effort. He was holding, she realized with surprise, flowers. For her? They were blue flowers with delicate, graceful petals with a golden centre.

“Here,” he said as he held out the small bouquet. “I didn’t know what to bring, since I never go to dinner parties, but I was walking here and saw these for sale, and they reminded me of you because of the blue, and your eyes, and I know you don’t like flowers, generally, not red roses, because…you know…but I think they suit you, and they smell nice, and I thought you might like to have flowers, even though…” Jon trailed off, embarrassed.

Brienne stared, then quietly accepted the flowers. She didn’t think that she’d ever heard Jon talk that much all at once, so nervously, in one go before. He was usually a man of few words. She lifted the flowers to her nose. They did smell wonderful: a little like carnations, but with a touch of vanilla and lemon. She blushed. No one had ever given her flowers before, sincerely, and not as a joke (she didn’t want to think of the odious man who threw a red rose at her feet when she was a teenager), and a part of her heart melted a little, and she was filled with warmth and a profound gratefulness.

“Thank you, Jon.” She stepped towards him and lowered her lips to lightly kiss his cheek. “They are the most beautiful things I’ve ever been given.” She smiled shyly and gestured to him to go inside. Jon’s cheeks were suddenly pink.

“Are my bottles of liquor not beautiful, Brienne? Or Pod’s cherry pie?” Tyrion raised his head.
“Hello Tyrion. Pod.” Jon reached out to shake both their hands. “Pod, I’ve heard so much about you. Wonderful to meet you at last.”

“And you, doctor sir.” Pod nodded uncertainly.

“Just Jon, if you don’t mind, Pod.” Pod smiled at that.

“Alright – who wants whisky and who wants gin?” Tyrion called out. “I ply people with drinks, remember?”

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The meal itself was a success, though Brienne was fraught with nerves they sat at the table and she began serving them. She made something that was a specialty on Tarth, a spicy chicken stew, which she served with bread and roasted potatoes.

“Tarth,” she explained to her guests, “is an island, so we often have trading vessels from the East, from Essos, Meereen, Lys and beyond, and those visitors would often trade or sell their spices and wine and other exotic goods on our shores.”

She poured each of them a tall glass of cold brown ale that had been chilling in the icebox.

“This stew was one of things that people made with the spices from those strange lands. The dish is sort of a tradition on Tarth now, with every family having a version of it.”

She had been tickled so see the men eating so heartily and with such gusto, declaring that it was one of the best things they’d tasted. She was even more pleased to see the cheeks of Tyrion, Jon, and Pod turn pinker and pinker the more they ate. They also started sweating, and reaching more and more for the ice cold comfort of the ale. The spices always kicked in later, she giggled inwardly.

Brienne could not help but compare this dinner that was filled with warmth to the frigid and tense one at the Lannisters. Here, everyone, including herself, was so relaxed. They laughed often, even, she realized, Jon, who normally reserved his smiles and jokes and laughter for close friends.

But he was laughing now, saying, “…and she would come out with us drinking in the pubs of Oldtown, and you know how women have to sit in a separate room from the men, if they’re even allowed in at all. And to get around this Brienne would dress in men’s clothes, hat, cloak and all…”


“Oh no, Jon, don’t stop. I’m riveted. Aren’t you too, Pod?” Tyrion drawled, grinning.

“Oh yes,” said Pod, his eyes wide.

Jon giggled. “Yeah and she would come with us, and we’d drink, all the while everyone thought she was a man. Well, she handled her liquor really well though, I give her that.” He smiled affectionately at her.

“Well, considering I had to carry you and Robb back to your rooms…” Brienne rolled her eyes.
“And the last time, this was the best, it was our last night in Oldtown and we were drinking and these three utter dicks start harassing Brienne and they were pushing us and Brienne got so mad that she punched one in the nose, and I swear I heard the crunch….”

“Ah, it all comes suddenly clear,” Tyrion exclaimed, recalling her battered knuckles on the day they first met.

“He deserved it,” glowered Brienne.

“Yes.” Jon said quietly. “That he did.”

Jon burst into laughter. Dear god, he is really drunk, Brienne thought. “Brienne’s my hero, you know that, Tyrion? She defended me that night. Clocked the idiot.” He downed his tumbler of whisky, then forked a piece of pie into his mouth.

“Yes, she defended my honour. That damned Connington. He was staying stuff about my mother and me being a bastard.”

“Jon.” Brienne tried to intervene.

“I never knew my mother, you know? I don’t even know who she is. Ned Stark, my father, wouldn’t even tell me. Even when I begged.” Jon suddenly seemed close to tears. Brienne squeezed his hand.

“I never knew my mother either,” said Brienne.

“I didn’t know mine too,” added Pod.

“My mother died from birthing me. My father and my sister both think I killed her.” Tyrion offered, grinning darkly.

“Not Jaime?” Brienne was suddenly curious.

Tyrion looked at her archly, then shook his head. “Jaime was always kind to me. He protected me from the hatred of my sister and the disgust of my father. He was the only one who made me feel loved.” He turned to look at her intently. “I know for some reason he has been cruel to you, and I can’t pretend to understand that, but Jaime is truly the best of us Lannisters. I know you don’t believe it. He’s just been hurt a lot. His heart.”

Brienne frowned in confusion.

There was silence.

Pod piped up, looking around at each of them. “We all never had mothers.”

“Motherless! Motherless!” Tyrion gleefully shouted to the ceiling.

Jon laughed, and Brienne stifled a giggle. Gods, they were all very drunk indeed. Tyrion poured them some gin in their glasses.

“To motherless children, and the emotionally crippled people they become!” Tyrion raised his glass, followed by the others and they toasted and drank.

They ate and drank and talked late into the night. Eventually Tyrion and Pod staggered to the other apartment across the hall to sleep, with Pod leading the small man and turning to squeak a “good night and thank you” to Brienne. Meanwhile, Jon was smiling and saying nonsense and he was
very drunk.

“Can I stay here, Brienne?” He looked at her with the pleading eyes of a very young puppy. “Tyrion won’t mind.”

Brienne stared at him, then blinked. “Ugh, fine. But you need to stay on your side of the bed.”

“I get to sleep in the bed too? With you?” Jon smiled blissfully. “Ostrich, you’re the best.”

Brienne felt a little wobbly. She giggled. It had been a good night. A fun night! When was the last time she had such a fun night? She couldn’t remember. Maybe Jon was there too that last time. Jon! She looked over at him, smiling. Now he was the best.

“I need to…get undressed….” He shrugged off his jacket and started unbuttoning his shirt.

Brienne felt heat rise in her face. She took out her nightgown and went to the bathroom to change. Somehow, the buttons on her shirt were more challenging than usual. She kept on missing them, and gods, her corset was tight. Why did she wear these things anyway? It’s not like she needed it. Maybe she should stop wearing it. No one could tell, she thought. No teats to speak of. She finally got her nightgown on – the sleeves were a bit challenging too, she observed. She splashed her face with water and cleaned her teeth. She looked herself in the mirror. Her eyes were so, so bright, her cheeks flushed, and for a moment she thought she didn’t look ugly. She looked happy. She smiled at herself. Even better. She let out a small laugh.

When she finally returned to the room, Jon had already settled himself into bed, though he wasn’t yet asleep. He stared at her. She blushed when she realized that he wasn’t wearing pajamas. His taut, smooth chest peeked out of from under the covers. She turned on the bedside light and turned off the main lights.

“Jon.”

“Hmmm?” He smiled lazily at her.

“Please tell me you’re wearing smallclothes under there.” Brienne stood staring at him, somehow not able to prevent her eyes from closely examining his lean, tanned torso.

“Wouldn’t you like to know?” Jon smiled. Then he laughed. “Of course I am, my dearest ostrich. I just couldn’t find anything else to put on.”

Relieved, Brienne slid under the covers beside him. Something nagged at her.

“Jon.”

“Yes, Brienne?”

“Why do you call me ostrich? Is it because I’m ugly?” Brienne chewed at her lip.

Jon’s eyes suddenly became serious as he looked over at her. He moved closer and turned toward her, propping himself on one elbow to look into her face. His expression was heartbreakingly kind.

Looking into her eyes, he said softly, “No, Brienne. I call you ostrich because you’re tall, and you have a lovely long neck, and the longest legs I’ve ever seen. And you dress in black and white all the damn time. And you are unique in all the world.”

His eyes were so dark they seemed black. His mouth parted. Brienne felt a blush suffuse her face.
“Oh,” murmured Brienne, “I didn’t know.”

Brienne smiled gently at him. Jon was just, so handsome; he would make some woman very happy to kiss him, she dimly thought. He was the kindest man she’d ever known. And he brought her flowers! Such blue flowers! She could smell them from here – they smelled lovely and warm and so comforting.

She patted his bare shoulders. His skin was tight and warm. “Thank you for the flowers, Jon. They’re beautiful…and they smell great.”

Jon smiled. “I’m glad you like them.”

He paused. “And I meant what I said before. You’re my hero, Brienne.” He dipped his head and planted a tender kiss on her forehead, one hand cupping her cheek. For a moment she leaned her face into his hand. It felt good.

Finally, she reached over to turn off the light. She turned toward him, and reached over to stroke his hair briefly. Jon closed his eyes at the touch.

“Good night, Jon,” she whispered.

“Good night, Brienne,” Jon whispered back.

Chapter End Notes

Remember to please kudos if you like, and drop a comment if you have thoughts. They are much appreciated, and help motivate me to write quicker.
Leather-bound books were stacked on the table and a number of heavy tomes were opened all across its wooden surface. Tyrion was hard at work, making swift, efficient marks with his pen in his notebook. Jaime smiled. He always admired his little brother for his intelligence, his quick learning, and his ability to find and process information. That, on top of his nimble wits and sharpness of tongue, made Jaime believe that if he weren’t born a dwarf, Tyrion would have been able to do great things. He would have been able, out of the three of them, to please their father best. Still, Jaime reasoned, what he was doing already was pretty impressive, even though only the family and close friends knew of Tyrion’s tremendous literary output. If his identity were known, he would have been one of the most famous and sought after men in Westeros. Not for the first time, Jaime cursed Tywin Lannister and his insistence on decorum, family legacy and reputation. If their father didn’t resent Tyrion, he would have had all that he wanted for the family: reputation, heirs, and the devotion of a Lannister son who actually took after him. But that was not to be, Jaime thought, remembering Tysha and how his father drove her away through threats and extortion (and oh, Jaime played his own part, he remembered bitterly, in soiling the character of the girl, convincing Tyrion that the girl was only a whore after his money). The young couple had loved each other desperately, though they were only fifteen at the time. Tyrion would have likely been a father by now, had they been allowed to stay together. Instead, Tyrion had become a jaded cynic about love; attracted to the most beautiful women but only seeking out those he found in whorehouses. He had put away thoughts of love, became glib and dismissive in speech, and was utterly convinced that love would never find him again. Jaime always felt certain guilt about Tyrion whenever they met; guilt and affection and regret and a ridiculous desire to make his brother happy.

His brother seemed to sense his stare, and looked up from his books. “Jaime. What a surprise.”
Tyrion smiled. “I’ve hardly ever seen you in the library, let alone in father’s abode. Are you here because our esteemed father is away at Casterly Rock?”

Jaime always avoided staying at Tywin’s whenever he came back to King’s Landing; he preferred, for obvious reasons, to stay with Cersei, even though it was understandably torturous at times with Robert and the children present. Tyrion still lived with Tywin, although Jaime knew that he also had a permanent room at one of the high-end pleasure houses in town.

“I forget. Don’t you have a bookshop, one that’s filled with books? And yet here I find you at the library, looking at even more books.” Jaime gestured at the very impressive shelves around him.

“Dear brother. I forget that you barely read.” He quirked a smile. “What you may not know is that every book is different, and are not interchangeable. Each one is filled with different words, all in entirely different order. Thus, I am here. Though it would be easier if father allowed me to take these books, but he is a bit of a stickler for stealing.” He paused. “Though I did steal a couple of bottles of his best gin and whisky the other week.”

“I read your books, Tyrion. Give me some credit. You make me sound illiterate,” Jaime groused.

Tyrion laughed. “You read my books because they’re fun, exciting and full of adventure. They are very romantic. My books are very popular with the ladies, you know.”

“Still, I read.” Was Tyrion saying he had same reading tastes as fawning, love-starved women? Jaime furrowed his brow.


“Sort of. Explorations, more like. I’m thinking about writing a story set in the North, prior to the Second Long Night. Jon was telling me about the history of the Starks, and the Wall, and the Others.”


Tyrion smirked. “Why, just last week, as a matter of fact. Your wench cooked us dinner.”


“So many questions!” Tyrion laughed, raising one eyebrow. “Well, it was an intimate affair in her rooms.” Tyrion smirked. “There was me, and the very handsome Jon, and oh, of course Pod.”

“Pod? Pod was invited?” How did that toothless boy get invited to the wench’s home? For dinner, no less!

“Jealous? Brienne actually loves the boy. He’s very sweet and adoring around her. Stutters around her like nobody’s business,” laughed Tyrion.

“It was an enchanted evening,” Tyrion continued. “The fair doctor cooked us a most unusual and delicious Tarth chicken stew. Then we had pie that Pod brought. Cherry and strawberry, it was. And of course so much drinking.” Tyrion tilted his head, as if to reconsider. “Too much drinking, actually. I woke up feeling awful the next morning at the apartment.”

“And Brienne? You said you wanted to get her drunk?” Jaime leaned forward, interested.
“Oh, yes, my aborted experiment that you rudely interrupted weeks ago. Well, it would be more
accurate to say that she got all of us drunk that night, including herself. By the way, Jon is hilarious
drunk. Who would have thought that under that dull, solemn air of his lurked such a charming,
uproarious fellow?”

Jaime narrowed his eyes. He recalled Snow’s perfectly handsome face, the dark, Byronic quality of
his features. He growled.

Tyrion continued, lost in his reveries, his eyes bright. “Brienne was lovely. The best hostess. The
best person. In fact, if she was a head or two shorter….” he trailed off, noticing his brother’s
increasingly peeved stare.

“Oh, I forgot. You’re not interested in her.” Tyrion smirked.

Jaime huffed. “Of course not. She’s the ugliest beast I’ve ever seen.”

“So you say.” Tyrion looked at him archly.

Tyrion continued, “Though I must admit that she is most…appealing when she laughs. That sound
is something. And when she smiled so sweetly when Jon gave her flowers…."

“The Northern bastard gave her flowers?” said Jaime, incredulous.

Tyrion nodded. “Uh-huh. But word of warning…Lady Brienne hates red roses…apparently. Well, I
didn’t get the whole story. But Jon knew that and brought her the prettiest blue buds that matched
her eyes.” Tyrion gave his brother a roguish glance. “Brienne practically melted. I don’t believe
she’d ever been given flowers before. It made her look almost pretty.”

Jaime pursed his lips and tried to quell…whatever was going on inside him. He was somehow
annoyed at the wench. Angry at her…for what? For being kind? For not including him? For having
fun? You’ve been beastly to her, you fool, why would she elect to spend time with you anywhere?
He decided that his feelings had to do with him being lonely and not having friends besides Tyrion
and Cersei, though to call Cersei a friend was quite an overstatement, he immediately realized.

At the thought of Cersei, his reasons to seek his little brother returned to the fore of his thoughts,
and he fell silent. He lowered his eyes; a vision of an enraged sister floated to his mind, much to
his consternation. A shadow came over his face. His insides roiled and his heart squeezed. He bit
his lip and furrowed his brow.

Tyrion looked up, noticing a change in the air. The jovial mood had all of a sudden started to
wither. He gave Jaime a sharp look. “Is there anything wrong? Why are you really here?”

Jaime started pacing back and forth, all of a sudden restless. “No, no, nothing’s wrong.” He
stopped and looked out the window to the park below. “I’m starting to think of going away again.”

“Ah. What is it with Cersei this time?” Tyrion said slowly.

Jaime gave him a cutting look. “What makes you think it has to do with Cersei?”

Tyrion shook his head. “My dear Jaime. Everything you decide to do has to do with our sister.
She’s the reason you’re happy or sad or angry or…frustrated. What has she done now?”

Jaime collapsed into the chair opposite Tyrion and rubbed his hands to his knees. “I don’t know
how much longer I can do this…. She’s vile, she says terrible things to me, she only lets me near
her when she wants it…. Maybe it’s Joffrey’s name day ball coming up – as it’s getting closer,
she’s more angry, impatient, practically vibrating with rage. We fight, and she fights even more with Robert. She really hates him. It frightens me sometimes, to see how she looks at him, like she wants to murder him.”

Tyrion looked at his brother levelly, black and green eyes steady in their gaze. “I’m well acquainted with that particular look, as I’ve often been the recipient of it. Let’s just say that Cersei hates…like you love.” He paused. “I’m sorry to say this, Jaime, but I’ve heard this all before. Many times. You feel this way, then you go away, then you come back and are happy for a time, then it becomes unbearable again, and she either sends you away or you send yourself away.”

Jaime looked down and cradled his head in his hands. “I know, Tyrion. I…can’t stop loving her, wanting her. But it’s so difficult to love her. It feels like sometimes she doesn’t even love me.” He remembered her cold eyes looking distantly at him at odd times, as if she was plotting something, or trying to find a use for him. On the other hand, he also remembered her eyes blazing with love and lust whenever she snuck into his rooms at night. She could be glorious when she wanted.

“Jaime.” Tyrion hesitated. Jaime sensed something amiss and looked up. There was an expression of concern in Tyrion’s face, a vacillation in his eyes.

“What.” Jaime said softly. “What, Tyrion?” He could feel the contents of his stomach churning. He felt ill.

“When you were away this time…I heard rumours.” Tyrion for a fact knew that they weren’t rumours, but he didn’t have the heart to tell Jaime exactly that.

Jaime’s expression was pained. “What?”

“I heard she had lovers, while Robert was gone hunting or on his business trips. The Kettleblack brothers…and more recently, Lancel.”

“Lancel? Our cousin?” Jaime sat up, alarmed and shocked. “He must not be more than sixteen years old!”

“Yes,” Tyrion quietly replied.

Jaime moaned, head back in his hands, shaking. “No, no, it can’t be true. I don’t believe it…” He looked up. “But she said to me, the first time I saw her after I came back, she was angry and she said, ‘you were gone too long’. What did that mean?”

“Jaime.” Tyrion went to his brother and patted his back. “I’m sorry to be the one to tell you. I’ve never understood why you loved Cersei, but I know that you do. That you can’t help it.” He squeezed Jaime’s forearm. “I just wish you had the strength, the desire, the courage to leave her. She’s not good for you. She’s never been good for you.”

Jaime rubbed his temples, wincing. He really felt ill. Dizzy.

“No. I can’t. All I’ve ever done is love her. It’s all that I’m able to do. We belong together, Tyrion. We love each other.” Jaime looked up at Tyrion, his eyes stunned and glazed. “I don’t know if what you said is true. Lancel is…too young. She wouldn’t. She couldn’t. She loves me. We’ll always be together, Tyrion.”

He had to get out. The walls were too close, the books crushing him. Jaime abruptly stood up from his chair, agitated.

Tyrion sighed, stepping away from his brother’s movement. Jaime thought of Cersei: her red lips
parted, her long golden hair that fell across her full breasts, her emerald eyes full of need. For him. All the promises they made to each other since they were children. We were born together. We belong together, always. We’ll die together.

“I must go back. I must go to her. She may need me.” He turned around, and with one anguished glance back, left the room.

Chapter End Notes

As always, thank you for reading.
Kudos if you like what you're reading.

I love comments, feedback, suggestions.
A House Call

Chapter Summary

Brienne is woken up by a late night caller.

[Trigger warning: see notes below]

Chapter Notes

Trigger warning in this chapter for sexual violence (we see the aftermath, not the acts). Also there's mention of sex work. Dark times ahead.

I've been enjoying your thoughtful feedback. Many of the comments have helped me think about the story and how it will play out in the future. So thank you and keep 'em coming. I'll try to respond to all of them but I might miss some as things get busy, so apologies in advance.

Also: I can't wait for you to read the next chapter. It's kind of EPIC.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Loud banging sounded at her door. Brienne was lost in sleep; at first, she thought it was one of her nightmares, that the violent thumps were the pounding waves sucking her under and pulling her down, but her consciousness quickly rose to the surface. She bolted awake.

“Brienne! Brienne! Wake up!” A voice shouted through the door. Tyrion, she thought. Tyrion’s voice. She slowly dragged herself up, yelling, “I’m coming,” so that the pounding stopped. She stumbled to the door, opening it. Tyrion stood there, worry and panic etched deep on his face. At the sight of her, he exhaled the breath he was holding and visibly relaxed, though she could still see how worn out he seemed. There were dark shadows under his eyes, his suit was rumpled and his face looked haggard.

“Brienne, thank gods you’re awake!”

“What is it? What happened?” From his countenance, Brienne feared the worst, though she did not know what exactly what that might be at that moment. Only death or injury at the black hour, she remembered the oft repeated saying.

“I need your help, you must come.” Tyrion pleaded, his eyes wide.

“What is it? Is it your family?”

Tyrion shook his head. “No, no, nothing like that. I need your services as a doctor, a doctor whom I can trust to keep things quiet. This is a very sensitive matter, and frankly there’s no one else I can
think of that I can trust.”

Brienne nodded, though she was confused. “Of course. I shall keep things discreet.” She turned back to her room. “Just allow me to dress, I’ll only be a minute.”

Tyrion frowned, considered, then asked, “Would you mind putting on your men’s garb? From Jon the other night, I know it would not be a hardship for you.”

Brienne raised her eyebrows.

“The place we are going to…well, let’s just say it would be best if a gentlewoman were not seen entering the premises. My apologies.”

She nodded, and quickly dressed in her trousers, shirt, jacket and light cloak. She haphazardly pinned her hair up and put on her men’s hat. Her boots. She remembered to grab her medical bag, first checking that it was fully stocked for all manner of supplies she may need.

When she opened the door, Tyrion looked her up and down, his expression one of surprise. He looked considerably less panicked at the sight of her.

“I’m impressed,” Tyrion said with a grin, his old humour temporarily returning.

Tyrion led her to a closed carriage, and Brienne was not surprised to see that Bronn was sitting at the driver’s box. “Mr. Bronn, hello,” Brienne said in greeting. He nodded to her. “You sure clean up nice, Dr. Tarth. I like it.” Bronn smiled roguishly. The night air was cool. They got in the carriage and the horses started moving through the near empty streets of Kings Landing.

They stopped in front of an unremarkable brick building, but all the windows were filled with light. Everyone was apparently awake, despite the lateness of the hour. She could hear very faint music coming from a window. Tyrion looked over at her and nodded. “Don’t be shocked. I must prepare you,” he warned.

“Tyrion, I’m aware we’re on Silk Street.” Brienne dryly remarked. Bronn guffawed.

In truth, she had never been in a brothel before, and what she glimpsed as they quickly moved through the building and up the stairs astonished her. She could tell right away that this place was one of the more high-end establishments. The air smelled of cinnamon and cloves and exotic night flowers; a flute and harp were playing somewhere, and the décor was opulent and sensuous. At the entrance was a carved wooden screen, painted with dreaming maidens surrounded by ripe fruit. On the floor was a mosaic of two beautiful, naked women writhing in ecstasy in each other’s arms. In the dark corners of the rooms, young, nubile women barely clad in colourful silks sat near obviously very wealthy men, whispering and giggling in their ears. Brienne could feel her whole being turn red at the sight of all this. Bronn smirked as he caught a glimpse of her face.

They navigated hallways and finally entered a room at the back of the building. All seemed quiet in this part of the house. The room was painted a soft pink, and a bed draped with a sheer silk canopy dominated the room. In the corner, two women sat on the divan. The red haired one, who was covered with towels and was visibly bleeding, was trembling and another woman, older and more conservatively dressed, was holding the woman’s hand in comfort. They both looked up in alarm as the three of them entered, then breathed a sigh of relief as they saw who it was.

“Tyrion! You’re back!” the older woman, who was ravishingly beautiful, exclaimed. She nodded to Brienne and Bronn.

“Yes, and I brought help,” Tyrion gestured to Brienne. “This is Dr. Brienne Tarth. A very
trustworthy soul. She has promised to help.” He turned to Brienne, “And may I introduce Chataya, the owner of this fine establishment. And beside her is Ros, one of the ladies that work here.”

“She?” Chataya asked in surprise. Ros, the red-haired woman, lifted up her head to look at Brienne, her gaze still nervous. There was a bruise around one of her eyes and her mouth was split open.

“Yes.” Brienne took off her cloak and hat and passed them to Bronn. She walked towards the women, smiling gently. “I came in disguise. It was Tyrion’s idea.”

Both women stared at Brienne in astonished surprise, and remained silent as Brienne kneeled in front of them.

“May I see?” Brienne asked Ros gently. She pretty woman nodded. Her face was stained with tears, and carefully observed Brienne, looking at her almost with amazement.

As Brienne removed the towels, she had to suppress a gasp. The woman’s arms and legs were covered in cuts, evidently made with a blade. They were bleeding slightly, but Brienne could see that they were mostly superficial and only a few of the cuts would need stitches. The rest would heal on their own. Brienne frowned as she tried to control her breathing and her rising pity and anger at the sight.

Ros looked at her with watery eyes. “There’s also…down there… I think I’m torn. I’m bleeding.” She lowered her head in shame, and started sobbing.

Brienne nodded, rubbing the woman’s shoulders. “It’s okay to cry. I’m going to help you, okay? Just take nice, deep breaths for me.” Ros tried to slow down her breaths. “I’m just going to get my things ready, and I’ll be right back.” She turned to the other woman. “Will you stay with her for a little bit more?” Chataya nodded.

Brienne walked towards Tyrion and Bronn and gestured them to exit the room and into the hallway.

“What happened? Who did this to her?” Brienne hissed, angry.

“It wasn’t us!” Bronn said in alarm.

Tyrion gave him a sidelong look. “It was a client, a very rich, privileged client who often likes to… hit the girls. Before, it was tolerated…” Tyrion paused as he caught Brienne’s glare. “It was tolerated by the girls…some men are into that, you know, inflicting pain…and some of the women are okay with that.” He looked embarrassed. “But this time, the client went too far, much too far. Obviously.”

Brienne stared at Tyrion. “And how did you come to be involved in this matter? And why wasn’t she taken to the hospital?”

Tyrion looked very uncomfortable and could barely meet her eyes. “I – I…frequent this establishment. Quite a lot. I actually have a room here, and everyone knows me – trusts me…and they came to me for help, you see. There is no question of the hospital due to the nature of the girl’s work, and especially the status of the man in question. This needs to be a discreet matter, as I emphasized.”

Brienne pursed her lips. “So he can do this again to another girl, or even worse?”

Tyrion shook his head. “No, no, that won’t happen again. The people around him have taken him in hand and will make sure he doesn’t do such a thing to any of these girls again.”
“Sure,” Brienne said, skeptically. She glared at Tyrion and Bronn. “You two wait here. I’m going to take care of her.”

Brienne went back inside, washed her hands, and approached Ros with her medical supplies. She tried to be as gentle as possible in washing the wounds. She carefully took care of the cuts that needed stitching, distracting Ros from the pain with funny stories about Tarth and its residents. Ros had indeed been cut in the vaginal area, and needed a few stitches. She could see that the tissue down there was torn.

Ros said shakily, “He couldn’t…couldn’t perform, so he used a bottle…” She paled, but did not cry any more.

Brienne was horrified, but did not allow herself to show it. “Thank you for telling me, Ros.” Brienne said softly. “There might be a little bleeding for the next few hours, but you’ll heal fine down there.”

And gesturing to the cuts, “And these will surely heal well and fade. They are not so deep to leave permanent scars, I don’t think.” Looking at her, Brienne could see that she had regained some of her strength. The woman’s gaze was more controlled and less frightened.

“Thank you, doctor.” Ros gave her a weak smile. “I’ve never met a woman doctor before. You’re so very kind, better than those who treat me like I was diseased.”

Brienne gave her a genuine smile and squeezed the woman’s hands. “I’m glad I could help.” She looked down at Ros, her eyes sad and soft. “I’m sorry that he did this to you. But know it’s not your fault. You’re strong, I can see that.” Ros’ chin wobbled a little at Brienne’s words, and she smiled a watery smile.

Brienne turned to Chataya and led her away from earshot of Ros. “She needs to rest and fully heal. This might take a couple of weeks at least. I trust you won’t make her work?”

Chataya shook her head. “Of course not. I treat my girls well. This has never happened before in my establishment. I’m appalled.”

Brienne considered all the things Tyrion had told her about the client, his power and status. “And how will you make sure that she is safe, from him, from any retribution? What if the client wants to make sure that she doesn’t speak about him or reveal his identity?”

The older woman widened her eyes, and nodded. “I will speak to Tyrion. Perhaps we can hide her somewhere, take her to a safe house while this…matter gets addressed.”

Brienne nodded. “Do that.”

Chataya conferred with Tyrion, both glancing at her at times, and Tyrion then whispered to Bronn, who quickly left the area.

Tyrion approached Brienne. “Brienne. Bronn, Chataya and I will be taking Ros to a safe house, where she will stay and heal. By the time she gets back, I’m positive that the matter with the client will have been addressed. I will see to it personally myself.” Brienne raised her eyebrows.

Tyrion gave her a grateful glance. “Thank you for this…just thank you. Chataya said you were kind with her. I didn’t know who to go to with this and I only thought of you. I knew that you would treat her as gently as you have done. And frankly, I think you being a woman helped to gain Ros’ trust.”
Brienne nodded. “You’re welcome. I was glad to help, though it upset me greatly to see the violence done to her. I just hate it.” She clenched her hands into fists. She knew that this wasn’t the first time it happened to a woman, and certainly not the last. But seeing it up close made her angry, very angry. And mournful for the state of the world. Looking down at Tyrion with sad eyes she said, “If something like this happens again, tell Chataya she can come to me. I would like to help.”

Tyrion nodded. Brienne started to put away her tools, and draped her cloak and hat on her arm, standing up as if to leave.

“You can’t go yet.” Tyrion said. Brienne turned toward him, one eyebrow raised. “Why not?”

“I’ve arranged someone to pick you up. It’s not safe for you to go home alone.”

Brienne frowned. “Nonsense. I’ll just take a cab.” Tyrion moved to stand between her and the direction of the door.

“I’m doubtful you can flag at cab at two o’clock in the morning. Please, just wait.” Tyrion pleaded.

Brienne let out a loud exhale. She certainly did not want his night to get worse. “Fine.” Tyrion looked relieved. “And who will I be waiting for?”

“Why, me,” said a smooth, deep, familiar voice. Brienne sharply glanced up.

It was Jaime Lannister.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you, thank you for taking the time with this story.

If you like it, please consider hitting the kudos button.
(Thanks for those that have already done so!)

Comments and feedback are so much fun for me, so please send me your thoughts about the story.
The Ride Home

Chapter Summary

Jaime takes the wench home but is surprised by the sudden turn of events.

Chapter Notes

So we get a glimpse into Jaime's filthy, dirty mind, ha ha ha. Of course, so many echos, direct allusions/homage to canon here. I'm glad I got to fit this in.

Thanks for the feedback regarding Jaime - you guys are right, he is not in a good place right now and needs to change. Hopefully it starts to happen soon. But hey, at least he's still entertaining even while an asshole, amirite?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When he first met Brienne, he remembered wondering in his collapsed and drunken stupor whether she actually was a woman and not a monster come to life. She was so tall and looming and utterly solid, much bigger than many of the men he’d ever encountered. He almost had to laugh at the memory, because seeing her in front of him now, wearing a man’s suit, trousers and tie and carrying a hat and cloak in one hand – she looked strangely and wonderfully feminine, as if the straight cut of the masculine clothes emphasized her long neck, her creamy, freckled skin, the fullness of her generous hips, and the beauty of her large, round eyes. She was lean, muscular, well-suited to men’s attire, and the way she moved her head and hands so gracefully made something in his body tremble. He felt a kind gnawing…of what? – interest, or was it a faint attraction? He wasn’t sure; what he was sure of was that seeing her standing there, in the hallway of a godsdamn whorehouse, surrounded by scantily clad women half her size dressed in silks, shook him, and for a minute he wasn’t able to think, speak, or even move.

He’d been standing in the hallway for some time, as Tyrion and Brienne were too deep in their conversation to even notice him. She wanted to go back, alone, she’d said, while Tyrion was trying to convince her to wait for a ride. To wait for him. While he stood there, taking all of her length in, he wondered idly what she’d look like dressed in the sheer, barely-there dresses that the girls wore here; that thought then led, rather dangerously, to the question whether she’d be in demand if she was actually working in this pleasure house. A part of him found that ridiculous, since she was clearly the ugliest woman ever born, but somehow he pictured her lounging on the divan, inviting men with those beguiling blue eyes of hers, her long, long, muscular legs on display, her overly large lips pink and pouted, and he didn’t think that the idea was quite so absurd. He was sure some men would have liked to fuck an Amazonian giantess like Brienne, men who had fantasies about a strong woman like her shoving them up against the wall and ripping off their clothes, her throwing them on the bed and straddling them like a magnificent monumental mountain. He swallowed and blinked slowly. Yes, he thought, he was sure some men might like that. Even dressed in menswear, as she was right now, he was sure the sight of her offering herself in that suit would undoubtedly
harden cocks. Strangely, he felt a sympathetic stirring in his own loins. He supposed there was a woman for every type of man in one of these establishments, not that he would know. Sure, he’d entered these places plenty of times, not as a patron, but to fetch his brother when he was needed. Jaime had no need of brothels, of course. He had Cersei. Beautiful, infuriating Cersei, who had always been the woman of his dreams. He’d never even desired anyone except her, and he’d seen plenty of gorgeous women in various stages of undress.

Brienne’s expression when she heard his voice was one of surprise; she looked over at him with widened eyes, and she took on a disgruntled expression. Jaime almost laughed and nearly said something cruel, about how even men’s clothes didn’t hide her homeliness, but he stopped himself. There was something in her face, a drawn, disturbed air that immediately halted his impulse to tease and poke her as he loved to do. He suddenly remembered the occasion, how he was woken up at Tywin’s by a telephone call in the middle of the night (Jaime had been staying with Tyrion at Tywin’s since his father had left for Casterly Rock). It was Tyrion, pleading for him to come, telling him that an incident happened, but this time a girl was cut badly and Brienne was there to help and could he come pick her up and drive her home. He cursed and leapt out of bed, pulled on the closest shirt and trousers he could find, barely having time to button his shirt, pulled on a coat and took one of his father’s closed carriages.

The occasion was a serious one indeed. In theory, a highborn lady should not be in a place like this, but this was the doctor wench, Jaime thought wryly. Tyrion filled him in on the events and afterwards gave him a warning look. Tyrion then ushered Brienne out the door with Jaime in tow. “Thank you, Brienne. I won’t ever forget this. You have helped. Tremendously. She will be safe, I promise you.”

Brienne nodded, mutely following Jaime to the carriage, and as she reached to open the door, Jaime impulsively asked, “Would you care to sit up front with me? It will be less lonely for me, and the fresh air will do us both good.” He looked at her soberly, trying to look nice and kind for a change.

She stared at him for a moment. “Only if I can drive.”

Her unexpected answer weirdly thrilled him. He couldn’t help but throw her a rakish smile, of which she took no notice. She tossed her hat, cloak and medical bag in the carriage, and ignored Jaime’s offered hand to help her up to the driver’s box, and instead used her long, muscled legs and arms to haul herself up with ease. Jaime, amused, followed her up to the box, sitting close beside her. He could feel their hips touching.

“You’ve driven one of these before, I take it?”

For an answer, he got a disdainful look for his troubles.

“Do you know how to get ba-?” She didn’t even let him finish the question, as she moved the reins and suddenly took them into the street. He looked at her curiously; her face was focused, determined, eyebrows furrowed. She said not a word but looked at the horses and far beyond the streets. Soon they were traveling at a good speed, all along the deserted night roads, then all of a sudden they were going faster and faster as the hooves and carriage clattered alarmingly. He saw that they had passed the old Iron Gate and were heading toward Rosby. Her face remained strangely determined. But they were going fast, much too fast.

“Brienne!” Jaime yelled out. “Brienne!”

She jerked her head towards him, seemingly surprised to see that he was there, and he saw that she came back to herself. She slowed them down, then stopped near the beaches of Blackwater Rush.
“I’m sorry,” she said, her expression grim. “I forgot myself.”

Jaime self-consciously ran his fingers through his hair to tame the tufts that were in disarray. “Sometimes it’s useful to forget oneself,” he said, smiling a crooked smile. She ignored his comment, or perhaps hadn’t heard. Her face was still.

Brienne’s hair had gotten loose in the chaotic ride, as the pins holding together her meagre bun seemed to have flown away. Her thin, shoulder-length light blond hair hung loose and stuck out around her head in all directions. He thought she looked like she was surrounded by a luminous halo.

“I must look a mess,” she smiled shyly, trying to comb her hair with fingers.

“No more than usual, wench,” he automatically replied, and winced. Brienne’s smile disappeared and she jumped out of the carriage, walking determinedly toward the water.

He wanted to kick himself. Insulting her was so automatic that words seemed to slip out without him even knowing it. He followed her, trying to catch up. But she wasn’t running away, he realized. She stopped, and slowly lowered herself down on the sand to sit. She hugged her knees to her chest protectively.

“I’m sorry,” Jaime said when he caught up with her. He sat down beside her.

“Oh, that’s all right.” She turned her head away from him. “I’m used to it.” Her words made him feel guilty.

They gazed into the water, and the gentle waves. The moon made everything blue. She unfolded her legs and stretched them out in front of her. Jaime realized that he had never appreciated a woman’s legs ever before. Hers were endless, and strong, and he could almost make out the muscles underneath her black trousers. He stopped himself from staring at the junction of her thighs. **Settle down,** he said to himself, as his own trousers began to feel a little uncomfortable. He chalked it up to the fact that he’d never really seen a woman wear trousers before, a garment which (he just noticed) displays legs so wantonly. It was quite scandalous.

“It’s peaceful here.” She stared straight ahead. “I forget how close we are to the sea in Kings Landing. Being here reminds me of being in Tarth. We share the same sea, you know.” She wore a grave expression on her face. He felt a pang when he observed her; the wench was sensitive; not just sensitive, but sensible to other people’s suffering. And she was a doctor no less; how could she afford to be this way? He thought of his own father, the great doctor, how he always seemed so cold, even (or was it especially?) to his own children; did he too, inwardly suffer when he saw the sick or dying people like he most assuredly did? Or did a part of him freeze when his wife died, leaving chunks of ice in his heart? Or was that frigidity reserved for his own kin, the ruined culmination of his seed, the utter disappointments that they all were to him?

She reminded him of a wild animal that needed to be approached gently (a stork? a giraffe, perhaps). The wench looked angry and heartbroken at the same time. He almost wanted to reach out and hold her, and let her cry on his shoulder or pound her fists into his back (he winced at the thought of the bruises that would follow). He guessed that she would flatten him on his back if he even attempted to touch her. Somehow that thought made him uncomfortably warm. Be kind, he reminded himself. He turned to her.

“Brienne,” he said gently. She turned to face him as he spoke. “Are you all right?”

“Yes, of course.” Her mouth twisted. “I wasn’t the one beaten, cut, or raped. Why wouldn’t I be
okay?” She cried out, angry. “I see people hurt, I see people who are sick, who are dying all the time. But to know that a man deliberately tortured this woman for his own pleasure?” She spat out. “That’s a whole level of sickness.”

“You were able to help her,” he offered.

“Yes. I helped her tonight.” She shook her head. “But who’s going to protect her the next time it happens? Or if it happens to another girl. Or, if he actually really hurts her, or even kills her?”

She continued, her voice getting angrier. “Tyrion said he’ll make sure it never happens again. But how would he do that? No one’s calling the Gold Cloaks, because apparently this man is too powerful to be touched!”

Jaime’s heart also twisted in anger. He felt helpless. He knew she was right. This wasn’t the beginning, and this was certainly not the end. It would most certainly get worse if nothing was done to stop all this. The Gold Cloaks were certainly useless in this matter; calling them would only be endangering the victim and putting Chataya out of business.

“You’re right.” Jaime said calmly, “But Tyrion and I will make sure he doesn’t get the opportunity to do this again. I know that it’s no guarantee and it’s certainly cold comfort, but I promise we will do our best.”

Brienne glanced at him sharply and narrowed her eyes. “You know who he is.” Jaime nodded. “In fact, you’re close to him.” Jaime avoided her stare.

A fire sparked in her eye. “How could you protect him?” He could almost feel her hot rage touch his skin. “You really are a man of dishonour, aren’t you?” She murmured. “Kingslayer.”

Jaime stared at her, and laughed bitterly. “Kingslayer. Man without honour. That’s what you heard, wasn’t it? That I killed Aerys Targaryen in cold blood so Robert Baratheon can take over the fabric industry? So the marriage of Cersei and Robert would be secured?” He scowled. “If that were true, I’ve no doubt I am low in your eyes indeed.”

She was silent for a while. Then Brienne turned her body to face him, eyes big on her sad, pathetic face. “Then tell me. Tell me what happened.”

Perhaps it was the night and the sound of the waves, perhaps it was something about her eyes that were honest and clear or how they reminded him of the moon; perhaps it was her voice, so straightforward and lucid and accepting, but he felt a strong urge to tell her the thing he’d hidden for twenty years, the thing that not even Cersei or Tyrion knew, the thing that made everyone fear and disdain him. He looked long at her open face, and improbably, he knew in his bones that he trusted her. He nodded, then opened his mouth to speak.

“I was seventeen and had run away against my father’s wishes to join the regiment. We were in Essos and I was assigned to protect one of the rich industrialists who had factories all over Westeros and Essos, Aerys Targaryen, who apparently had threats against him. But in his mind, whatever threats that existed were multiplied. He saw shadows lunging to kill him, he saw assassins in the flames. And he was cruel – he beat and raped his wife regularly, but we, the soldiers protecting him, weren’t allowed to do anything about that. He was too rich. Too powerful. We had our orders.” He shook his head bitterly.

Brienne was wide-eyed, her mouth open. She nodded in encouragement for him to continue.

“I don’t know if you ever been in a cotton mill – there are cotton particles everywhere, they get
into your lungs, on your clothes. But because of this, the factory was extremely flammable. Just one spark could start an inferno. And Aerys one day had the idea that he was being attacked, and had his fool accomplices chain the factory doors closed, and locked his son's wife and her two young children inside, along with all the workers, which included children as young as six years old. Their little fingers were useful to unjam the machines, you see. For some reason, I was left alone to guard, other soldiers sent away on some errand to catch the imaginary assassins. He was raving that day, seeing enemies everywhere, in every corner. He sat locked in his office with his daughter-in-law and children and kept repeating ‘Burn them all!’ ‘Burn them all!’ And just as he was about to set wildfire loose in the factory, I stabbed him and slit his throat.”

He paused and felt his hands tremble. “Soon, the other soldiers returned and unchained the doors and the workers escaped. The wife and children ran away, returning to their family in Dorne, not even wanting a part of the cotton industry that Aerys left behind. Robert Baratheon, seeing blood in the water, so to speak, took over the industry. My sister’s marriage, well, that was just an outcome of Robert becoming rich and Tywin wanting Cersei to marry money.”

He dared himself to look up at her. She looked back at him with a crystal clear gaze. She was shocked but sad...it seemed like she felt sorry for him, for the seventeen-year-old Jaime who was trapped and who had no choice but to kill a man to save innocents.

“I believe you.” Brienne said quietly. Her calm eyes almost felt like they were holding him up. “You did the right thing. I’m sorry that you got blamed. You didn’t deserve it.”

Shadows shifted. He felt a huge weight lift off him. Like he had gone to the Maiden to confess and she had kissed his sins away. Jaime hung his head. He was exhausted, lightheaded. He felt entirely naked before her, his thoughts and emotions laid bare. He abruptly stood up. He felt like he was floating. He felt his body start to sway, topple, then start to fall.

Firm hands grabbed him and strong arms surrounded his back and chest, and he felt himself being gradually lowered onto the sand. His body was half on her lap, and somehow, Brienne was cradling him in her arms. One hand reached out to stroke his hair, over and over. Jaime felt, at last, at peace. He closed his eyes. He felt so tired.

He was back to himself in a few minutes. He opened his eyes and looked up at Brienne’s face, her blonde hair floating around her head. For a second he thought he must have died and had woken up in heaven. But that’s wrong; he would never have ended up in heaven. Though she certainly belonged there. She looked down on him, her expression one of pure compassion, her eyes made even bluer by the light of the moon. *In this light, she could be a beauty,* he suddenly thought.

They got up silently, disentangling themselves and walking silently back to the carriage, with her still supporting his arm. She insisted that he sit in the carriage, believing he was still unwell, despite his protests. She further insisted she drive him home and was a little surprised to discover he was staying at Tywin’s empty home and not at Cersei’s. She drove and set the carriage at a slow pace, jostling the carriage not even a little.

They arrived at Tywin’s and she held on to his forearm as they walked to the door. She helped him in. He felt shaken and exhausted. He felt like a newborn baby, vulnerable and fully emerged into a new world. He could not believe he’d told his secret; nor could he believe that she believed *him.* He found himself trembling; his legs felt like they were made from string. She looked at him with concern. She quietly half carried him to his bed and lay him down. He felt feverish with relief. A warmth suffused his whole body. She fetched a glass of water and held him up to drink. She gingerly took off his shoes, his jacket. She covered him with a blanket, sat on the bed beside him. He was tired, so tired. He could barely keep his eyes open.
“Sleep,” she said, gently stroking his hair. He closed his eyes.

“Will you stay?” he asked quietly, “there are spare bedrooms….” In truth, he wanted her beside him, he wanted her arms around him while he drifted off to sleep. And he wanted to open his eyes just once more to look at her, but his lids were so heavy.

“No.” He felt the weight of the bed shift as she stood up. “I must go. It’s already morning. I can catch a cab home.”

“Brienne,” Jaime softly called out as she started to move away. “Thank you. For everything.”

“Rest, Jaime.”

Her steps faded and he heard the door close. Jaime felt like he was floating in the middle of the ocean, all his troubles washed away. His heart was oddly light, his mind unfettered, his body weary and worn out. He drifted. He slept.

Chapter End Notes

Kudos if you like.

Comments, feedback, random rambling thoughts are welcome!

Thanks so much for sticking with the story so far.
A Family Meeting

Chapter Summary

The Lannisters and Baratheons have a family meeting. Things get serious.
[Warning here for Jaime/Cersei content.]

Chapter Notes

Oh, more fun over at the Lannisters? Yes please. Also yes, there is some J/C intimate content, but not as explicit as the other chapter. (But you have been warned.)

Whew, I'm glad my take on the canon bathtub confession scene worked for people in the last chapter. I was desperately trying to figure out how I would get them naked in a tub together for this world, but couldn't. (Yet? Who knows). But at least the beach had water.

Next chapter, we'll take a break from the Lannisters.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I agree. Something must be done about the boy.” Robert leaned forward in his armchair, cigar in hand, frowning and jiggling his left leg.

“Where is he now?” Tyrion asked casually.

“Sandor Clegane is guarding the boy, standing outside his room. He’s been with the boy since that night.”

“The Hound? Good.” Sandor was a brute to be sure, but he had no love of men who hurt women. Or violent bullies, Tyrion thought, remembering the horrifying facial burns that the older brother, Gregor, gave to Sandor as a boy. With our luck and Cersei’s continued care, Tyrion sardonically reflected, Joffrey will become the most violent and erratic version of Gregor, except with infinite power and money. He shivered at the thought.

“He’s barely a boy any longer, soon to turn eighteen.” Tyrion observed, “Though I suppose his spirit will always be of a violent, immature, impulsive twat.”

Cersei, who had been pacing the room, turned to glare at Tyrion. “How dare you say that about my son, you pathetic little monster!”

“Now, now Cersei, Tyrion tells the truth of the boy, though your…mother’s love may deny it. There’s always been something not right about Joffrey, that I can easily admit. This has been some time in the making.” Robert called to her.

Tyrion summoned his patience. “He’s gotten out of control. First hurting animals, then killing
them; hurting his little cousins, even his siblings, now cutting up women.”

“You tell lies,” Cersei spat.

“No, dear sister,” Jaime spoke up, “He most definitely hurt the poor girl. Most violently. And he’s hurt the other girls there before, just…not as severely.” He gazed at his sister with a dispassionate expression.

Cersei narrowed her eyes. It was evident she hadn’t expected her twin to side against her. She stopped pacing and strode toward them. How appropriate that she looked her best when angry, Tyrion idly noted, noticing his sister’s flushed cheeks and the odd light in her green eyes.

She smiled cruel smile. “So what that he’s hurt those women? They’re just whores. No one cares about them. Anyway, no one died.”

Robert scowled at his wife. “Just whores? Are you an idiot, woman? If this gets out, it could ruin us!”

“Of course, you would care about whores – you bring them here and fuck them in your rooms nearly every night! Only you would care more for your precious whores than our son. Our heir!” Cersei yelled, spitting in rage. She lunged at him.

Jaime caught her by the arm and restrained her in time, pulling her by the waist to him. Robert reddened, then laughed. “Oh that lioness! I’m sure that’s where Joffrey got his… tendencies from!”

“Robert, enough.” Jaime said sternly, releasing Cersei when he saw that she had settled down. “Cersei, sit.” Cersei sat, her eyes glittering with malice as she stared at her red-faced husband.

“Now that my loving wife’s tantrum is out of the way, we can get to work. Who’s the girl this time?”

“Ros.”

“Ah, Ros! Fun girl, red hair, brilliant teats.” Robert enthused, as Cersei fumed. “She can be trusted. Give her money to keep this quiet, as much as she requires.”

Tyrion nodded in agreement. “Joff cannot go near her or Chataya’s ever again. That’s vital.”

“Yes.” Jaime added, “The women there must be kept safe.”

“Since when do you care about whores, sweet brother? Have you found one you finally like?” Cersei seethed.

Jaime sneered. “Sweet sister, you know there’s only one whore I’m devoted to.” Cersei started, glanced quickly at Robert, then back to Jaime. She was more furious than ever. Tyrion was surprised at Jaime’s… audacity. Had things changed between them? He had wondered why Jaime had been staying at Tywin’s with him instead of at the Red Keep with their sister.

“Now, now, as much as I enjoy this bickering, we must decide what to do with our precious Joffrey.” Tyrion said, trying to get them back on topic.

“I’ll talk to him,” Cersei offered. “He’ll listen to me.”

Robert scoffed. “Woman, he hasn’t listened to you since he was an infant! You’ve indulged him at
“Like you’ve ignored him? Remind me again how he inherited your love of whores?” yelled Cersei.

“Hopeless.” Robert shook his head, ignoring his wife. “The only thing to do is send him away.”

“What?!?” Cersei cried.

Tyrion nodded. “I quite agree.”

“No one asked you, hideous dwarf.” Cersei hissed. “We need to send for father. He won’t agree with this.”

“On the contrary, sweet sister,” Tyrion said, “Tywin is quite aware of Joffrey’s proclivities, and we have thoroughly discussed his future, he and I. On this point, we are surprisingly united. Our father is aware that if news that the Baratheon heir is an unrepentant, homicidal, abusive brat, the Lannister name – and fortune – would be irreparably tarnished.”

“You’re a monster,” snarled Cersei in a low voice.

Tyrion laughed. His dear sister fumed prettily.

Robert nodded. “He’ll enlist. Maybe the army or Navy will instil some discipline in him. I’ll tell them not to give him special treatment, he should be with the new recruits, start from the bottom, work his way up. He’ll have to work hard.”

“It worked for Jaime.” Tyrion offered, looking at his brother.

“Well, considering I was already quite perfect when I enlisted, there wasn’t much room for improvement in my case.” Jaime smiled arrogantly.

Cersei glared at him. “You’re joking? They want to send my son away to die in some foreign country and you’re making japes? And what of the ball? It’s in a fortnight!”

“He will go after the ball. A farewell party.” Tyrion mused. Cersei opened her mouth to protest.

“Cersei, be reasonable. You know this is the only option.” Jaime stated calmly. Cersei fumed, looking daggers at her twin brother. Now that is a change, Tyrion thought.

Robert laughed. “Then it’s settled. He’s to enlist. Make sure he ends up far away. The boy has got to toughen up. Now who’s going to refill my drink? Tyrion, drink with me.”

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“Jaime,” Cersei whispered, pulling him into a guest bedroom. Jaime had been on his way out of the Red Keep, Tyrion having decided to stay with Robert to drink.

“Cersei, what are you doing?” Jaime pulled away from her. “It’s too risky…Tyrion and Robert….”

“Are drinking themselves into a stupor at this very minute.” Cersei smiled. “Besides, I added a little sleep aid in Robert’s wine. He’ll be spending the night in that beloved armchair of his.” Jaime stared at her.
“Brother, you must help me.” Cersei pouted, pressing her luscious body against his. He dimly remembered Tyrion’s words: the Kettlebacks, Lancel…he wanted to ask her if the rumours were true, if she had betrayed him, if she was betraying him now. Surely it wasn’t true, he thought. But his thoughts soon stopped; he was too conscious of his sister’s soft, ripe form. Despite himself, he felt his cock immediately respond. He was a weak man.

“Oh Cersei,” Jaime breathed into her neck, surrendering, smelling her and kissing her exposed shoulders, his arms winding around her.

She pulled away slightly, looking into his face and licking her lips. “My brother, my twin. I need you. You must help me.”

“What is it, Cersei,” Jaime moaned, reaching for her breasts and kissing her shapely red lips.

She pulled away again. “You mustn’t let them send Joffrey away. He’s our son. He needs his mother. We have to protect him. You have to save him.” She kissed him deeply then, opening his mouth with her tongue and running her hands down his body. He groaned.

“We are protecting him by sending him away,” he murmured, squeezing her breasts and rubbing her nipples. She sighed.

“I need… I need…” She moaned into his neck. “That whore…Ros…you have to talk to her. Tell her it was some other man, that it never happened.” He felt Cersei’s hands reach around his ass and squeeze. He couldn’t think, his senses were overwhelming him. Cersei’s touches and kisses were entirely overwhelming him.

“Just…talk to her.” Cersei whispered, kissing his neck, licking it. “Threaten her, if you can.” He felt her small hand grab his swollen cock. Hard. Jaime groaned. Her hand felt incredible. He pressed his own hand firmly to her cunt. She moaned into his mouth, her kisses becoming wilder. “And if she ends up at the bottom of Blackwater Bay, all the better for it.”

He stopped suddenly, realizing the meaning of what she was saying, appalled at her words. He felt himself grow cold. Had she thought him capable? In the back of his mind he remembered he made a promise to keep the woman safe. He lowered his hands and stepped away from her.

“Come, Jaime, my love.” Her eyes were dark with lust, her lips swollen and moist. “You’re a soldier, you’ve killed so many. Surely getting rid of one worthless little whore should be easy for you. I bet she wouldn’t even scream.” She ran her tongue slowly across her lips. Normally this would make him rush to her and want to devour her, but this time the gesture left him cold.

She started unhooking her dress, revealing ripe globes half-supported by a tightly laced corset. She stepped close to him. “I need you, brother. I love you. Fuck me right now. I’m so wet for you.”

He stood still, staring at her, as she continued to lavish him with kisses all along his neck and body. When she reached out to unbutton his pants, his hand stopped her.

“No, Cersei. I won’t do this for you.” Stubbornly, she reached again to rub the front of his pants, but his enthusiasm had since diminished considerably.

“I can’t. I won’t.” He grabbed her wrist and pushed her hand away. She glowered at him, mouth pressed into a thin, white line.

“You sound like a child.” She sneered at him.

“And you sound like a lunatic.” He stepped away from her and toward the door.
Cersei smiled mockingly. “You’re weak, you know that? Now get out. I don’t want to see your pathetic face here again.”

“With pleasure, sweet sister. I happen to have business at Riverrun that I need to attend to.” He smiled crookedly at her, bowed mockingly, and turned to leave.

“Get out!” She screamed, picking up a crystal vase and throwing it at his head. He heard the glass smash against the door as he slipped out.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading. And I'm loving your comments, so keep 'em coming.

Kudos if you like (thanks for those who have already done this!)
The redness of it was astounding; the stark white of the tiles, walls and clothes provided a horrific contrast to the blood that floridly splashed against them from the events of the afternoon. Blood was everywhere: on the floors, all over the operating table, and it covered the three surgeons and two nurses that had attended the procedure. The patient, her face covered in cloth, lay on the operating table. Her abdomen was cut open, insides bloody, her organs swimming in the dark red liquid. There were no heartbeats, no breaths; the patient had bled and bled until her body could no longer sustain itself. It was a difficult case; the older woman had come in the hospital with a protruded abdomen. Examination found that she had a large protuberance that seemed to be slowly growing. The patient complained of severe back pain in the prior days, but when she arrived at the hospital there were signs that it was already too late. Indications were that her abdominal aorta had already ruptured. When she was quickly rolled into emergency surgery, her body was already showing signs of failure; her heart rate was rapid and her skin had started turning blue. She had bruising all along her back, which indicated severe internal bleeding.

When Oberyn Martell cut her open, blood flowed out like a fountain; they could not crank the manual suction hard enough as they filled jar after jar of the woman’s blood. When they located the aorta in question, they found a blood vessel that had completely blown open; the chance of repair was minimal. Still, he and the other surgeons clamped the aorta, and tried to sew the tears. But the tissue was so fragile that not even the smallest suture could hold; instead, the tissue tore even more. Soon, her pulse became faint; the loss of blood was too great, and the woman perished. All in mere minutes. He called time of death. Oberyn looked at Brienne and Jon, who were both
utterly pale, their entire bodies covered with blood, just as his was. He could tell they were shocked, that they had not seen such a case before, of such rapid blood loss and death. He could tell from their desperate movements during the surgery that they were fighting with themselves to control something, do something; but the immense flood was too great. They had not even had the time to do anything, aside from locate the aneurysm and watch as the life flowed out of the her.

“There was nothing we could have done.” Oberyn said, his eyes observing his two residents, as the nurses exited the theatre, leaving them alone.

“I’ve never- I’ve never-” Jon tried to say.

“No,” Brienne added, “Neither have I. It was all so quick.” She hung her head low.

“We didn’t have a chance. She had already started rupturing and bleeding out even before we opened her.” Oberyn reassured. He knew that when a patient died on the table, it was a good surgeon’s first instinct to blame himself. “We couldn’t have saved her.”

He continued, “Go, get cleaned up. Have a shower. Then we’ll inform the family. I’ll sew her up and clean her a little before moving her to the morgue.” Both their faces were pale, probably from shock. He remembered feeling the same way the first time he encountered an aortic aneurysm many years before.

“No,” replied Brienne, her mouth set with determination. “I’ll close her and clean her up. I’d like to.”

“Me too,” said Jon, “I’ll help.”

Oberyn nodded, understanding their need to come to terms with the events. “I’ll meet you in my office when you’re done,” he said as he walked out of the operating theatre. In the last few months, he had been impressed with his two surgical residents; the first impression he’d had of them were not wrong. They were hardworking, determined, stubborn, and had that rare passion that makes a good surgeon. Brienne was more impressive to him, however, for how she was dealing with the ignorance and uncooperativeness of both their fellow doctors and some patients. The two also had a strong working relationship; they worked well together, and moved with and around each other seamlessly in the operating room. He also witnessed their strong personal relationship; they certainly were very good friends, but he often found himself wondering if there was more between these two. Their obvious affection for each other could indicate either possibility, whether in the present or future. It was a shame that they both lived and grew up in restricted Westerosi society, where there were so many rules of propriety between men and women; were they in Dorne, they would undoubtedly be happily fucking each other, and perhaps him too, he added with further consideration.

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They had mopped up the mess as best as they could with towels, astonished at how much blood a human body can contain. They removed the bloodied sheets draping the body and replaced them with new ones. Brienne knew that when she closed her eyes, she would see the vivid red in her mind for a long time. They had been only in the operating theatre for a short time, and the surgery and her death lasted only a few minutes. It was a miracle that she hadn’t just stood there gaping. They’d all known that the chances of them fixing this was minimal; she knew that the majority of ruptures resulted in death, but the savageness with which the aneurysm took over was astonishing.
Jon started sewing up the patient’s abdomen with his neat, beautiful sutures, his long, deft fingers practiced and steady. She stood across from him, starting her own stitches from the opposite side of the incision.

“Who do you think she is? Mrs. Forester.” Jon looked at the woman’s thin face. She seemed peaceful, despite the pain she must have felt in the last few hours of her life.

“I don’t know.” Brienne looked across to Jon. “We never really know who they are when they’re in here. We just know her name, her age, diagnosis, the problem that needed to be fixed.”

“She has a good face. A kind face. I wonder if she was a kind person in life.” Jon mused.

Brienne smiled sadly. “I’m sure someone will miss her. I hope someone loved her.”

Jon nodded, lips tipped in a gentle smile.

“I wonder sometimes,” mused Jon, looking into her eyes, “If we are better surgeons not knowing all about their lives when they’re in here. If we knew that she loved to eat peach pie on Saturday mornings for example, would that make us care more for her and do a better job?”

“Sometimes I think it’s better to not know them in the operating room.” Brienne’s eyebrows furrowed. “In the operating room, a body is a body. There’s a problem and we try to fix it. What we do is *absurd*, cutting into people. It makes it easier not to think of them as real, living individuals.”

Jon nodded. “That’s true. But sometimes that seems….”

“Dehumanizing?”

“Yes. Shouldn’t we know the person, the *whole person* when we slice into them, so we’d know the risk we were taking?” Jon bit his lip and scrunched his face in thought.

“In theory, yes,” Brienne said thoughtfully. “But that would make our jobs incredibly hard. Like, I don’t think I could operate on someone I know. I would be paralyzed.”

They had finished. The woman looked pale, too pale, really, but she was together and whole again, a row of neat stitches the only evidence of her final ordeal. Both Jon and Brienne separately sent out silent prayers to the Mother in their minds. Later, they would move her to the morgue, and spend plenty of time in the hospital showers washing away the woman’s blood. Later, they would meet with Oberyn and inform the woman’s family. It was then that they would get to know a little of the woman who had so quickly perished on their operating table.

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“To the Stranger,” said Oberyn, and Brienne and Jon joined in, as they toasted over a brilliant white Dornish wine that Oberyn had specifically requested from the restaurant manager. “He sure won this round.”

It had been a trying, disastrous day, but then a death in the operating room would do that every time. The Stranger had indeed won the day, despite their best efforts to fend him off. Oberyn had decided to take his two acolytes out to a magnificent dinner, for in his opinion, there is nothing better than feasting and indulging to remind one of the gift that is life.
“To Mrs. Forester,” announced Brienne. They drank to her memory. Mrs. Forester, the woman who
died so suddenly in surgery that day, was a good woman. She had a banker husband and a grown
daughter and worked as a seamstress in her spare time. She would never now meet the grandchild
still growing in her daughter’s womb. At the moment the doctors informed them of their wife and
mother, their lives had fallen apart, but yet he knew that they would continue on. The grandchild
will be born, knowing his grandmother only through only stories. The husband might or might not
remarry. His two residents, Oberyn further discovered, were good with people, a gift he himself
was blessed with, but many other surgeons did not. People in medicine often joked that surgeons
were doctors who had no idea how to look at human beings in the eye; there was some truth to that
with some of his colleagues, he mused. However, both Jon and Brienne were sympathetic and
sincere and seemed truly sorry. They were a genuine comfort to the family.

Out came course upon course: oysters with lemon and chilies; artichokes slow-cooked in butter;
roast capon with rosemary and summer peas; Dornish spiced lamb; cheese from the Vale; and
peach tart. He would feed them till they were merry, he thought. Death was a time for celebration,
he believed. One passes but the ones remain must endure and live on, and hold on fiercely to the
jewel that is life.

“In Dorne, when someone dies, we celebrate his life, not mourn his loss,” he said to them. They
smiled at him in return.

“That’s a good idea,” Brienne murmured, remembering the silence and darkness that followed
Galladon’s death. There were so many tears at his funeral and many years after.

Oberyn was happy to see their cheeks flush pink with food and wine, and the fire in the hearth. He
too, was quite content; it was rare that he went out with colleagues like this; most of the other
doctors in the hospital seemed to have sticks up their arses at all times. Nurses of course, were off
limits, a personal rule he made for himself. There were too many young, pretty nurses who wanted
to ensnare him into matrimony or at least to their beds. But he learned early that he was not one for
marriage; romantic partnerships yes, but never dull, Westerosi marriage. He was of the belief that
promises should not and cannot be made for life. As for going to bed with the willing nurses,
Oberyn found that he liked more of a challenge; he wanted to be fascinated by the person; he
wanted to observe them, respect them and chase them and have them be fascinated by him.
Besides, he already had Ellaria, though she was in Dorne. He was still most intrigued by her, his
paramour of many years.

He paused in thought, suddenly remembering something.

“Brienne,” Oberyn said, leaning forward. “I hear you’ve been invited to the Lannister Ball,
celebrating that terror of a boy Joffrey.”

She laughed. “Is he really that bad?” Jon sat up, interested.

“Very fair to look upon, but I suspect if we cut him open, we’d find a rotten and blackened heart,
among other parts.” Oberyn raised his eyebrows at them.

“That’s very dramatic,” Jon said dryly. Brienne giggled. Oberyn smiled, thinking: ah, she giggles!

“Dramatic, but very true, if you ever happen to meet him,” replied Oberyn.

“And you, Jon, have not been invited.” Oberyn noted bluntly. Jon nodded, his face suddenly
serious. “Due, I suspect, to the circumstances of your birth.” He split a fig with his fingers and
popped a half into his mouth.
“The Lannisters have always been snobs about family and birthright and social status. It’s extremely tedious,” explained Oberon, “And I’m sorry for your exclusion.” Jon nodded, his mouth quietly quirked into a small smile.

“I don’t think I’d want to go.” Jon said, smiling lightly.

“Of course not.” Oberyn agreed. “It’s going to be awful. I don’t want to go, and I assume that Brienne, you don’t want to go either?” Brienne nodded in agreement, amused.

“The Lannisters are perfectly entertaining for their wit, but their parties are…let’s just say, tense affairs. Each person in the family is fine company on their own, yes, even Cersei, but together they are just…let’s just say it’s like watching mortal enemies fight for survival over a turkey leg.” Oberyn let out a belly laugh, revealing shiny, white teeth. His black eyes sparkled with merriment.

“The dinner we had with them…” Jon started.

“….was painful.” Brienne completed. She considered. “It was like they were having an entirely different, extremely hostile conversation beneath the polite conversation we were having with them. It was…uncomfortable.”

Oberyn smiled, “I know exactly of what you speak.” She was perceptive, this one. “But I’m not surprised that Tywin wanted to keep tabs on you. He’s always been…protective of his protégés.”

They both looked at him, curious.

“Let’s just say Tywin and I have been more rivals than friends, which is often the case with surgical colleagues.” He looked between the two of them, who were sat side by side. “To find true friendship in surgery is, let’s just say…rare.” Jon and Brienne exchanged a glance, both smiling shyly. Oberyn wondered again, if there was anything between the two.

Oberyn tilted his head, a sly smile on his lips. He turned to Brienne. “In an effort for togetherness and to find solace in what promises to be the dullest, most vexing evening ever, I propose that you join me as my escort for the ball. What say you, Brienne?”

Brienne started in surprise, and a delightful red blush immediately suffused her face. How diverting, he thought. She lowered her eyes, started to stammer. Jon turned to her with an acute glance, watching her carefully.

“My paramour and the mother of four of my daughters, Ellaria, is unfortunately in Dorne. So I thought that we could keep each other company, and support each other in case of a Lannister onslaught, which I’m sure will happen, considering dear Joffrey’s presence.” He turned a mild gaze at her, willing himself to subtract any heat from his look. “I assure you my offer is completely innocent. It is not my intention to seduce you, my dear doctor.” Unless you want me to, Oberyn silently added.

Brienne visibly relaxed. “Of course, I would never have thought you’d want… I mean, yes, it would be wonderful to have a friendly face nearby. I gladly accept.” It was evident from her unfinished sentence that Brienne did not believe that he, or he suspected, any man, would want her in their bed. Curious, he thought.

Brienne smiled with genuine warmth, the heat of which Oberyn very much enjoyed. “I must confess that Cersei was rather…awful to me – to us, really – at that dinner. And Jaime…is confusing and likes to provoke me.”

Oberyn raised his eyebrows. “Cersei has always been the nastiest of the siblings. Her sharp tongue
can do much more violence than a blade. Jaime, however, he is a strange one, true.” He remembered his sister Elia and how the seventeen-year-old lion had saved her, and took dishonour on his name. “Still, there is more to him than meets the eye. He is infinitely better than his twin, despite his reputation.”

Brienne nodded, thoughtful. “Yes. I’m beginning to figure that out.” Jon gazed at her curiously. “In that case, I shall look forward to our time together. I will endeavour to be your entertainment that night.” Oberyn reached for her hand and pressed it to his warm lips.

Brienne blushed rather sweetly, and nodded. “Thank you Dr.-” She stopped as she saw his raised eyebrow. “I mean, thank you, Oberyn,” she repeated, blushing even pinker.

Brienne and Jon declined Oberyn’s offer to give them a ride back in his carriage, telling him they’d preferred to walk back as it was such a lovely evening. Oberyn grinned. He leaned first into Brienne as if seeking an embrace, but quickly and almost imperceptibly gave Brienne three alternating feather-light kisses on her cheeks. She barely felt his lips save for his warm breath on her face. It was unexpected and quickly over; she honestly did not even have time to react or be offended. Then he leaned and did the same to Jon, three light kisses on the left, right, then left cheeks; Jon was surprised and paralyzed and just stood still until it was already over.

“That’s how the Dornish greet and say goodbye to their friends,” explained Oberyn, with a grin and a wink. “I hope we will be friends.” Jon and Brienne nodded dumbly and waved at the carriage as it drove away. Then they looked at each other and burst out laughing.

Jon offered her his arm and she took it. They strolled through the early evening streets of King’s Landing. Stores were just closing, but pubs, restaurants and other nighttime venues were just starting turn on their lights. It was a lovely summer evening, and they could smell the sea beyond the stench of the city. Brienne was happy; she’d never thought the day would end so pleasantly after the disaster on the operating table. During times like these, she thought, it was good to be reminded that life could be worthwhile, and fun, and that it was okay to laugh and enjoy things. She looked over at Jon, who was looking back at her with a pleased expression. He squeezed her arm and smiled a soft little smile. She couldn’t help but smile back. She had told him earlier of that strange night when Tyrion banged on her door, and about Ros, and the strange ride with Jaime, though she did not reveal their conversation, or the fact that she tucked him into bed, which she felt would betray Jaime Lannister’s confidence. When Brienne expressed an eagerness to go back to the brothel to check on the other girls, Jon offered to come along and help.

She thought that even a few months ago, she would not have dared to walk alone with a man at her side in public. Not that she cared about impropriety, but had this been six months ago, she would have worried how she would look alongside someone so handsome and well-formed as Jon. She would have been sure that people would openly laugh at her and mock her for the difference in their looks. Side by side with Jon, she would have been hideous: a head taller than him, ugly and brutish. How dare she imagine herself worthy to be next to such a man! But now her heart felt light and full at the same time. She felt oddly free – perhaps because she was in King’s Landing, where every sort of person was doing every sort of thing, and where people didn’t seem to care about your personal business; perhaps it was that she cared less about other people’s opinions of her; perhaps it was because she was walking with Jon, who was kind and truly had no concept of his own good looks. Sure, he didn’t talk overly much, and in fact, they were strolling in silence right now, but she felt surrounded by his presence all the same: the sweetness, the keen sensitivity to her
own emotions, his concern for her well-being. Oberyn was right: the friendship they had, even beyond being fellow surgeons, was rare. And she felt incredibly lucky to have it.

Brienne’s attention was distracted by the cart up ahead, around which a small crowd had formed. They were walking near the water along River Row, and families and couples mingled on the street. She took Jon’s hand and led him to the cart, which was selling ice cream. “My treat,” she said, smiling broadly at him. He playfully complained that he was too full from their dinner but allowed her to drag him to the cart anyway. The cart was run by a stout woman with strong, muscular arms; she specialized in ices sold in cone-shaped wafer cookies called cornets, which were all the rage. Brienne got an ice cream flavoured with rosewater, pistachio and saffron, while Jon got chocolate. They walked down to the water and sat on some rocks to eat their ice cream cornets. It was warm, the dessert was melting quickly, and Brienne found it was a battle to lick the ice cream fast enough to keep it from dripping on her hands. She looked up, and caught Jon staring at her with an odd, intense expression.

“What?” Brienne asked. Jon shook his head, as if only then aware he had been staring.

He shook his head, smiling. “Nothing.”

“I know,” said Brienne, smiling playfully.

“You do?” Jon raised his eyebrows. His mouth twitched.

“You want some of my ice cream.” She grinned. “Here,” She held out her cone to him, and he gave the ice cream a long lick. Some of the ice cream had dripped over her fingers and he caught the sweet drippings with his mouth, instinctively licking her fingers. She caught her breath, feeling the brief heat of his wet mouth and warm tongue on her hand.

“Sorry,” Jon murmured, looking down, embarrassed. “It was dripping.” She stared at him.

“It’s delicious, though,” he said, finally looking up at her with flushed cheeks.

“My turn,” Brienne said, strangely filled with confidence as she pulled his hand holding his ice cream toward her. Her plump lips met the ice cream as she bit into the cold chocolate. She closed her eyes. It was delicious, sweet and rich on her tongue; she couldn’t help but make a small moan. When she opened her eyes, Jon was looking at her closely, soft lips parted. He was holding his breath.

“Delicious.” Brienne stepped away, smiling, but suddenly nervous at the intensity of his stare. She felt like she was on the verge of falling and had no idea if the place she’d be plunging into would be soft and welcome or hard and bone-breaking. She felt warm all over, and wanted to step closer to Jon but was too frightened to do so. They looked at each other for a long moment. Then they quickly finished their ice creams.

Jon took her hand again and wrapped it around his arm and they continued walking, mostly being quiet, observing the arrival of night and its cool breezes. She felt at peace again. They talked about Robb and how each of them apparently received identical letters, the only difference being in Jon’s letter there were very detailed descriptions of all the pretty ladies Robb had met since arriving in Winterfell. Nevertheless, they were glad that Robb seemed to be enjoying himself working with Dr. Luwin.

“It’s strange being in the south,” Jon said, “Even though I’ve been here for years now. I miss the snow, and believe it or not, I miss the cold.”
“I’ve never been up North,” Brienne admitted, “I don’t even know what snow feels like! It must be so different.”

Jon looked at her. “I think you’ll like it. It is very lush and green mostly. The winters are harsh, but there is such overwhelming beauty there. Majestic, monumental mountains. Plus, I think you’d look good in the snow, whiteness all around you, your cheeks pink from the cold. An ice queen.” Jon smiled at the vision.

“You want to go back.” Brienne looked at him carefully; Jon’s eyes seemed faraway, imagining the other world he wished to return to.

“Aye, that I do. I want to find my own way though, live away from Winterfell.” He pursed his lips. “I’m done acting the bastard in what’s supposed to be my own home.”

“Will she ever come around, do you think? Catelyn Stark seems like a formidable woman, according to you and Robb.”

Jon shook his head. “I don’t know. I doubt it. People get set in their ways, and she’s never actually seen me. She has no idea who I am and has no interest in finding out.” Jon bit his lip. Brienne squeezed his arm, leaning into him in comfort. She could feel him leaning his weight into her in return.

“I want to be around my brothers and sisters again. Especially little Arya. She reminds me of you, though she’s very small and scrawny.”

“The very opposite of me, then?” Brienne teased.

Jon laughed. “The opposite of you in looks, though not in character. Though she may be a tad wilder than you.”

“Oh, you haven’t seen me at my wildest!” Brienne smiled, raising an eyebrow suggestively. Jon’s face took on a choked expression.

“No,” he countered mildly, “I suppose not.” He swallowed visibly.

They had finally reached the bookshop and her door. She looked at Jon, his gentle and shy expression, that long, angular face that softened into a quiet smile. For her. A flood of affection rose within her.

Jon gazed at her, his eyes warm and shining. “I love looking at you.”

“Jon.” She scowled and shook her head, suddenly self-conscious.

“No, Brienne. Don’t do that. You’re wonderful to look at. Believe me?” His eyes seemed almost black in the night, and she did somehow believe him.

She nodded. His skin looked pale and blue, like it was carved from moonstone. She had the impulse to touch his skin, to feel that it was warm.

“Good night Brienne.” He moved a strand of loose hair from her cheek to behind her ear.

“Good night, Jon.” Brienne leaned down to softly kiss him on the cheek. His hand reached up to gently cup her neck so their faces were close. She could feel his warm breath on her skin.

“Good night, Brienne,” he repeated, reaching up to very slowly kiss her on the left cheek, then her
right, then her left cheek again, each kiss lasting longer and moving closer and closer to her mouth. The last kiss landed and slowly lingered on the corner of her lips. Brienne nearly swooned.

“Dornish goodbye,” whispered Jon, slowly letting her go.

He smiled, stepped back, and quickly walked away, leaving Brienne standing at her doorway, her cheeks and neck and lips vibrating from all his tender touches.

Chapter End Notes

Tell me what you think in comments? I'm so curious if you felt...things.

Kudos if you like the story and haven't already (many thanks for those that already have done).
Jaime wants to have a serious conversation with Brienne, but it doesn't go according to plan.

I know in the last chapter I said I wouldn't be posting for a few days, but I got inspired to write this chapter and couldn't wait to share it with you. (Jaime INSISTED that he get back into the story.)

Thanks for all your comments - I'm glad many of you like the flirtation between Jon and Brienne, and that the last chapter made your heart warm. Yay.

In this chapter, Jaime wants to win you back in his corner. Does he succeed? Let me know.

Brienne had to remind herself to breathe as she stepped through the door of her building and closed the it unthinkingly. She felt giddy, as if she had drunk – no, bathed in champagne, and she felt strangely happy, she felt like such a girl. She hadn’t felt like a girl since she was a hopeful, naïve child wanting to wear dresses and look pretty. She wasn’t drunk of course, she had a mere glass or two of Dornish wine at dinner, and that seemed ages ago. Brienne didn’t exactly know what was happening; why on earth did she feel so happy? Nothing really happened, her mind reminded her. Jon was just being his kind self and of course they were very good friends and of course she was blowing things out of proportion as she always does when it comes to men who are nice to her. She was pathetic in that way, she knew. She tried to remind herself of Renly and how she made such a fool of herself, and yet…and yet, she just felt so good, like everything was right, and she was young and oh so free.

“Brienne? Are you back?” Tyrion’s voice called through the open door of the bookshop. “Come through, will you?”

She came back to herself a little as she passed through the door, the bookshop’s back rooms and into the main part of the store. Tyrion sat at his usual spot at his desk, holding a glass of whisky. Across from him, a figure quickly stood up at her arrival, surprising her. It was Jaime Lannister, and as he turned toward her, she was again reminded of how handsome, golden and perfect he was. He looked at her and bowed, oddly.

Tyrion stared at her without blinking. His expression bloomed into surprise, eyebrows raised. “Why Brienne, you look…incredibly well!” He must have seen her too bright eyes, her pink blush, the smile that wouldn’t leave her lips. “You look like someone gave you a basket of puppies and
they spent an hour kissing and licking you.”

Brienne laughed, throwing her head back. Tyrion could be incredibly silly. And yes, well, she couldn’t help but smile because she was just in the best mood. Jaime looked at her sharply, one eyebrow raised.

“Was that Jon I saw walking away? Why didn’t he come in?” Tyrion asked, curiosity evident.

Brienne’s smile grew. “Well, he just walked me back, that’s all. I suppose he didn’t feel like coming in.”

“Huh.” Tyrion examined her closely. “It’s strange. You usually look dead tired when you come back from the hospital. It must have been a good day.” Tyrion asked mildly, offering her a glass of whisky. Jaime looked intrigued, anticipating her answer.

Brienne blushed. “Well, it was actually a terrible day. We lost a patient.” She said, her voice low. “But Oberyn took us out for dinner to cheer us up, and Jon walked me home.” She couldn’t help but let out another smile at the memory of the evening. Tyrion grinned at her, and looked over at Jaime.

Jaime, who had remained standing, cleared his throat. “Brienne. I came by to request a word with you, if you’d let me.” His green eyes looked eager, searching her face.

“Tyrion.” Jaime shot his brother a nasty look. “Please shut up.” Tyrion’s smirk grew.

“Tyrion.” Jaime shot his brother a nasty look. “Please shut up.” Tyrion’s smirk grew.

Jaime looked at Brienne, eyebrows raised quizzically. “Will you?”

Brienne looked from Jaime to Tyrion, then back again. She nodded at Jaime. “Come up then. We can talk in my room.” He nodded, relieved, and followed her up the stairs.

“Have fun, you two!” Brienne heard Tyrion call out in a sing-song voice. She heard Jaime scowl behind her. Brienne laughed. She opened her door and led them inside. Jaime stood in the centre of the room, looking around curiously. “Your rooms are quite plain.”

“There isn’t a red and gold colour scheme, if that’s what you mean.” She wasn’t quite ready for her good mood to disappear, but she had a feeling that this would be imminent.

“No, I mean it’s simple. It suits you.” Jamie said simply, with a mild expression.

“Because it’s as plain and ugly as my face?” Brienne offered, only half-jokingly. She had already begun to anticipate his insults. They were very predictable.

“I was not going to say that. That’s very unfair of you,” protested Jaime, walking toward the window.

“I’m sure you thought it.” Brienne was conscious she wasn’t being as gracious as she could be, but she was peeved with this man who was demanding her time after such a glorious evening.

“You profess to know my thoughts now, wench?” Jaime plopped on the settee, spreading out his muscular legs and incredibly well-shaped arms while making himself comfortable. His jacket and the collar of his shirt fell casually open. He looked like a painting.

Brienne deliberately moved to the stove and put on water for tea. She was not going to offer him
liquor this evening. Plus, she needed to keep a clear head for his onslaught. She sat herself down on
the armchair nearby.

“Afraid of me, wench?” Jaime asked, patting the seat on the settee beside him. He smiled
seductively. Damn him for mocking her, she thought. And damn him for being so blessedly good-
looking.

Brienne rolled her eyes. “I’m comfortable right here, thank you very much.”

“You know,” he mused, “You did look incredibly happy when you walked in. I don’t think I’ve
ever seen you smile more.”

“I don’t think I smile around you very much.” Brienne countered dryly.

Jaime smiled crookedly. “Was it Jon that made you so happy? Or was it Oberyn?” He tilted his
head, looking at her teasingly. “Are you in love?”

Brienne turned a steely gaze at him. “Are you?”

He looked at her a long time, silent. His arrogant face suddenly fell, turned serious. His green eyes
became sad. “Yes. Yes, I am.”

Brienne’s skin prickled, and she looked at him carefully. “You don’t seem very happy about it.”

He looked at her then, giving her a doleful smile. “No. I’m not. But she is the only woman I’ve
ever loved, the only woman I’ve ever known.” He looked out the window, seemingly lost in his
thoughts.

She heard his words and tried to process what they meant. Surely he didn’t mean that he’s only
been with one woman. In all his life? And with him so utterly desirable and beautiful? She could
hardly imagine it. She was sure women were falling over themselves for him, which meant that he
had turned them all down. But somehow, she knew he was telling the truth. He placed a confidence
in her for some reason, and his words had the same air of verity that his beach confession had the
other night.

They locked eyes; she was trying to read him, and his eyes were limpid and surrendering. He
blinked and looked away to the window. But the moment passed in a flash. When he looked back
at her, his eyes were sparkling again, teasing, challenging. Whatever vulnerability he had just
shown was promptly packed away.

“So, wench! I don’t suppose you’ve been with many men? Or women?” Jaime leered. “Or are you
waiting for marriage like a proper highborn lady? I recommend you don’t,” he continued
relentlessly, “Or you’ll be wasting a great number of years waiting for a prince charming that will
never come.”

Brienne’s anger flared. Damn him for ruining her mood. Her time with Jon was quickly receding,
and was being replaced by a growing annoyance and white hot anger.

“Do you want me to punch you tonight?” Snarled Brienne.

“Ah, there’s the angry wench I know and love.” Jaime grinned. “No, I don’t want a punch, though I
would settle for a wrestle. Do you think you can best me?” He wagged his eyebrows.

She really did want to lunge at him, to pull him off that settee and shove his body down to the floor
and pin it with her hands. She wanted pull his hair and wipe that conceited, insulting expression off
his face. She glared at him. He stared back at her, his pupils dark and wide. He licked his lips.

The kettle started to whistle. Brienne abruptly got up, and poured water in the tea pot. She took out cups. She could sense Jaime following her every movement with his eyes. Like the lion that he is, she immediately thought. She walked slowly back to him, handing him his tea. She did not bother to offer him sugar or milk. She sat on the other side of the settee, and turned to face him. She sighed.

“Jaime. Why are you here?” She looked at him earnestly. He looked mutely back at her.

“You said you wanted to talk to me.” She prodded. Jaime exhaled deeply, and nodded, setting down his tea on the coffee table.

“Look, wench - Brienne,” he began, “This isn’t the way I wanted our conversation to go.” He cleared his throat. “I wanted to talk to you because – well, it occurred to me that you’ve helped me from an incapacitated state twice now, tucked me into bed like a little boy. Much to my shame, I might add.”

Brienne raised an eyebrow. He continued. “And you’ve been so goddamn helpful and kind that I don’t really know how to act around you. I mean, why are you so bloody noble?” His face took on an exasperated expression.

“Excuse me? Are you angry that I’m nice to you?” Brienne did not bother concealing the annoyance in her voice.

“Damn. Just. I’m just fucking it up again.” He muttered to himself.

He shook his head. “Look. I wanted to thank you. That’s all. Thank you for helping me.” His face was serious, eyebrows furrowed.

“And that night on the beach, you listened to me, like no one’s ever listened to me before,” Jaime continued, his voice gaining passion, “And bloody hells, you actually believed me. I…I just have never experienced that before. No one ever believes me. What I told you that night was something I’d never told anyone, and you actually believed me.” He looked at her with awe on his face.

“Jaime, if you’re worried, I won’t tell anyone.” Brienne pursed her lips in determination. “Your secret is safe with me. I promise.” She added gently.

“That’s just it. I know. I know my secrets are safe with you. It’s the strangest thing.” His eyes were large and unguarded, and Brienne knew that he was completely sincere.

She smiled kindly at him. “I’m glad, Jaime.” She reached over and squeezed his hand. As she was in the process of removing it, he grabbed her hand in his and held it with both hands, stroking and caressing it. She felt herself blushing. He pressed her hand to his lips. His kiss on her hand felt searing. Confused, she slid her hand away.

Jaime lifted his eyes to hers, and she saw a certain pleading in them. “I hope that we can be friends,” he said, his voice low.

She looked back at him, skeptical. “You need trust to be friends.”

His countenance was beautiful then: open and wanting and completely genuine. “I trust you.”

Brienne didn’t know what to do with his words or his expression; it was almost too much, the depth that he revealed to her, the frankness, the fragility of his being. She knew it was precious,
that at that moment, she had the power to spoil it and break him. But she did not want to do that. She was grateful for him, to again reveal himself to her in such an unguarded way. She didn’t understand why he chose her for this, but he did, and she wasn’t going to harm him with this.

“Then I guess we’ll be friends,” she said gently. He gave her the sweetest, most open smile in return. It transformed his face. Suddenly she saw him as a boy, his heart utterly open, before the hurt, before the cynicism and sarcasm stole him away.

He continued to look at her as she sipped her tea, which she noticed had begun to grow cold.

Jaime then sat up in his seat, ran a hand through his golden hair. He blinked, cleared his throat.

“Err…I should have said this earlier, since it’s important. But one of the reasons I came here is to let you know that Ros is safe and healing. Tyrion said she wanted to send you thanks.”

Brienne smiled. “I was very glad I could help her. I’m relieved she’s okay.”

Jaime fidgeted, clasping and unclasping his hands. “And the other matter. The client who did this. It’s…it’s Joffrey, my…” He stopped himself. “Cersei’s son.”

Brienne gasped. “But he’s all of seventeen! How, how, did this happen?”

“I’m sure you’ve heard rumours about him. What they say is true. He’s a cruel, terrible monster. His tendencies have been escalating, but this was the first time he seriously hurt a woman.” Jaime shook his head.

“He’s being sent far away, to the army in the East. He is to go after his nameday ball.” He looked at her pleadingly. “I know it’s not the best solution, but it’s the only thing we can do to stop him right now.”

“He…he was just born wrong, I think.” Jaime hung his head in shame.

“It’s not your fault, Jaime.” Brienne looked at him softly. His look back at her was one of shame, guilt, and an unspoken longing to say more. But he remained silent.

They sat for a while, not saying anything.

Jaime made a move to get up. His tea remained untouched. He smiled. He adjusted his shirt and jacket.

“Well, I think I’ve annoyed you enough for tonight, wench.”

“I suppose you have,” said Brienne, looking at him warmly. She walked him to the door and opened it for him.

He looked amused and delighted. He turned to leave but quickly turned back.

“Oh, I’m off to Riverrun on military business tomorrow, so I won’t be around to aggravate you until the night of the ball.” Jaime said cheekily.

“I’m sure I can survive until then.” Brienne rolled her eyes.

“Saucy wench. Say you’ll miss me.” He teased. He lingered, leaning prettily against the doorway.

“I really won’t miss you, but I’ll say it if it makes you feel better. I’ll miss you.” Brienne said, pretending to be irritated.
He grinned broadly.

“Kiss goodbye?” Jaime leaned in toward her, his lips in an exaggerated pout.

“No.” She grumbled, pushing him away. He pretended to be hurt, rubbing where she had pushed him on his chest. Then he laughed. He turned to go.

“Try not to get eaten by wolves,” she dryly remarked.

“Saucy, saucy, wench.” Jaime bowed, then started strolling away, whistling all the way down the stairs.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading and sticking to this story. Your comments are loved. Kudos if you like and haven’t done so. (thanks for peeps that have already given kudos)
A Dress Fitting

Chapter Summary

As the ball approaches, Brienne visits the Tyrells for a dress fitting.

Chapter Notes

It's Tyrell time, and Jon comes along! This is a fluffy chapter, full of fashion. I hope you enjoy it.

Fun fact: the name "Nysterica" is straight out of ASoIAF books - she's a Septa that accompanies Margaery to KL (she has like a sentence devoted to her, lol). I cringed at the name at first, but I guess I'm used to it by now?

Also a reminder that the ball is coming up.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Margaery’s gown was breathtaking: a heavy satin in a brilliant gold and embroidered with large red roses and green leaves, the dress was cut low to reveal her ample décolleté and boned to emphasize a tiny waist and flat stomach. It showed off the graceful, slim lines of her shoulders and arms, and was fitted around the hips then slightly flared out to the floor. She looked magnificent, like a princess from a storybook. With her brown curls, upturned nose, doe-like eyes, pink bow lips and adorable dimples, Margaery was simply one of the loveliest creatures Brienne had ever seen. A part of her regretted visiting Rose House and being there with Margaery and her immense team of five seamstresses. She glanced over at Jon, who was looking at Margaery appreciatively, small smile on his lips. Of course, Brienne thought. What man could resist such a vision such as Margaery? She looked like she was spun from gold and dropped from the Garden of Eden. Jon definitely belonged with someone who looked like Margaery.

Margaery, however, seemed to have reservations about how she looked, scrutinizing herself in the full-length mirror with narrowed eyes.

“No, the shape of this is all wrong, the skirt is cut too close to my legs – I need to be able to move and dance and this skirt will just hobble me.” She demonstrated, doing a fluid turn on the floor. “See? I can’t move my legs far enough.” One of the seamstresses, who was dressed in a white laboratory coat, took furious notes.

She tilted her head skeptically at her own reflection. “Is it the embroidery, or is the whole dress in general? It’s just not golden enough, not shiny enough. Don’t you think, Brienne?” She young woman suddenly twirled in Brienne’s direction, a wild expression on her face.

Jon grinned. “I think I like the colour best of all. I distinctly remember Cersei saying to Brienne, no red or gold. So, hats off to you Margaery. It if matters, I think you look very beautiful as well.”

Margaery tilted her pretty head back and laughed. “Yes, ‘Lannister gold!’ As if they can prevent anyone else from wearing the colour. But that’s my point,” she said, turning back to the mirror. “It needs more…shine! Can you add golden beads? Real gold sequins somehow?” The team fervently nodded.

She sighed. “Otherwise, I suppose it will do.”

She turned around and looked through the door. “Loras!” She yelled, “Loras!” Brienne heard a muffled shout, and steps, and in came a very handsome young man with curly brown hair and large brown eyes. He resembled his sister a great deal, and was just as good-looking.

“What is it? Why are you shouting?” Demanded Loras Tyrell, stepping into the room.

Margaery twirled around. “What do you think?”

Loras laughed. “I think Cersei Lannister is going to be vexed with you, sister. The audacity to wear gold!”

“It happens to complement my complexion very well,” his sister tittered.

Loras frowned in concentration. “It’s lacking something though, like some gold beading? It needs to sparkle more.”

Margaery squealed. “Exactly as I thought! See?” She looked to her team, who vigorously nodded. Then, suddenly remembering her guests, turned to her brother.

“Jon, Brienne, this is my brother, Loras. He’s just come over from Highgarden for the ball, and will be visiting a while. He’s a lieutenant in the army.”

“Loras, may I present Dr. Jon Snow. He’s a surgical resident at the hospital.” Loras and Jon shook hands.

“Oh, and this is Dr. Brienne Tarth, also a surgical resident at the same hospital. She’s coming to the ball as well, and I convinced her to do a fitting together, even though she’s working with Mistress Nysterica.”

Loras bowed and kissed Brienne’s hand, smiling. “Pleased to meet you at long last. I have heard much about you. It appears we have a friend in common.”

“Margaery?” Brienne said idiotically.

Loras laughed. “Yes, of course Margaery. But I was thinking of a good friend of mine, Renly Baratheon.”

Brienne paled and then blushed. “Renly?” Her voice sounded faint.

Loras nodded, smiling at her. “Yes. He’s told me of your kindness when he stayed on Tarth with your family many years ago. I believe he has a high regard for you, dear doctor.”

Jon looked at Brienne and frowned faintly.

“Yes, I have many fond memories of him in Tarth as well. He is doing well?” Brienne, having recovered from the shock of hearing Renly’s name, settled back to herself. She remembered being
in love with him all those years ago, and how she thought he was the most handsome man alive. *But I didn’t know that many handsome men back then,* she thought to herself. She feared that those old feelings would return at the thought of him, but she was pleased that only a mild fondness remained.

Loras beamed. “Yes, he’s been spending a great deal of time in Highgarden, helping me with the estate and so on. You’ll likely see him at the ball; he’s been summoned by his brother Robert, of course.” He rolled his eyes.

Brienne blushed at the thought of seeing Renly again, but was ultimately glad that he would be there. She remembered their last conversation, the day before he was to leave, how they talked by the waterfall and he gently turned her down. How he said he could never love a woman. She looked at Loras, and wondered if he and Renly found each other. If they did, she was glad.

“That’s wonderful,” Brienne said sincerely. “I look forward to seeing him again. It has been too long.”

Margaery looked over at the group, smiling mischievously. “Loras, why don’t you show Jon around Rose House? It’s Brienne’s turn to try on her dress and we want to surprise you.”

“All of you, help me take this dress off and go get the Mistress.” The team surrounded her.

Mistress Nysterica arrived, serious and commanding, carrying a very large cotton garment bag. Brienne automatically stood at attention. Margaery squealed with excitement. The Mistress smiled and slowly removed the dress from its cover. Brienne let out a gasp. The dress was a deep sapphire blue and was made from a luxurious flowing silk velvet and had overlay of sheer silk around the shoulders. The dress was embroidered with beads, silver sequins and thread, in a design of small half-moons and tiny stars.

“Oh, Brienne,” Margaery breathed, touching the delicate material.

“Mistress Nysterica, this is the most beautiful dress I’ve ever seen,” said Brienne in an awed voice. “I don’t think I deserve this dress, it’s too beautiful for me.”

The Mistress let out a small smile, looking at Brienne and faintly shaking her head. “No.”

“Please disrobe and you can try it on.” She looked so commanding that Brienne had no choice but to obey, taking off her usual black skirt and white shirt and leaving on her thin corset and smallclothes.

“Your other clothes will be ready in three weeks.” The Mistress sniffed disapprovingly as she eyed Brienne’s discarded garments.

Brienne’s first instinct was to hide the state of her undress, and she fought the impulse to shield her meagre chest with her hands. She could not help but remember Margaery’s slim, curvy build, with her tiny waist and elegant shoulders; in comparison, Brienne was thick and hulking and just too big.
The Mistress, as if sensing Brienne’s discomfort, smiled kindly. “It has been my pleasure to make this dress for you. Yes, the dress is very pretty. But I made this dress to reflect you. Remember that.” With those words, she removed Brienne’s corset. “You don’t need a corset. Your body is amazingly lean.” Margaery looked on wistfully at those words, wishing she could do away with her corsets too.

She helped Brienne into the dress. “The dress is not boned, like most of the dresses you’ll be seeing at the ball. Boning helps women achieve specific shape, or covers up fat or unsightly protuberances. You, Dr. Tarth, don’t need boning. You are plenty wiry and already have a shape.” She did up the tiny buttons at the back of the dress, then pulled here and there. The dress felt surprisingly comfortable; she did not feel pinched or pulled in or short of breath from any sort of tightness. Margaery looked on with wide eyes. Brienne was worried that she would burst out laughing, as many had laughed and jeered at her whenever she wore dresses when she was younger. She needed to steel herself from disappointment. She was slowly led to the mirror.

Looking back was a woman Brienne did not recognize, a woman with stature, with shape. A woman who stood proud and was rather…comely? Almost pretty? Mistress Nysterica had a warm smile on her face as she looked at Brienne. The dress had a straight silhouette, fitting closely to the body, skimming the hips and draping down loose and flowing to the floor. The neckline was a generous V-shape, low enough to reveal her collarbones and a bare suggestion of breast and curves. The sleeves were short and made of flowing transparent deep blue silk, so the shape of Brienne’s well-defined arms could be seen through the fabric. Brienne stared hard at her reflection, confusion on her face. She had never seen herself look so…well. The dress fit wonderfully, even without a corset or any boning, and it didn’t feel tight in the arms or shoulders or tight in the waist; it just fit.

And good gods, it was long enough. All the other dresses she’d worn were always too short. This one skimmed the floor as it should. The starry silver of the embroidery reminded her much of Tarth’s night sky. She felt her eyes nearly fill with tears.

Margaery was smiling from ear to ear and looked like the cat that ate the cream. “Brienne, you look wonderful, heavenly. It’s perfectly lovely. It matches your eyes exactly! And the moon and stars on your dress! They are a dream!”

Mistress Nysterica nodded, pleased. “The dress on you surely exceeds my own expectations, which is a rare thing, if I do say so myself.” She looked at Brienne up and down. “No alterations necessary, I think.”

“Brienne, now I wish I used Mistress Nysterica for my own dress.” Margaery laughed. “I can’t wait for the men so see this...Loras! Jon!” She yelled.

“Margaery, no! I don’t want…”

“Loras! Jon! Come!” She continued to yell, not hearing Brienne’s quiet protests.

“Stop yelling, Margaery!” Loras stomped in, followed closely by Jon. The both stopped in mid-stride as they caught sight of Brienne. She willed herself to stand tall, not to look down or become embarrassed. She recalled Tywin Lannister’s advice not to simper or stand in the corner, to be a warrior. She dared to look over at the men.

Loras looked frankly impressed, broadly smiling, and seemed amazed as he surveyed her up and down, from tip to toe. Brienne did not sense a hint of mockery, however. She slowly let out a breath.

She made herself look over to Jon. He looked stunned, like he’d been hit on the head: eyes large, mouth gaped open, an expression of utter shock. He stared and stared, as if in awe. Then with large
strides, he suddenly rushed to Brienne, taking both of her hands in his. He gazed up at her, his eyes full of adoration.


Brienne was astonished at his words; no one had ever, ever told her she looked beautiful, and with such evident sincerity. She could not doubt him, not her Jon. He believed what he said about her was true, and this made her heart flutter. She had never, ever been seen as beautiful in all her life.

“Jon,” Brienne said softly.

He looked up into her eyes. “Thank you,” she said shyly. She leaned over to whisper in his ear, “I believe you.”

At those words, Jon smiled a tender smile which slowly broadened into a grin. “Now I’m sorry I wasn’t invited to the ball.”

“Oh?” Brienne raised her eyebrows. Jon smiled playfully.

“Yes, because now I won’t have a chance to dance with you, my dear ostrich!” And with those words, he draped an arm around her waist and twirled Brienne around in an improvised dance. Brienne was carried along (he was surprisingly strong, she noticed), and followed his lead. They grinned at each other and eventually ended up laughing, almost falling to the floor.

Suddenly they heard the sound of clapping. Realizing where they were and what company they were in, Jon swiftly dropped Brienne’s hand and arm around her waist. She stepped away from him.

At the door stood a short, wizened old woman, dressed in colourful pink silks and holding a cane. She was laughing a delighted laugh in their direction.

“Wonderful!” She exclaimed. “You two are just…stunning, aren’t you?”

Margaery and Loras hurried to her. “Grandmother!” Margaery said, “I thought you were waiting for us in the dining room?”

“Oh my dear, how could I resist all the excitement? You shouting for Loras most urgently, and then such laughing.” She turned to Brienne. “I’ve never heard such a loud, infectious laugh, my dear. Hearing it did my heart good.”

“Grandmother, this is Dr. Brienne Tarth, and this is Dr. Jon Snow. They’re residents at the hospital.”

“Oh, yes, I’ve heard all about you from Margaery. You two make quite the picture. I rather wish I were young again, seeing both of you gallivanting about!”

“A pleasure to meet you, Lady Tyrell,” both Jon and Brienne murmured, walking over to shake the woman’s hand.

“Call me Olenna, my dears. It makes me feel not quite so old.” She smiled at them, albeit with sharp eyes.
“Come join me for luncheon when you’re done. I have so much to ask you.” With that, Olenna started walking away, gesturing for Loras to accompany her. He took her arm without a word. She then turned back. “Oh, dear Dr. Tarth – Brienne, may I call you? Good. You look very lovely in that dress. It suits you.”

She nodded to them, and with those words, the old woman walked away and out of the room, holding on the arm of her grandson.

Chapter End Notes

Feel free to comment on this chapter! I love comments, short or long.

Kudos if you haven't already (thanks for those that already hit that button!)

Thanks for reading, truly.
A Luncheon in the Garden

Chapter Summary

Lady Olenna gets to the heart of things as she presides over a garden luncheon.

Chapter Notes

A bit more of the Tyrells because they are SO amusing.
I was nervous about introducing Olenna into the mix, but she turned out to be pretty fun to write. She certainly has IDEAS.

In the next chapters, we go to the Lannister Ball. A number of you suggested Jon sneak into the ball; I mean, I'll ask him, but I don't think that's his scene, you know? In any case, he will be around. Somewhere.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Instead of having them sit in the dining room as originally planned, Lady Olenna had everything moved to the gardens, and so there they were, sat amidst roses and tall ferns and ornamental hedges, protected by a yellow fabric canopy. The sun shone on them, and soft breezes serenaded them. A veritable feast lay on the table: cold meats, cheeses, chilled oysters and cooked shrimp, fresh vegetables, hazelnut pâté, breads of many varieties. To drink, they were served a chilled fruit-soaked wine, sweet and cold on the tongue.

Lady Olenna sat at the head of the table, examining her guests with spritely eyes. In some ways, she observed, Jon and Brienne were an odd-looking pair, he so purely good-looking and she so very not, with her large, prominent features. However, her eyes, which dominated her face, were remarkably beautiful.

“So tell me, Brienne. What does your father, Selwyn, the Evenstar of Tarth, think of his daughter adventuring off into this wicked Westerosi world? I met him once, you know. I never thought him the type to raise such an independent creature such as yourself.” Olenna’s eyes glimmered with curiosity.

“Well, Lady Olenna, I didn’t give him much of a choice, as I couldn’t be anything other than what I am, given my…stature and well, lack of prospects. But I believe he is proud of me, in his own way.” Brienne remembered her father’s wearied sigh at her announcing that she wanted to go to the Citadel to become a doctor. In the end, his exasperation at her nonconformity was outweighed by her unwavering stubbornness. She had won.

“Splendid! Good on you. Men need to be run over from time to time. Don’t you agree, Jon?” Beside Brienne, Jon swallowed his sweet wine nervously. He nodded.

“Now, what I do remember of Selwyn is him trying to find a match for you. I believe he even
proposed our Loras for you!” She turned to the man in question, looking at him with amused eyes. “Can you imagine, Loras? That would have been an ill match indeed.” Olenna gave him a wink. Loras coughed.

She turned back to Brienne. “I suppose he was unsuccessful in that regard, given your unmarried, unbetrothed state, and the fact that you are on your way to becoming Westeros’ first female surgeon. Though I don’t believe I can credit your father for that, fool that he was.”

Brienne fidgeted in her seat, uncomfortable at her father being called a fool. “He betrothed me three times, my lady.” She could sense Jon turn toward her in surprise. “One died when he was young, the other rejected me, and the last one, an old man, I challenged to a sword fight and gave him a broken nose and three broken bones as an engagement gift. That was the end of my father’s efforts.” Brienne smiled at the memory of standing over old, awful Humfrey Wagstaff, who wanted her to act like ‘a proper woman’ and wear skirts, and sew and fawn over him.

Margaery gave a delighted cry. “Brienne, that’s the most wonderful thing I’ve ever heard!” Jon smirked, “I see you have a history of breaking men’s noses.” Olenna gave him a shrewd look. “Capital, capital. I always approve of women using violence over men. Only when absolutely necessary, of course – don’t protest, Loras. I’ve always thought that most idiot men could do with a good walloping on their backside.” Olenna grinned. “Present company excluded, of course.” She paused, thinking.

“And Jon,” Lady Olenna turned to him. Jon paused in the middle of taking a bite of bread that was piled with meat and cheese, and raised his dark eyebrows questioningly. “Is it true what my Margaery says? That you worked and earned your own money for your schooling, without any help from your family?” Olenna turned a razor sharp gaze on him.

“Yes. Since my father, Ned Stark died, that has been the case, my lady. His wife did not, well, she did not care for me. I had no choice in the matter.”

“Then she’s a fool. Why blame an innocent babe for her husband’s sole indiscretion? She might as well have closed her legs and banished him from her bed instead of birthing five more wolves.”

Jon opened his mouth to protest. “Oh hush, I know I’m being unfair to the Starks. I suppose it’s some credit to them that you turned out as well as you did. He did turn out well, didn’t he, Brienne?” She turned to Brienne with a sly glance.

Brienne was flustered. It was suddenly warm under the sun, despite the protection of the canopy above. “I – I suppose so. He is a very good man,” she answered rather pathetically. She gave an embarrassed smile at Jon, who smiled nervously back.

The old woman looked back and forth at them. Gesturing to the oysters, she said to them, “Here, try these oysters, they are a rare variety. Very plump. Put some lemon on them.” Brienne and Jon did as they were told, and tipped the oysters into their mouths. Brienne tasted the cool brine of the ocean in her mouth. It was delicious.

“Now aren’t they good? Don’t they remind you of something, Jon?” Olenna looked slyly at them. “Oysters are said to stimulate the lower organs, as it were.” She winked. Jon squirmed.

Margaery and Loras exchanged a glance and appeared to be suppressing laughter.

“Tell me,” said Olenna, further scrutinizing Jon and Brienne. “How long have you two been courting?”
Jon paled, and Brienne opened her mouth in surprise.

“Grandmother!” Margaery intercepted, “I told you they weren’t together. They’re just friends! Isn’t that right, Brienne?” Margaery’s eyes shone with merriment. Loras smirked wickedly.

Brienne nodded, speechless for a moment. Jon frowned.

Olenna’s eyes seem to penetrate them to the core. “Oh,” she said, “My mistake. It’s just I could have sworn you two were – well, never mind that. I suppose you taking her in your arms and leading her in a little dance might have confused this muddled brain of mine. I have moments of disorientation now that I’m so veritably ancient.” Olenna gazed at them with a knowing, puckish expression.

“Not that I advocate matrimony to young ladies, in this day and age.” Olenna nodded. “That’s why I approve that my Margaery is working right now, when she has absolutely no reason to.” She paused, considering Brienne. “She is no doctor, of course, let alone a surgeon.” She tilted her head at Brienne. “Imagine, you achieved all that on your own. And look at you! You are a magnificent creature, aren’t you? Positively singular!”

Jon beamed. Brienne looked down, embarrassed.

“If only there were more women like you in the world, Brienne. You are forging a new path for us, and I don’t see why you should take the traditional matrimonial route if you don’t want to. In any case, women like you would make mincemeat out of that voting business.”

Loras leaned in, explaining, “Grandmother is a suffragette, you see.”

“No shame in that. Haven’t I always maintained that the world would be better if it was run by women?”

“Yes, grandmother,” said an amused Margaery.

“Well, getting women the vote is the logical step to that. It’s just so self-evident how right it is. I’m astonished at all the men who are opposed to it.” She turned to look at Jon, who was rather uncomfortable under the old woman’s shrewd gaze. “Now you, Jon, strike me as a modern young man who wouldn’t oppose his wife having career or life of her own.”

Jon raised his eyebrows, meeting her glance. “No, I don’t believe I would.” He continued, thoughtfully, “If I do marry, I would want a woman who was smart, strong and had a mind of her own.”

Olenna smiled. “Good man,” she approved, looking pointedly at Brienne.

“Of course,” the woman mused, “You wouldn’t find me protesting on the streets for the vote, or doing hunger strikes or getting arrested. That would be unseemly. I support the movement with donations. Very generous donations.”

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Later, Loras led Jon away to show him the armory. Brienne longed to go with them, as she was very interested in all the swords, fencing foils, daggers and weapons they might have had, but Lady Olenna wove an arm around Brienne’s and led her into the gardens, with Margaery happily following behind.
“Now Brienne,” said Olenna, leaning intimately toward her. “As I was saying about this modern age... there are so many more choices for women now. When I was young, the only option was marriage, and a lot of the time, women did not even have a choice about who to marry. Needless to say, I found the whole marriage thing quite dull. Imagine being with one man all your life. What if your husband was a terrible lover? One would never find satisfaction in the joys of the flesh.” She looked impishly at Brienne. “And such joys they are,” she sighed wistfully.

Brienne could feel her face glowing with mortification. Olenna glanced at her, chuckling. “Now, you don’t imagine my late husband Luthor was the only lover I’ve ever had in my life? I had men before, during, and after him, though my Luthor was quite adequate in the bed chamber, to give him credit. But it was all done in secrecy, of course. I could imagine the scandal to our house if anyone had found out about my exploits!”

“But you, Brienne, are a woman of a new age. Margaery is too, of course, but she is unfortunately fixed on the idea of matrimony to advance her cause, aren’t you, dear?”

“Yes, Grandmother. I do want to get married to someone who’s terribly rich and handsome and powerful. And to be honest, love is optional.” Margaery called out, most casually.

“Ever the pragmatist, my Margaery.” Olenna said fondly.

“Now Brienne, you are making a whole new career for yourself. A respected one! You don’t need marriage and children to have a fulfilling life.” She paused, looking at her quizzically. “Do you want children, Brienne?”

Brienne stiffened. “I rightly don’t know. When I was young, it was what I thought I wanted, but when I grew up I realized that it was not a realistic path for me... I haven’t thought much about it since.”

“Be that as it may, it is not the sole focus of your life right now, unlike most young, insipid, terribly boring women out there.” Olenna glanced over, and lowered her voice enticingly. “My advice is: take pleasure when you can. Don’t treat virginity as a sacred cow, something to be guarded and walled up until your husband comes along. That would be a terrible waste of youth and this body of yours.”

“Of course,” Olenna said thoughtfully, “The old systems remain. You still must be cautious and not flaunt your lovers or affairs. It’s one thing to be unconventional, but another thing to put a target on your back, isn’t it, dear?” Brienne mutely nodded, both terrified and confused.

“Besides, I imagine being a doctor has advantages. You know the human body, and what is needed not to become with child, I imagine?” Brienne nodded, unintentionally running the various methods of contraception that were available for women in her mind, like a good doctor would.

Olenna patted her arm, smiling. “I’m glad we had this conversation.” They stopped at the entrance of the house. “I’m so glad to have met you and I hope to spend more time with you and Jon soon and often. I will be eagerly following your course in life.” She grinned wickedly. “You are an absolutely fascinating human being, Brienne Tarth.”

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Later in the hansom cab from Rose House, Jon was eagerly describing the Tyrell armory and Loras’ skill with the weapons, as they had a quick spar that afternoon. Brienne groaned in
frustration.

“I wish I could have been there. It’s been ages since I held a sword. Master Goodwin would be ashamed of my lack of practice these last few months!” Jon laughed, merriment in his eyes.

“What on earth did Olenna want with you?”

“Oh Jon, it was mortifying!” Brienne winced and rubbed her head with a hand as she recalled the conversation. “She was telling me how I didn’t have to get married, that I should take on lovers, discreetly of course, and something like how I shouldn’t make my virginity a sacred cow, whatever that means!”

“Oh.” Jon looked both surprised and thoughtful.

“Oh?” She glanced at him quizzically.

“I mean, that’s good advice,” said Jon, slowly. He looked down at his hands.

She looked at him, searching his very serious face. Then she burst out giggling. Jon, hearing her laugh, couldn’t help but join her.

“What’s so funny?” he eked out.

“It’s just, just…the idea that any man would want to…with me…is just ridiculous. Olenna seems to think I’m some kind of Cleopatra who could bend men to my will!”

“Oh.” Jon gazed at her with a serious expression.

“Oh?” She raised her eyebrows.

“Brienne. You have no idea,” Jon said, his voice faint.

He smiled and shook his head. He turned to look out the window at the passing streets.

Brienne bit her lip, puzzled, but left Jon’s remark alone. She thought back to the strange conversation with Olenna. All her life, she felt that doors were being closed on her: the doors of marriage, children, love, family, home; but somehow after this afternoon, the tiny old woman made her feel that her current life were a series of doors that she herself could easily open. Those very doors led to all sorts of possibilities in her life. There were doors that led to happiness, love, pleasure, and intellectual and emotional fulfillment. And that she would need to choose which door she wanted. But somehow, she knew that inside her was some obstacle of her own making that was blocking her way. She needed to see the doors for what they are, and she had a notion that in this instance, she was a little blind.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think! Comments, short or long, are very appreciated.
Kudos if you like! Thanks for those that have already done so.

Thanks for sticking with this story and taking the time to read it.
The Lannister Ball, Part 1

Chapter Summary

Brienne attends a ball in celebration of Joffrey Baratheon's nameday.

Chapter Notes

Warning for Jaime/Cersei incest content.

The ball was a MONSTER to write, with so many characters to visit, so many things going on. Thus it is in two parts and is immense. This particular chapter is nearly 7,000 words long, but it's divided into 3 sections, so you can take a reading break if you want to.

Also I realized that technically it should be the "Baratheon Ball" but I've been calling it the "Lannister Ball" in my head, so...oh well.

I really hope you like it and that it's diverting and entertaining.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jaime scanned the grand ballroom. Red and gold were hung, draped, pinned and placed absolutely everywhere, from the drapes to the tablecloths, to the napkins, to the red and gold-painted roses that adorned the tables. Cersei had certainly outdone herself this time; it looked like she spared none of Robert’s money in the opulence of the event. The decoration scheme certainly lacked subtlety, he mused, but then his sister was never subtle in anything she did. Interesting though, that she didn’t adorn with Baratheon colours, Jaime reflected. Everything was the best: the flowers, the mountains of food, the large ice sculpture of a roaring lion (in the middle of a southern summer, no less), the veritable orchestra which was currently playing a very intricate version of “The Rains of Castamere,” the infamous Lannister song of homicidal domination. Fitting, he thought, for this particular occasion and for the specific boy in question.

As the nameday boy, Joffrey eschewed the usual tuxedo-and-tails that most of the men wore, including Jaime himself. Instead, the boy (Jaime shuddered to think of him as his son, but he knew it was so) fancied himself a little prince, wearing an intricate red brocade doublet embroidered with gold lions. On his head, he wore a ruby-studded gold crown. He looked ridiculous. He sat on a large gold chair that was on a raised platform at one end of the room. Jaime guessed that it was supposed to be his ‘throne’. Beside him, Gregor Clegane, the towering solid mountain of him, stood as his guard. What happened to Sandor? Jaime could think of no worse pairing than these two violent, murderous men. He supposed this was Cersei’s doing and the result of the boy’s complaints about Sandor, who, to his credit, had no respect for Joffrey. This was what happened when Tywin goes away and lets Cersei and Joffrey organize everything, he supposed. Jaime looked over at Tywin, who looked elegant and sombre in his tuxedo. Jaime thought that his lips looked particularly pinched tonight. He does not like this ostentatious display at all, Jaime was sure.
He and Tywin had a rather tedious and uninspiring meeting upon both of their returns to King’s Landing. Tywin wanted him to come to Casterly Rock after the ball; Jaime refused. Tywin wanted him to search for a wife; Jaime again refused. Then Tywin asked him why he was staying at his home instead of at Cersei’s, and all Jaime could do was stare at the old man and shrug. Still, he couldn’t help notice a smug and rather pleased expression on his father’s face resulting from that line of inquiry.

He now saw Margaery Tyrell standing with her brother Loras, and Robert’s brother Renly. The three seemed close, and were laughing and talking together as they looked about the room. Margaery was beautiful in her gown. Her gold gown was adorned with red roses, Jaime noticed, laughing to himself. She looked a rose garden come to life in a gold field. Cersei would certainly not be pleased about *that*. He glanced around and wondered if the wench was nearby – according to Tyrion, she and Brienne were good friends since they worked together at the hospital. Jaime remembered his incredulity when he learned that Margaery Tyrell of Highgarden was working as a nurse at the hospital. It seemed so patently *absurd*. But he supposed he had to give her credit for sticking with it. Work is certainly better than idleness, he thought, stealing a glance over at his sister.

Cersei was standing with Robert near the entrance along with the very bored younger children. He supposed darling Joffrey had been spared from this particular duty. Marcella looked lovely in a green gown, physically already a miniature of her mother (and her *real* father, he supposed); he hoped, however, that the twelve-year-old girl wouldn’t be a miniature of her mother in personality and temperament. Thankfully, he suspected that the girl had a more infinitely gentle nature. Tommen, at seven years old, was a plump, adorable little thing, easily bored but easy to please. Also unlike his mother, thank the gods. The little family was greeting every guest as they entered. His sister looked magnificent, as she always did, wearing a bright gold dress that was sleeveless and cut low enough that her glorious breasts were on display. The dress tapered to a tiny corseted waist and flowed out in full skirts. Her hair was swooped in intricate and voluminous up-do, which highlighted the elegance of her slim neck and shoulders. He supposed she wanted to announce to the world that she was still young and beautiful even though they were celebrating her eldest son’s eighteenth nameday. As always, Jaime felt himself drawn to her, his eyes hungry for those breasts and those red lips, among other parts of her. A part of him still wanted her.

He’d been gone for more than two weeks at Riverrun. Despite himself, he’d missed his sweet sister. Upon his return to King’s Landing, he immediately decided to visit the Red Keep. All was quiet when he arrived: no Robert, no children. He wondered if Cersei had also gone out. He walked toward her room and when he rounded the corner, he saw cousin Lancel come out of Cersei’s chambers, walking slowly while he adjusted his clothes. His cheeks looked pink from exertion, like an overgrown cherub and like the sixteen-year-old boy that he was. Lancel turned the corner opposite Jamie and walked away, with a lilt in his step of the recently bedded. Jaime felt paralyzed and felt ice enter his veins. Then, a quiet rage seemed to take over. He strode to Cersei’s rooms and flung open the door, slipping inside. His sister, hearing the door open, asked, “Did you forget something?” and widened her eyes in surprise when she turned around to find Jaime standing there. She was wearing a slinky red robe that gaped open to reveal much of her breasts. The room smelled of fucking. It smelled like Cersei’s cunt which, god knows, was a smell that he knew intimately. A smell which never failed to make his cock twitch. The bed was unmade and blankets strewn about its surface. Jaime looked at her with cold eyes.

“So it’s true. You *are* fucking Lancel. And the Kettleback brothers, I suppose?” He stared at her harshly, as if searching for truth in her countenance.

Cersei’s shocked face turned soft and pleading. “No, of course not. I would never sleep with anyone besides you, dearest brother. My lover. I don’t want anyone but you.” Her eyes were large
and pleading. Her chin trembled. Something in him cracked and twisted. How long had she been lying to him?

“You must think I’m the stupidest Lannister if you think I’ll believe that.” He snarled, his face hot.

“Jaime, I would never lie to you. I love you. I would never cheat on you, why would I? You complete me, I never feel as whole as when you’re deep inside me.” She stepped forward, taking his hand and putting it on a breast. He could feel her nipple hardening at his touch. Damn her. He fought the urge to squeeze and pinch it. “See how my body responds to your touch? I want only you, sweet brother.” She looked down at the bulge starting to strain his trousers. “And I know you want only me.” She smiled in victory, lowering her hand down. He pushed her away, disgusted at both her and his own body’s reaction to her.

“Cersei, you really do think I’m the stupidest Lannister, don’t you?” Jaime smiled maliciously. “I can smell your fucking. I can smell you, and I smell him. Not to mention what I see in front of me, a freshly fucked whore.”

Cersei looked like she wanted to summon the fires of all the seven hells on him. She sneered. He could feel her nails digging into the skin of his forearm, hard enough to draw blood. “You’re delusional, Jaime.”

“I’ve been faithful to you Cersei,” he raged, gripping her shoulders. “Meanwhile, how many men have you slept with? Are there more? How many have you spread your legs for?” His head felt hot, like it might burst at any second.

She slapped him, hard. But he barely felt the sting; his heart felt like it was on fire. “How dare you,” Cersei fumed.

“I’m tired of this. It’s over.” He couldn’t take it anymore; he could barely look at her. He realized that he wanted her to deny everything, to tell him again how they belonged together, but the pain that suffused his whole being wouldn’t let him believe those lies any more. He stormed out of her room, slamming the door behind him. He supposed that was the end. He supposed that it was about time.

He came back to himself, to the ball. He was filled with disgust at himself at the memory of the last conversation with his sister, and how she always knew how to entice him and get him to give in. To his shame, he knew that he was still deeply attracted to her and he was angry at his lack of control, and angry at his body’s betrayal in the presence of his sweet sister. He wondered then, if he could even physically love another woman after her. Cersei was ingrained in him, was part of him. Even before they were fucking, they were inseparable as children, always touching, embracing. At this point, fucking her felt as natural and easy as breathing. He thought, cynically, how long until he forgave her and give in?

He looked around at the sparkling splendour of the ladies and men, the piles of decadent sweets, the lush mass of blooms that dressed the ballroom. He wondered if the wench had arrived. He hoped for her sake that she didn’t look too ridiculous. A smile played on his lips as he recalled her showing up to their dinner in a dull grey funeral dress. He hoped he would be able to control his tongue around her; even when he tried he seemed to end up insulting her. He winced. But she made it so easy, he thought.

There was a movement at the entrance, and in walked Oberyn Martell, wearing a resplendent golden Dornish style tunic and breeches. On his arm was a magnificent creature, a tall blue and silvery goddess come down to earth in the garb of the night sky. Jaime stared and stared; it took him more than a second to realize that it was the wench. He gasped. His wench. Her hair was
different from her usual severe bun, set in a crown of braids around her head, all done up with tiny blue stones and tiny silver jewels. Her dress fit her exactly and he could see the straight lines of her body, her strong, long neck, her surprisingly delicate collarbones, the whole creamy expanse of her shoulders and arms. The subtle, delicate swells of her teats. His mouth involuntarily watered. He gazed upon her, his eyes greedy and unable to take their fill. He felt like she was the only person in the room and all he could see was her. Brienne. And her eyes, and the dress that matched the exact sapphire shade of them. She was still ugly of course, of that he had no doubt, for no dress could alter her unfortunate facial features. Still, he thought, tonight she looked like a saint, she looked like an angel, a goddess. She was the Maiden made flesh and whose flesh he desperately wanted to touch, he realized with chagrin.

He stared hard at her, still not believing what his eyes were seeing. He saw Robert and Cersei greet them; Robert with his usual enthusiasm, and Cersei absolutely fuming at the sight of the wench. Jaime remembered that she had wanted to humiliate her at the ball, wanted to laugh at her wearing a dress. A beast in a ball gown. He smiled. He was happy to see Cersei’s maliciousness disappointed. He saw Brienne lower herself in front of Myrcella and Tommen to shake their hands. Myrcella smiled sweetly at the wench. Tommen gaped at her as if she were a god, and smiled tentatively as she beamed back at him. He felt a twinge of tenderness at the sight of her with his two youngest children. Of course she was kind to them, even in that brief exchange.

Oberyn helped her up, his arm winding around her and he continued to hold on to the wench’s waist, drawing her disturbingly close to him. He saw him whisper in her ear as he led them away from the Baratheon couple, and he saw her giggle at his words. Jaime’s jaw clenched. The man was smiling disgustingly at her, practically leering. What is this, he asked himself. Why is the wench here with Oberyn Martell, of all people?

“They make quite the picture, don’t they?” Tyrion said as he walked over.

“Who?” Jaime casually responded, not bothering to look at his brother.

“Dear brother, why the two people you have been staring at for the last five minutes, of course.” Tyrion sniggered, looking over at Jaime. “Or were you just looking at your wench all that time? The two of them, side by side, just make a majestic looking pair, don’t they? Like two eternal beings come to earth for a single night.” He looked thoughtful. “I confess, I never thought she could look that beautiful.”

Jaime scowled, still watching the two. “What is she doing here with him?”

Tyrion smiled, “I believe they came together. He is her escort for the ball. Since Jon Snow was spectacularly not invited by our dear sister.”

Tyrion watched as Jaime carefully followed them with his gaze. The couple was walking through the room, now greeting Tywin, who looked oddly pleased to see Brienne. “They do seem remarkably close for just being work colleagues, wouldn’t you say?”

“I really don’t care,” Jaime said with feigned indifference. The wench seemed to be having a fascinating conversation with his dear father, and dear gods, his father was actually smiling. Jaime actually wondered if hell just froze over.

Tyrion laughed. “Oh brother, when I thought you couldn’t surprise me more with the depths of your self-delusion, here you surprise me once again.” Jaime turned to Tyrion sharply. “I believe you do care, you care a great deal. Even our loving sister has noticed,” he nodded toward Cersei, who was glaring at Jaime. Tyrion smiled at Jaime and waved at their sister. “I’m glad that you care. I’m ecstatic that you are interested in fucking someone other than our sister. It’s refreshing.
And it’s about time.”

“I do not want to fuck her.” Jaime said, indignant. “And you shouldn’t talk about her in that way. She’s a highborn lady.”

Tyrion nearly collapsed in laughter. “Oh Jaime, you never cease to entertain me. Still, you better get in there before some other man does. For someone with such unfortunate looks, she seems to be attracting the most unusual and handsome of men.” And with those parting words, he strolled toward the wench.

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Brienne nervously clung to Oberyn when they arrived; her senses were overwhelmed from everything: the red and gold decorations, the overabundance of food and flowers, the sheer number of people, the swirling music of the orchestra, the whole utter decadence of the whole ball. He all but supported her as they walked into the grand hall. “Just breathe,” he’d said, rubbing her arm. “You look beautiful, and I’ll be by your side for as long as you need me.” Looking at him gave her strength. To her amusement, he had chosen to wear gold, opting for a finely made Dornish tunic and breeches. He looked every inch the prince. He’d also been looking at her with admiration all night, ever since he picked her up. He had greeted her in the Dornish style, with three cheek kisses, and told her she looked like she’d been plucked from the stars. Brienne giggled as she remembered Gilly’s reaction to him as he knocked on her door. Gilly had been kind enough to help Brienne dress and do her hair, and was absolutely gobsmacked at seeing the head of surgery on the other side of the door, looking so dashing.

She realized that she wasn’t awful to look at the moment they greeted the Baratheons; she saw Cersei’s mouth open in shock and her face settle to a cold fury. She’d said to Oberyn, “I didn’t know men wore dresses in Dorne,” to which Oberyn threw his head back and laughed, showing his shiny white teeth.

“Dear Cersei, I was inspired by the occasion. I looked at this gold tunic and thought it perfect for tonight. Plus, I thought I would be the sun to Brienne’s moon and stars.” Cersei’s eyes turned cold. She turned to Brienne.

“And Miss Tarth. So lovely to see that you found a dress that actually fits you. You must have found a rare dressmaker indeed.” Brienne looked at her with a neutral expression. She must not look bad at all if that was all Cersei could muster. She felt a small weight lift off her.

“Dr. Tarth,” Oberyn corrected pointedly. Cersei pursed her lips.

“You do look most fetching, Dr. Tarth! The dress suits you!” Robert boomed. “Where’s your Jon Snow then? I’d hoped to talk to him about Ned and his aunt Lyanna.”

Brienne looked at Cersei, who glared at her husband. “He wasn’t invited, Robert. We only invited legitimate representatives of houses here. Remember?”

“Pish-posh! I don’t see why he couldn’t have come. I see all sorts here.” Robert smiled broadly.

Brienne shook hands with the very serious Myrcella and Tommen, who didn’t look too happy to be standing there. “How do you do,” said Tommen in a little voice. They shook hands. She smiled widely at him, and he slowly smiled back.

Brienne saw that a crowned Joffrey was sitting idly on a gilded throne on a raised stage, next to a
large and immensely tall (more than a head taller than her, she estimated), grim man. The young man seemed to be surveying his domain. He was golden and handsome and looked quite a lot like Jaime, though he lacked his uncle’s ease and sense of ironic detachment. Nevertheless, she could not prevent a wave of disgust and anger at the sight of him, remembering what he did to poor Ros. She wondered how such depravity could lie under such pretty coverings.

“Brienne, how lovely you look tonight,” a voice called to her. She looked down to find Tyrion, impeccable in his custom tuxedo. His countenance looked particularly amused this evening.

Brienne blushed. “Thank you.” Tyrion leaned close. “As a matter of fact, my brother has been staring at you ever since you made your entrance. He seems quite impressed.”

She laughed. “I seriously doubt that. He’s probably thinking of ways to say how manly I look in this dress.” She scanned the room and indeed discovered that Jaime was looking at her, his eyes glittering and restless. She nodded at him, and he, surprised, nodded back, breaking eye contact and looking down at his hands.

Both Oberyn and Tyrion looked skeptically at her. Tyrion turned to the man.

“Oberyn.”

“Tyrion. How goes the writing?” Oberyn smiled.

Tyrion looked at Brienne. “Oberyn is one of my biggest fans, if you can believe it. I blame it on the Dornish climate.” He turned to Oberyn. “It goes slowly. I’m trying to find my way in the new book as yet. A romance this time, with a fantastic heroine.”

A small, feminine hand caught her elbow and pulled her away from Oberyn and Tyrion. It was Margaery. Brienne gave an apologetic look to Oberyn, who bowed and smiled.

“Brienne, you look…simply amazing!” Margaery looked up at her, pleased as could be. “No, you are the one who looks beautiful and golden. As if a light were shining from you.”

Margaery tittered, spinning around in her gown, which indeed had a lot more golden beads and sequins than it originally had. “It turned out well, didn’t it? You should have seen Cersei’s face when she saw it!” She glanced slyly at Brienne’s escort. “Oberyn certainly looks dashing in gold as well.”

“Yes,” Brienne nodded, “I was surprised to see him looking so much like a hero from a storybook.”

She dragged Brienne to a small group. “You remember Loras,” she pointed to her brother, who bowed pleasantly at her. “And oh,” she reached out to grab a tall, dark-haired man’s arm. He turned around. “And I’m so pleased to reintroduce you to Renly.” Renly. Brienne’s breath caught in her throat. He seemed taller, broader and had lost the roundness of youth in his face. But his blue eyes and black hair were the same, and so was the kind, gentle expression he wore. “Brienne,” he breathed. And suddenly she just felt pure affection for him – not the romantic kind per se, but a sincere gladness to see him and see him look so well. She spontaneously reached out to embrace him and he must have felt something too, because he returned the hug with enthusiasm. When they finally let each other go, they both looked at each other and laughed. Both Loras and Margarey looked immensely pleased.

Renly offered her an arm, asking “May I have this dance, my lady?”

Brienne blushed, nodded and took his arm. It was as it was years ago. The noise and din fell away, the crowd fell away, and it was her, Renly and the music. Her feet fell into rhythm with his, and
they swayed to the music and moved across the dance floor almost automatically.

“Do you remember the last time we danced?” Renly asked, smiling.

“Of course. You saved me from those awful boys.” Brienne blushed.

“They were awful. You didn’t deserve that.” He looked at her kindly. “But I’m so glad that you have come so far. I knew you’d make something of yourself. A surgeon, no less! A very fine one too, from what I’ve heard.”

“Oh, I don’t know.” she replied, embarrassed at his compliments. “I’m trying my best.”

“We are all trying our best. But you’re succeeding in it.” His eyes were wide and soft and oh so considerate.

He twirled her and led her all across the floor. He was dashing and exactly the man she remembered, but even more self-assured. She could feel eyes on them at one point, and she surprisingly did not seem to mind. She was with the man who first believed in her, who first recognized her for what she was. All too soon, the music ended. He bowed and led her back to Margaery and Loras.

Oberyn appeared at her side, and after greeting the group, invited Brienne to dance the waltz. She wasn’t surprised to learn that he was an accomplished and graceful dancer. He moved with the fluid ease of a jungle cat and exuded a sensuality that made Brienne blush. His arm around her back was strong and solid, and if he pulled her closer to him than was the norm, she honestly did not mind. She felt strangely alive dancing with Oberyn, as if his fire and zest for life had transferred to her through his touch.

He looked into her eyes, enjoyment prancing in them. “You are surprisingly agile and light on your feel for a woman of your goddess-like stature,” he pronounced.

“And you, Oberyn,” she countered, “Are just as graceful and panther-like as I thought you would be.” He laughed and she couldn’t help but join him.

“It doesn’t surprise me that we move so well together on the dance floor,” he added. Brienne felt herself colour. “For in the operating room, we move together in sync, much like this. I open my hand, you automatically hand me the scalpel. Now the dance in the operating room is a dance that very few people can do, and very few surgeons do very well.” She agreed with him, she always felt that push and pull, that ask and demand, aware of how her body moved in reaction to, and in anticipation of, his movements. It was instinctual, natural.

“I always knew that we would fit together well, like this, like in the operating room, and perhaps elsewhere.” He lowered his eyes and looked at her through his long, dark eyelashes. She had a sense that he was being seductive, and she felt herself flattered at the notion, but she knew that it was Oberyn’s natural way. Being sultry was like breathing the air for him. Not directed at one person, and certainly not at her, but in a general direction of everywhere. But for just a moment, she was able to pretend that all his attention was aimed at her and only her, and allowed herself to play the heroine. It was lovely to have this, here, with him. She felt the music and a euphoric sense of well-being soar in her blood.

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The wench had been in King’s Landing for less than half a year, and yet it seemed like she’d made
friends with the whole bloody realm. And one of them is supposedly you, you idiot, he said to himself. He wanted to approach her, talk to her, dance with her, and maybe lead her to a less crowded spot of the Red Keep, but the damned wench was surrounded by people, who were smiling at her as if she’d personally rescued them. Margaery and Loras were fawning over her, and good gods, was that Renly? And were they embracing, right in public, right in the middle of the ballroom? Does the wench usually touch men so spontaneously? Jaime’s jaw tightened at the sight of the tall, immensely good-looking man leading Brienne onto the dance floor, as if it were his every right. And godsdammit she looked so happy, like she didn’t want to be anywhere but in Renly’s arms. He recalled something about him visiting Tarth when Brienne was young, but he never believed they were on such intimate terms. Still, as Jaime cocked his head, he was surprised at how well she moved; as a highborn lady she would have surely had dancing lessons drilled into her as a girl, but he assumed with her height, those lanky limbs of hers, that she would be as graceless as a plucked turkey. He watched as her blue skirts swirled around her. She did not look so freakishly large when dancing with tall man, he mused. Jaime was nearly as tall as she was, just perhaps an inch shy of her; he knew that they too would be well matched.

After Renly, that blasted Oberyn pulled her into his arms, rather too closely, thought Jaime, as he felt his own shoulders tense. Was there any space between their bodies at all? He couldn’t help but stare. In his periphery, he was vaguely aware of figures coming toward him, but didn’t particularly care to look around.

“Captain Lannister. Captain Lannister!” The voice came from a woman, dark-haired and pretty, her neckline low enough for Jaime to see how full and round her breasts were, and her companion, similarly pretty but with blond hair. He looked down at them, automatically breaking into his well-worn charming smile.

“We were just saying how divine the music is tonight.” One of them said.

One of them squeezed his arm. The other, the dark-haired one (he’d forgotten their names if they’d said them to him) pressed her bosom insistently against his other arm, and looked up at him through her dark eyelashes.

“We’re just longing for a dance, among other things.” The dark-haired one, whom he figured was the more forward of the two, cooed at him. She rubbed his arm up and down. Her breasts pressed closer to him. If she were taller, those breasts would be right in his face.

“Well,” Jaime mustered, grinning winningly at them. “I wish you good fortune in that. Ladies, I must attend to…something.” With that, he extricated himself from the two women and walked to the ice sculpture of a lion. Sadly, the lion’s mane was quickly melting and the ice creature was on its way to becoming a sea lion. He looked up. From this vantage, he even had a better view of the wench dancing with Oberon. Why were they still dancing? How long had it been? Still, he had to give Oberyn credit. He was a lithe and agile dancer, full of innate music; he and Brienne moved with disturbing synchronicity, their bodies responding to one another in a way that raised his hackles and made him uncomfortable. Her face was full of joy, those large lips widening into a big smile, her blue eyes rich with merriment. Gods, Tyrion was right. He was pathetic, following the woman he was – what? interested in? liked? had lusty thoughts about? – with his eyes and doing nothing about it. He poured himself a punch from the ice sea lion and drank it in two gulps. Tyrion had certainly done his work on the punch, as it was probably half rum at this point. Jaime paused. He had an idea. He would bring the wench a glass of punch; that was a very friendly thing to do. And with all that dancing, she was sure to have summoned up a fiery thirst.

He wove around the dancing couples, the women over decorated with baubles, the men smoking cigars, as he headed toward the wench. She was at last standing alone, looking out onto the
veranda. But before he could reach her, he saw a slim blond man approach her. Joffrey. Jaime quickened his stride, but was frustrated by the number of bodies in his way – *why were there so many people in this blasted room?* He saw Joffrey lean into Brienne, his face looking at her as if she were prey. He knew that look well enough. He saw the wench hesitate and try to step back as she looked down on him, for she was half a head taller than him still. Joffrey grabbed her hand and started pulling her to him. She was silent, but was starting to let him tow her along. He felt an urgent need to intervene, a panic rising within him.

“Joffrey!” Jaime managed a false smile on his face. “What a beautiful party for your nameday this is. My congratulations.”

“Uncle.” The brat nodded at him and frowned.

“I was just summoned to get you.” Jaime put on the most ingratiating smile possible. “It appears your mother has urgent need of you.”

“But uncle, I was just about to lead Miss Tarth to a dance. It is my nameday after all. I intend to dance with *all* of the eligible ladies in this room.” He announced arrogantly. Jaime’s hand twitched. He repressed an urge to slap the boy.

“Joffrey.” He smiled again. “Your mother was very insistent. You know how she is. You wouldn’t want to disappoint her, do you? And by the way, it’s Dr. Tarth you are speaking to.”

The boy screwed his face in frustration. “Fine,” he darkly said. He turned to Brienne with an oily smirk and kissed her hand. “Doctor Tarth, I will claim that dance later. I promise, my lady.” Brienne smiled weakly and nodded. The boy walked away from them.

Brienne looked at him, her mouth tilted in a smile, her eyes full of relief. “Thank you for rescuing me, Jaime.”

Her eyes. All he saw was blue, and points of light that seemed to emanate from them. She was looking at him as if she saw into the very depths of him, as if she knew all his soft spots and the guises with which he used to cover them up. It was unnerving, and yet he could not tear his eyes away. Her eyes were remarkably open and guileless and were an exact match to the colour of her dress. He had a notion that he would thank whoever made that dress with all the gold in Casterly. He handed her a glass of punch.

“I did nothing. In any case, I brought refreshment, my lady.” She took a sip, and made a face. “Tyrion’s doing, I’m afraid. He must have raided Robert’s cellars tonight.” He felt her gaze on his face, his shoulders, chest and down his legs. Jaime preened appreciatively.

“You look well tonight.” She said, hiding a small smile. He self-consciously straightened his jacket.

“As do you.” Jaime said sincerely. “You are a skilled dancer. You move with considerable grace, Brienne.” He wanted to slap himself. He sounded *idiotic*.

She smiled shyly. “Thank you, Jaime.” He gazed at her and remembered how easily she had accepted when he asked if they could be friends. He searched for defensiveness but he couldn’t find any in her impossible, astonishing eyes. How could she be so *good*? He felt that she actually *liked* him. When was the last time anyone liked him? He had a sudden urge to be near her.

He hesitated. Drew closer. She did not retreat. “Would you care to walk outside with me for a moment? I could use some air, and I believe it’s tradition by now that we take the night air
together.” Brienne nodded, put down the drink, and took his offered arm. They walked onto the empty veranda, which overlooked Blackwater Bay; it was a still night and a full moon hung from the sky. The aroma of night blooms filled the air.

“Now this is the most spectacular view of the water I’ve seen in King’s Landing,” Brienne murmured.

They stood in companionable silence.

Brienne turned toward him, her glance transparent and warm. “How was your time at Riverrun?”

Jaime laughed, saying, “You know, you’re the first person who’s asked me that since I’ve returned?” Brienne raised her eyebrows. “It was fine. Nothing of consequence.”

It occurred to him how true his realization was. His family never asked about his trips, his wars, his campaigns. Even Tyrion, though a good listener when Jaime wanted to tell him something, rarely asked about his daily goings-on. It dawned on him how thoughtful the wench was, and how he truly had never met anyone like her before. He shook his head again at how sincerely she thanked him for making that pimple of a boy go away, as if he’d done a grand deed for her. He turned toward her, and was again amazed at the sight of her in the night, in a gown that suited her so well.

“What?” She asked, looking at him, lips pursed. He realized she was vaguely expecting him to insult her. Guilt twitched within him.

“I was just thinking how much you resemble the starry skies tonight.” He came closer to her. He wanted to reach out and touch her dress, the stars that covered it. “I’ve been thinking that all evening. You look like the skies we sat under that time, at the beach.” He paused. “And I’ve been wanting to talk to you all night, wench.” She raised her eyebrows in surprise, her eyes roaming his face.

“You have?” She looked at him quizzically.

“Yes. But you’ve been surrounded by people who want your attention. I had to steal you away just now.” He smiled fondly at her, and she shot him an amused look.

Jaime was overcome with a feeling of ease, of nothing being as simple as it was in that moment. He could hear music pouring out from the doors and windows; it gave the evening a certain magical air.

Jaime smiled softly and held out a hand to her. “I was wondering if you’d do me the honour of a dance, my lady?”

She looked at him, her face blooming into a playful smile. She nodded, taking his hand. He gingerly placed his hand on her back, and they started to move to the music. She was light on her feet, fluidly moving with ease to the strains of the orchestra. The veranda was empty, and there was no one to watch them except for the moon and stars. His heart warmed at the sight of her joyous face, which radiated with a pure kind of light. He tightened his arm and drew her a bit closer, bravely touching her cheek with his. He felt the warmth of her skin; he was sure she was blushing. The smell of mint and rosemary and sweet oranges wafted from her. He felt incredibly close to her, her body sending heat to his own; he discovered to his surprise that her dress was unboned, and it even felt like she was uncorseted. He could feel the muscles and contours of her torso under her dress, right under his hands. He liked that they were of near the same height; their bodies seemed to match together incredibly well. He felt a little intoxicated at the feel of her, the
closeness, the intimacy of it all. After a while, the music ended. She stepped back a little, and he dropped his hands from her. She was looking at him with a near disbelieving, yet enchanted expression in her eyes. She was luminous. There were stars in her hair. He found himself reaching toward her.

“These things in your hair,” he gently touched a few of the jewels, “They make you look like a constellation come to life. The Moonmaid.”

Her eyes widened at his words, and her lips slowly parted. Her fathomless eyes drew him in. He leaned closer, his face nearly touching hers. He could feel the heat radiating off her skin, her breath caressing his face. He traced her neck lightly with his fingertips. She inhaled sharply, opening her mouth in surprise. The blue of her eyes were gone now, replaced by the black of her pupils. His gaze was drawn to her plump, open lips.

“I’ve always wanted to know how it felt to kiss the stars.” Her gaze lingered up and down and paused on his lips. He leaned closer and closer until finally, he felt the pillowy softness of her lips against his; he felt himself sinking and he pressed harder into her lips, and miraculously felt her kiss back, her mouth moving tentatively against his. He moaned, and she leaned her body into him and he wrapped his arms around her, holding her tight to him. He could feel the warmth of her body, her small breasts pressed against his chest, the velvet plushness of her dress crushed against him. She squeaked adorably, and melted into him, and she opened her lips wider so he could taste her mouth, lips, tongue. She sighed into his mouth, and he felt hands around his neck and fingers in his hair. His trousers quickly became uncomfortable as his arousal soared. He had a notion in the back of his mind to stop before he was lost, to stop before he lost control, but all he wanted to do in that moment was to pull up her gown, kneel in front of her, and taste the slickness between her thighs. It took all the willpower he had to unwrap himself around her and pull back. He stepped away from her. They stared at each other, both breathing hard. Her lips were swollen and red and she had a look of wild abandon in her eyes that made his cock grow even harder. He wanted to kiss her again and again. “Brienne,” he breathed, feeling astonished and full of desire. She looked back at him, her eyes wanting more but also with an expression of both curiosity and confusion.

“Brienne!” She turned. Oberyn was standing in the doorway. Behind him he could see Clegane, and Tywin looking on. Behind them couples were still twirling on the dance floor.

“There you are. I thought I lost you.” He walked toward them, offering her his arm. He looked sidelong at Jaime, his gaze lit with intense interest. She took his offered arm, and started to walk away. She looked back for a moment at Jaime, her eyes large and questioning.

He turned back to look at the view. The water was still glittering, the moon still shone brightly. Nothing had changed yet Jaime had the feeling that something had fundamentally shifted. That the kiss was something he could not come back from. His body was still reeling from the sensation of her lips, her body against his. Her mouth that was sweet and giving. He realized that he had been on the verge of losing control. He couldn’t think. He didn’t want to think. He wanted to fall back into that kiss. He wanted to think about it and remember every detail, every press of the lips, every swipe of the tongue. Her softness. Her noises. How he’d kissed the stars and swallowed them. How they’d lit something deep inside him.
Next time, we'll get Part 2 of the ball, which actually might not be as fun as this chapter was.

Kudos if you like, and I would love to hear your thoughts about the ball! What did you all think of Jaime?
The Lannister Ball, Part 2

Chapter Summary

Brienne has some surprising encounters at the Lannister Ball.

Chapter Notes

Warning for Jaime/Cersei incest content.

I can't believe the entire ball scene was over 10,000 words. Gosh. I hope you like the second part, although I think some of you...will not.

Thanks for such brilliant feedback on the last chapter. I'm so happy that it made people feel good. And we get romantic Jaime - finally!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Brienne never thought her first kiss would be from a man who’d agitated her, provoked her into anger numerous times, who insulted her looks over and over, and certainly not from a man who was known as the handsomest man in all of Westeros. To describe herself as stunned would be an understatement. She was astounded, at a loss for words, and at a loss for thoughts as well. It seemed like a dream when she recalled it, but the memory of the heat of his lips, the touch of his tongue inside her mouth, the press of his hard body against hers, the way his arms wrapped around her as if it were the only important thing, were all too real. She could still feel his lips; it seemed that the feeling would stay with her forever. The kiss inflamed her, and made her feel an unusual ache in her loins.

But it made her want something she knew she could never have. Jaime’s kiss had opened some kind of portal inside her, made her glimpse a whole other world she didn’t know existed, a world she was heretofore ignorant of. But it was a world that she knew was barred from her. She was both glad she discovered this within herself, but angry at Jaime for teasing her this way. Teasing her with the one thing she could never have: a desire fulfilled, the consummation of love; she thought it was cruel what he did, like a prisoner being shown the way to freedom but the key to the cell was not quite within reach.

“Are you quite well, Brienne?” Oberyn leaned in and squeezed her arm, eyes curious and concerned. They were walking in the hallway, outside the ballroom, where things were quieter.

She looked back at him with a searching glance. “Yes – but I find myself a little overwhelmed. I wanted to step outside to get some air, and Jaime Lannister was being uncharacteristically kind—”

She broke off, not wanting to relive the kiss with him. “But I suppose I’m not used to all this… attention, all these people, the noise, everything. I never wanted anyone to look at me, but it seems like tonight everyone has been looking right at me. It’s uncomfortable.”
Oberyn stopped and turned her to face him. “I know this environment is not your forte, but I have seen you reacting with remarkable grace and fortitude. Despite the somewhat hostile surroundings, I hope you see how much people admire you. You’ve been surrounded by friends tonight, and that is a testament to your character.” Brienne felt heat flood her face.

“Plus,” Oberyn looked at her and smiled, his dark eyes soft and welcoming, “You look like a moon goddess come to life. Of course people will want to stare.” Brienne looked at him, her eyes luminous and trusting. Oberyn leaned close to her, his voice low and sultry in her ear, “You have no idea how those eyes of yours can unmake a man.” His warm hand touched the back of her neck and caressed down her shoulders to her back, where her dress met skin. She shivered deliciously at his touch. “No idea,” he repeated. He slowly pulled away, looking at her through lowered eyes.

“It seems to me,” Oberyn murmured, lifting her hand to his lips, “That in addition to learning how to become a surgeon, you are learning how it is to be a person – a woman – outside your role as a doctor. Even in the time I’ve known you, you’ve personally grown, and it has been my privilege to witness such an unfolding.” He held her hand to his chest, squeezing it. She could feel the beat of his heart through his golden tunic; he felt very much alive.

Oberyn’s gaze on her was strong and fierce. “But remember too, that desire can be a good teacher for someone such as yourself, for whom control is so important.” He smiled and placed her hand on his arm as they resumed walking.

On their way back to the ballroom, they encountered Tywin Lannister, who looked as crisp and proper as he did the beginning of the evening. He nodded at them, a reserved smile on his face. “Brienne. May I have the pleasure of a turn in the gardens? If you don’t mind, Oberyn.” Oberyn bowed. Brienne nodded and took Tywin’s offered arm, and he led her leisurely outside. They walked from the veranda and came down the stairs to the finely kept gardens, which were lit by lamplight.

“I saw you talking with Jaime a little while ago.” Tywin began, his voice even.

“Yes. I needed some air, and he accompanied me.” Brienne said in a neutral tone.

“He was civil to you?” He looked at her inquiringly. “It’s just that he can be a little, let’s just say, caustic with people he doesn’t know very well.”

Her mind flashed to his kiss, his searing, desperate kiss. She quickly willed herself to put that memory away. “He was quite…annoying in the beginning, but I believe we have compromised in becoming friends.” Tywin raised his eyebrows, his cold eyes transfixing her with their clarity.

“That surprises me. Jaime, you see, doesn’t have friends. His attachments have hitherto consisted of Tyrion, and to an extreme degree, Cersei.” He compressed his lips into a thin line, his jaw tight.

“I’m pleased, however, that he has come to know you. Jaime is a very willful individual. God knows I have tried to guide him in my own way. But I hope that you will be a good influence on him. The Seven know that he acutely needs some guidance in his life.” They stopped in front of a bush of dark purple roses. Tywin leaned over to sniff a bloom, closing his eyes as he inhaled the scent of the flower. He then carefully took out a small folding knife from his jacket pocket and snipped at the flower. He offered it to her to smell. It had a lovely, rich heady smell, fragrant and earthy.

“This flower is called the midnight rose, named for the darkness of its petals. It was my late wife Joanna’s favourite – since her death, I’ve planted this rose in every place I’ve lived in. As a reminder of her. They are very finicky, hard to cultivate, and they will bloom only with great care.”
Brienne watched him as he, after an inquiring look, placed the flower in one of the silver ornaments that was in her hair. He smiled at the sight of her and the memory of his late wife, his eyes unusually melted and warm. Brienne was amazed at the sight. The smile transformed his whole face.

“You must have loved her very much,” she murmured.

Tywin winced a little, and nodded. “I did. She was my light, my only light. When she died, the world was suddenly cold. I with it.”

He continued, as Brienne watched him quietly. “Out of my three children, Jaime is most like Joanna; he doesn’t know it, as I’ve never talked about her to my children, though I know I should have. She was full of love, and she gave herself freely to me and the children. If there is one thing I remember of her, is that she loved.” He offered her his arm again and they started making their way back. “Jaime is like that, so full of love that he doesn’t know where to put it. And in those years since her death, that force in him has been twisted, perverted, and dammed. Love becomes hate; it becomes sarcasm and insults.”

Tywin paused. He looked at her and out onto the sea, his expression troubled. “It’s no secret – I’m sure you’ve heard from Tyrion and Jaime – that I’m disappointed in my children, and consequently have been harsh toward them; but they seem to me all warped and corrupted in their own way. Some of that is my fault. I was unable to love them as she did. But they also made profoundly wrong choices.” He hesitated. “I feel that it is almost too late for them now.” Brienne’s eyes were wide with sympathy and apprehension.

They had reached the veranda again. Tywin stopped. Brienne looked at him with direct, clear, honest eyes. He nodded, bowing slightly to her. When he straightened up, she could see his steely, cold façade had returned. “I must leave you here. Thank you for taking a walk with me, Brienne.”

“Thank you, Dr. Lannister. I mean it.” She said as he strode away.

It had certainly been a strange evening; she had so many conversations – and encounters – that she needed to think about, and all the while she hardly knew what she was feeling. She walked back into the ballroom and helped herself to some refreshment, noticing that the poor carved ice lion had lost all his features and the melting lump lay in a puddle of its own making. Gradually, she felt a strange presence; Brienne turned. A shadow fell in her path. She looked up, and saw Cersei standing right in front of her. She was certainly a vision, to rival Margaery as the prettiest woman in the room. Her dress was flowing molten gold and showed off her considerable assets. Her lips were red and curled to a forced smile, though her brittle green eyes were far from welcoming. She scrutinized Brienne and stared hard at Brienne’s hair, her face tightening with anger.

“That is mother’s rose. Why do you have that in your hair?” Cersei hissed.

“Oh, the rose? Your father gave it to me when we were walking just now.”

“My father? He put flowers in your hair?” She threw her head back and laughed maliciously. “You lie. Why don’t you just tell me you stole it?” Cersei’s voice grew louder, as her rage increased. Brienne was transfixed in her confusion.

“But I didn’t-” Brienne protested and tried to move. Cersei’s small hand grabbed her tightly on her arm to prevent her from moving away. Cersei set her jaw and curled her lip.

“Gods, you’re exactly like a cow when you look at me with those dumb eyes. I don’t know how Jaime can stand looking at you. What did you do to him? Why has he been staring at you all
night?” She scrutinized Brienne, looking her up and down and sneering. Brienne’s mouth opened in astonishment; she finally had the faculties to pull her arm away from the woman’s grip. But she found herself standing there, as if paralyzed.

“You’re a great dumb beast, aren’t you?” Cersei licked her red lips and her mouth twisted into a smile.

All Brienne could do was stare at her, like the great dumb beast that she was. She was speechless, stunned by this beautiful woman in front of her, stunned by the unexpected vitriol that was suddenly spewed at her, unprovoked. Suddenly she was aware that all the eyes in the room were on them. Even the music had stopped.

“Cersei, that’s enough!” Jaime shouted, rushing in, standing between the two of them and grabbing his sister by the shoulders. He forcibly led her away outside to the veranda and Cersei complied, gleefully laughing at the stricken and wounded face of Brienne as she was being pulled away by her twin.

Oberyn was quickly by her side, arms around her waist and guiding her away. “Come, come,” he leaned into her hair and murmured, his grip tightening on her waist. He led her to a quiet room off the hall and closed the door. She was humiliated; her insides felt it was being squeezed, and a panic set in. She felt like she was under water, drowning, and she couldn’t get a breath. She felt herself panting, she felt her stomach twist, her lungs hurt. Her eyes were terrified pools. Faintly, she heard a voice, a calm voice, telling her to breathe. To take deep breaths. To slow down, and suddenly the voice was close to her, next to her skin. She breathed slowly, deeply, and gradually, her panic started to ebb. She felt she was coming back to herself again. She could breathe. She was flooded with relief. But she felt her body trembling uncontrollably, and the pain was still there, and she felt arms – Oberyn’s arms around her, holding her, embracing her with his whole being. He was whispering into her ear, “Come now, it’s all right. You’re fine. You’re fine. Shhh,” over and over until she felt still. She clung to him like she didn’t want to let go and her arms tightened around his shoulders, which felt comforting and solid and strong. He rubbed her back, stroked the back of her neck. He made cooing, comforting noises. She rested her head on his shoulders and closed her eyes. They embraced for a long time, until she came back to herself, and she felt the floor was solid again. She squeezed his shoulders and let him go. He dropped his arms, and looked at her with concern.

“I’m okay,” she reassured him. “I just-”

“I know. Don’t worry. I’m glad you’re better.” He held her hand in his and squeezed it.

“Thank you, Oberyn.” Her big eyes looked into his. He waved off her thanks, shaking his head. “I’m glad I was here for you.”

They sat in silence for a little while.

“Cersei is certainly a malevolent fool,” Oberyn shook his head.

Brienne let out a surprised giggle. “Yes, yes she is. Most definitely. She took me by surprise.”

Oberyn stood up, gesturing toward the door. “Shall we get out of this place before anything worse happens?”

She nodded eagerly. “I shall have the carriage outside in ten minutes. You’ll be all right in the meantime?” Oberyn asked.
“Yes. I’ll just step outside to take the air for a few minutes.” Brienne reassured him. He nodded, then left the room.

She walked through the ballroom where people were still mingling and dancing, and came through to the veranda. She really did want to get some air and take a look at the view again. However, a part of her wanted to find Jaime to see if he was okay, and more importantly to thank him for stopping his sister’s attack. But the veranda was empty. She decided to walk toward the garden again, perhaps to visit Joanna’s rose. She was deeply touched by Tywin’s words tonight. He must have been lonely, she felt, in all those years. She felt for Jaime, and Tyrion, and yes, even for Cersei, who grew up and lived without knowing how to love. She understood now why Jaime was so surprised at any kindness she showed to him. He simply was not used to it. But she was troubled at how bitter Tywin seemed at his own children, how he thought it was too late for them to change, for him to show them love. She shook her head, troubled.

Her thoughts were interrupted by voices, angry, urgent voices, as if in an argument. Curious, she followed the sounds into the rose garden. She realized the voices were coming from the alcove. She had a strange feeling in her spine; something about the voices unnerved her. She slowly stepped closer, standing behind some rose bushes. Her heart suddenly leapt in her throat and she felt her stomach clench violently. She had to suppress a gasp. For she saw Jaime with his eyes closed, his back pressed against the alcove wall, and in front of him stood Cersei, golden and shining, kissing his throat and ripping his shirt open. Jaime was protesting, trying to push her away, saying “No, Cersei, we’re over. Stop. Stop.” But his pleas eventually ceased as his sister’s hands confidently stroked down his chest and down to the front of his pants. Jaime whimpered, all protest gone from his throat. Brienne heard the clinking of belt buckles, saw Cersei’s hands in front, moving, frantic, as Jaime’s pants and small clothes were yanked down, revealing taut, muscular thighs, pale in the moonlight. “Cersei, oh, Cersei,” he cried desperately. His eyes were closed, head moving from side to side as if in a trance. “Brother, you’re mine. You’ll always be mine,” said Cersei, as she lowered herself to kneel in front of him. Jaime groaned obscenely, his head thrown back, as her head moved back and forth. Brienne could bear it no more. She turned around, her dress violently rustling the rose bushes, the sound causing Jaime’s eyes to snap open. And in a brief moment, he saw a flash of blue and silver stars disappearing, running away. The night sky gone from his vision, the stars that he earlier swallowed while he kissed her were all gone.

Brienne! His heart hurt. He wanted to run after her, to catch her and explain, to plead for mercy, but Cersei’s mouth was on him and there was too much pleasure, he couldn’t stop, didn’t want it to stop, her swirling tongue and lips were so masterful on his cock. It was too much, felt too good, too intense and overwhelming. He had to give in. He closed his eyes again and moaned loudly, over and over.

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Brienne ran as quickly as she could out of the garden, up to the veranda and pushed her way through the crowd in the ballroom. She could barely see, her eyes still filled with the vision of Jaime with his twin sister. She burst out the main doors, only stopping for breath when she saw Oberyn waiting in his carriage, doors open for her. He looked alarmed when he saw the state she was in. She rushed into the carriage, closed the door. She was pale. She looked sick.

“Please, just go. Please,” she cried out.

Oberyn called out to the driver, and they started moving. “Brienne, what has happened?” He asked with concern, eyes wide.
“Nothing. Nothing. I can’t. I just need to go home. Please.” She curled herself up in the corner of the carriage and screwed her eyes shut tight.

From her constricted body language, he guessed she did not want to be touched. Still, her wild, frantic appearance frightened him; she was pale, haunted, distressed. He wondered what happened in those ten minutes. He cursed himself for leaving her alone. But she had seemed fine, in control. What on earth could have happened? He could only assume it was one of Cersei’s cruelties once again – but what was it to have caused Brienne so much physical and emotional shock? It was clear she was in no mood to talk or receive comfort, at least not from him. But he knew she could not be left alone. He made the driver stop at the hospital. He gave the driver instructions and the driver left with his errand.

Oberyn looked at Brienne. She was silent, still and as pale as marble. Her eyes were open now, but they were haunted and unseeing. She shivered; she looked like she was going to be sick. She curled into herself. She did not seem to be aware that they had stopped. Oberyn felt lost, adrift, unable to help her and unsure of what to do for the first time in years.

Moments later the carriage door opened and Jon burst in, panicked, his clothes in disarray, his shirt barely buttoned. He gasped when he saw the state of Brienne.

“Brienne!” Jon called, and he automatically took her into this arms. At first she was unmoving as a block of ice, then Jon called her name again, and she began to stir, pulling away, as if awakening, and she looked hard at his face, to make sure he was really there. “Jon?” she asked.

“Yes, my ostrich, I’m here.” He pulled her to him again, and this time she clung to him fiercely, her arms round his back. “Jon!” she cried, and he pulled her even closer, rocking her in his arms. Soon she calmed, became silent. Jon looked sharply at Oberyn.

“What happened?” Jon asked harshly.

“I honestly don’t know,” Oberyn replied, frowning. “Cersei said cruel words, and I took her away to comfort her and she was better. Then I went to get the carriage, and Brienne came running out, upset, but she wouldn’t tell me what happened.”

“You shouldn’t have left her alone-” Jon snarled.

Brienne, still in Jon’s arms, shook her head vehemently. “No, it’s not Oberyn’s fault. He was perfect to me tonight, so kind. Don’t blame him. I just had a shock…I was upset…I ran out.”

“I’m so sorry, Oberyn.” She looked up at him with tired eyes.

“No need to apologize, Brienne,” he said kindly.

“I feel awful, ill to my stomach. My head.” She nestled into Jon’s neck. “I need to go home and rest. Please take me home, Jon.”

“Yes. I’ll take you home. I’ll take care of you.” Jon lowered his face into her, and closed his eyes. He tightened his embrace.

Chapter End Notes
Ok, come at me with your comments! I love 'em. Though yeah, this chapter was a
tough one. Sorry? It needed to happen.

Kudos if you like (and thanks for those that have already done so).

Thanks so much for sticking with this story. It's not your classic Jaime/Brienne story,
but I hope you're enjoying it nonetheless. Plus, more J/B content to come guaranteed.
The Night and the Dream

Chapter Summary

Jon tries to comfort Brienne after the night's events at the ball.

Chapter Notes

Readers, can I say how absolutely THRILLED I was to read all your comments from last chapter? I was so incredibly fascinated at your reactions, interpretations, and visceral feels to that terrible BJ paragraph. I LOVED reading them, especially the very passionate discussion that happened between readers. So good. That being said, I'm choosing to post this chapter instead of responding to the comments. I just kind of want to leave that as a work of art without sticking my fingers in there. The comment threads on that chapter are magnificent. Thank you!

Also, I'm sorry about the emotional whiplash - one moment you're all rooting for Jaime, the next you want to punch his lights out. Yeah, it was not nice of me to put that scene in. But it needed to be done. I felt Brienne really needed to know the extent of Jaime's dysfunction and the role Cersei has in his development. And yes, this story is ultimately Jaime/Brienne end game, but I agree with you in that it will take a while. It will be a process of growth for Jaime. I hope to lead you guys there. [BTW I think I have more sympathy for Jaime than most of you at this moment, lol]

Ok, so in the meantime, enjoy some Jon and Brienne interaction. I hope you find it as fun to read as it was to write.

Love you guys.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Seeing Brienne’s pale, shocked face in Oberyn’s carriage had set a blind panic in Jon, so much so that without thinking, he simply enfolded her in his arms. It took her a while to realize he was there, holding her, but eventually she came back to herself and clung fiercely to him. Jon received a brief overview of events at the ball: how happy she seemed, how Cersei insulted her in front of a crowd, and how she ran to the carriage after getting some air. What happened was a mystery, and Brienne did not want to talk. She was eerily quiet the rest of the ride back, and remained pale and withdrawn when Jon helped her up the stairs and into her rooms. He set her down on the settee and put on water for tea.

As he sat down beside her, she turned to look at him, the light in her eyes dim. She seemed unhurt and physically fine, but something had happened to affect her in this way. He wondered if it was Cersei that was responsible. He remembered that malicious gleam in her eye when she invited Brienne to the ball at that dinner.
“Brienne,” he said, clasping her hands. He had never seen her like this and it scared him a little.

“Jon,” she murmured, blinking her eyes. She shook her head hard as if to clear it. “I feel so stupid.”

He made a noise of protest. She seemed irritated at herself, saying, “I’m fine. I’m fine. I don’t

know why I reacted like that. Nothing really happened.”

“Did anyone hurt you?” She shook her head vehemently.

“No, no, nothing like that. I was…I saw…something.” Her eyes looked into the distance, into

some faraway memory. She flinched.

“You had a shock. Something scared you.” He squeezed her hands. He kissed them.

“I did…something did shock me. I was surprised...” she turned to him, suddenly frantic, “But Jon, I
can’t tell you, I wish I could, but I can’t tell anyone. Please don’t ask.” Jon pulled her into his arms

again, holding her, stroking her shoulders and back. When he pulled away, Brienne seemed to

return to herself a little bit more, though her mood remained sombre.

He got her a cup of tea, sweetened with plenty of milk and sugar. She sipped gratefully. “You

know, I didn’t even have time to drink or eat much of anything tonight, so this tea is lovely.”

“Shall I get you something to eat?”

“No!” She started. “I don’t think I can manage eating right now.” For a brief moment she looked

like she was going to be ill. Then she seemed to notice how worried he looked.

“I’m okay, Jon. You don’t need to worry about me.” She reassured him, and reached out a hand to

push away the curls that had fallen over his eye. She smiled a sad smile at him. His heart

constricted.

“I wish I could have been there for you tonight.” Jon said wistfully.

Brienne smiled. “Yes, I wish you had been there too. I would have liked to dance with you.”

He had imagined it a number of times that day, dancing with her in the ballroom, twirling her so

much that she became dizzy and giggled, holding her close to him, feeling her cheek against his. It

would have been glorious.

He’d been too distracted and frightened to look at her before, but now he finally got the chance to

really take her in. He warmed; she was, indeed, a vision. The tiny jewels in the crown of her hair,

the stars and moon on her dress, all made her seem…otherworldly. Despite her recent shock she

still looked beautiful. He couldn’t help but stare at her with adoration.

“What is it, Jon?” Brienne caught something in his gaze.

“You look so lovely tonight, Brienne.” Jon murmured. “You even have stars in your hair…and this

purple rose...”

Brienne blushed, a faint pink finally returning to her cheeks. She reached up to pluck the dark

purple rose. “Oh this. Tywin put that in my hair. It was his late wife’s favourite flower.”

“Tywin Lannister?” Jon was incredulous.

Brienne smiled. “Yes. He was quite sweet tonight. Though Cersei had a fit when she saw that I was

wearing her mother’s flower.” Her face turned serious. Ah, perhaps it had something to do with
Cersei after all, Jon thought.

“Poor Oberyn, I must have given him quite the shock. He was so gracious and generous toward me and really took care of me. I have to apologize to him tomorrow.”

Jon shook his head. “Hush. He doesn’t care about that. I think he’s glad that you’re okay. He didn’t want you to be alone tonight though.”

She nodded. A calm fell between them. “I’m glad you’re here. I’m sorry they had to drag you out of bed.”

Jon laughed. “It was fine. I wasn’t really sleeping, I was just lying there, trying to fall asleep.” He didn’t tell her that he’d been lying there, imagining her at the ball, dancing with men who were not him, having a good time without him. He’d been in mild agony the whole night, if he was honest with himself. He’d spent half the day unsuccessfully trying to think up a scheme to sneak into the ball, much to his chagrin.

He hesitated, looking at her with an unsure expression. “It’s okay if I stay with you tonight, then?”

She nodded and smiled. “Yes, of course. I’ll even let you sleep on the bed.” She glanced at him playfully. He smiled in return, a warmth settling in his stomach.

“You should rest. It’s late.” He said, pulling her up from the settee.

Brienne looked at her dress, and back at Jon. “Will you help with the dress, and getting these things out of my hair? Gilly helped me put on the gown earlier, and I’m not sure if I can manage on my own. All the buttons are at the back.”

Jon swallowed; he felt something in his stomach flutter. He nodded. Brienne sat still as he carefully pulled out little blue stones and silver stars out of her hair and dropped them into her cupped palms.

She looked at the shiny pile in her hands. “These are so lovely. I’ll have to return them to Margaery later.” Jon then removed the pins from her hair, finding them by feel in order to pull them out. When he finally got all of them, he slowly unwound Brienne’s braid from around her head and carefully ran his hands through the silken hair, slowly combing out the pale, fine strands with his fingers. He loved feeling her hair like this, just as he loved touching her head. His hands caressed the back of her neck; he fought the desire to kiss the pale, freckled skin. Brienne’s eyes were closed and she looked completely relaxed. With her hair all wavy from the braid and sticking up like a nest, Jon thought she looked like a faerie from the forest. He smiled to himself.

“All done, faerie nymph.” Jon whispered in her ear. A sudden sense of mirth seized him.

She snapped open her eyes at his words. “Me? A nymph? Don’t be silly. I’m the very opposite of a nymph.” She looked at him provokingly.

He laughed, “Says the faerie nymph who had stars in her hair.”

Brienne tilted her head and smiled. “Good point.”

She stood up and turned around, exposing the back of her dress to him. “Could you?”

Her dress had tiny buttons all along the back. Of course she would need help undoing them. Jon swallowed, and felt his gut tighten. He willed his hands not to tremble, which was ridiculous, because he was a surgeon, and surgeons are supposed to have very steady hands. At this moment, his were not.
“Jon?”

“Yes, right away.” He slowly undid each button without too much fumbling, and he had to remind himself to breathe as Brienne’s skin was slowly being exposed. He couldn’t help but touch parts of her back as he unbuttoned, and he tried to contain his excitement at feeling her warm skin.

“There. All done.”

Brienne turned around, and the front of her dress was loose, her arms awkwardly holding up the bodice. She looked welcoming and wild and he felt an impulse to take her in his arms and slowly slide down the dress. He stared at her.

“Could you pass me that nightgown over there?” Brienne asked, gesturing to the white fabric hanging from a chair. Her dress dipped down further at the gesture.

Jon handed it to her, then said, clumsily, “I’ll – I’m going to the bathroom. For a moment. Be right back.” He exited with quick steps, and closed the bathroom door behind him. He felt his heart beating, he felt all too warm. He splashed water on his face and willed himself to settle down, and tried to take deep breaths. During the last few months, he’d felt increasingly unsettled by Brienne; he didn’t know what changed, other than the fact Robb was gone and he’d been spending more and more time with her. He gradually began to become aware of Brienne. Her body. Her smile, her face, and oh gods, her eyes. And tonight, how he helped undress her and felt the smooth, warm skin of her back, how she loosely held her dress up, so casually, but all he could see was how low the dress dipped, and how he could see just the top of her breasts, how her dress came so close to dropping and revealing the whole expanse of her. He desperately wanted to see that expanse. Oh gods, he had to get it together. He drenched his face with cold water.

When he returned to the room some time later, Brienne was in her nightgown and already tucked in.

Jon sat on the edge of the bed.

“You’re not going to sleep in your clothes, are you? They’ll get all wrinkled.”

Jon hesitated. “Of course not,” he replied, as he started undressing down to his small clothes. He slid in beside her.

“Jon.” Brienne turned to face him, moving closer. “Thank you for being here.” She reached over to embrace him, her arms and body pressed against his naked chest. She felt warm. He closed his arms around her and pulled her closer. He felt her small breasts push firmly against him. He willed himself not to think. She slowly pulled away. Her eyes were dark as they roamed his chest. He felt a thrill down his spine. He wanted to kiss her. He inwardly winced, admonishing himself. Not tonight, especially after her shock. It would be the last thing she wanted, if she even wanted it at all. But he could not deny how endearing she looked with her messy hair and pink cheeks and white nightgown which left her freckled, pale arms exposed.

“You’re welcome, my lovely faery nymph.” He said softly.

She giggled. “Sleep well.”

They turned off the lamp, and settled into sleep.

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Jon awoke with a jolt; he heard a cry, a moan, a woman’s voice sobbing. *Brienne.* She was thrashing, kicking in her sleep, panting. The anguished sounds coming out of her mouth tortured him. “No, no, no” she cried. He pressed closer, wrapping his arms around her, stilling her, cooing soft words in her ear. “It’s just a dream, shhh, it’s okay, you’re dreaming. *Brienne.*” He rubbed her shoulder and arms, gently kissed her cheek. Finally, she stilled and became quiet.

“Jon?” *Brienne* asked in a small voice still heavy with sleep.

“Shhh. You had a nightmare, *Brienne.* Go back to sleep.” Her arms pulled him even closer, so his whole body was pressed close against her back. He tightened his arm around her stomach as his head rested at the nape of her neck. He sleepily kissed her there. She was so soft and warm. She let out a contented sigh and he felt her entire body relax as she quickly fell back to sleep. He felt comforted and safe. A new feeling. He nestled closer to *Brienne* and he too, drifted off to sleep.

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*Brienne* woke up with a feeling of peace. She felt warm and safe, feeling a comforting weight on her body. She smiled languidly as she opened her eyes. *Oh.* She widened her eyes as her drowsy state took in *Jon*’s dark hair, his muscular shoulders, his near hairless chest. *Oh.* They had become entwined in sleep. His head lay on her shoulder, his arm was draped across her stomach, and his body was pressed against her, his right leg nestled between her legs. Her arms had somehow come across his shoulders and back in an embrace. *Brienne* had never been this close to a near naked man before, especially not such a beautiful man like *Jon.* She felt the heat of him, the firm strong muscles of his back. His face looked so innocent and peaceful while asleep; he looked almost happy. She couldn’t resist moving her hand to stroke his lush, black curls. *Jon* moaned contentedly. She smiled. His hair was so soft and shiny, she thought, as she continued to run her hands through it. *Jon* moaned again, pulling her body closer to him in sleep. His hips pressed tightly against her and something very hard poked at her thigh. *Oh.* She stopped touching his hair. At the loss of contact, *Jon* nuzzled his body even closer, and she could feel his very insistent hardness against her through his smallclothes and her nightgown. She blushed, embarrassed but also fascinated.

To be fair, she was a doctor and had seen many penises before, and she knew male anatomy and the physiology of erections, but in all her life she had never felt a man’s hard member against her, and this was *Jon*’s. And he was so warm and so very stiff against her, still pressing himself against her, against her most intimate, private part of her. She felt a warm pooling at the juncture of her thighs at the persistent press of his hardness, which rubbed against her in a most pleasant, indefinable way. He must have been dreaming, about a girl in Winterfell, perhaps. She knew from medical texts that men often had erections in sleep, sometimes even to completion, and that it was mostly a random physiological reaction. A part of her was very interested in what was happening. A part of her was curious to see what could happen.

But she knew she had to wake him before things got too embarrassing for either of them, thinking of the ache and wanting that she was beginning to feel between her thighs.

“*Jon,*” she said softly. He groaned, moving his hips roughly against her. She gasped at the feeling of him pushing against her *core.*

She shook his shoulder, at first gently, then harder has he failed to wake. Finally, he opened his eyes, looking up at her drowsily. “*Brienne,*” *Jon* said, smiling lazily. She smiled back. He nuzzled his lips into her neck. She shivered pleasantly.

“*Jon,*” *Brienne* repeated. “*Wake up.*” He moved his head away from her, starting to rouse.
Suddenly she felt his body jolt as he realized where his body was in relation to hers. He gasped as he further realized the state of his rampant manhood, which was still pressed against Brienne’s hip. He pushed himself away from her, completely disentangling them. His face was a deep pink, and he looked profoundly embarrassed.

“I’m sorry!” Jon called out, his voice rough with sleep. He looked completely mortified and could not even look her in the eye.

Brienne smiled, amused, and took his hand. “It’s okay, Jon. I know you were probably dreaming about someone. I know this isn’t about me, that it’s not personal. Anyways, it’s a totally normal reaction for man, from what I’ve read in the medical literature.”

He glanced sharply at her, incredulous. “You…what?”

“You were probably dreaming about an old girlfriend or some beautiful woman you fancied. Don’t worry about it, Jon. There’s nothing to be embarrassed about.” She looked at him calmly. He stared at her. His eyes were wide and dark. He stared down at his straining erection through his smallclothes. He stared back at her.

Suddenly he uttered, “I…I’ll be back. Excuse me.” With those words, he swiftly fled the room. She heard the bathroom door slam.

She lay back in bed. Her smallclothes felt damp and she still felt a residual arousal. At times like this, she would have reached into her smallclothes to touch herself, but this time she willed the desire to go away. She couldn’t help but wonder at her strange morning. And she remembered then, the overwhelming kiss from Jaime last night, the kiss that made her whole body throb. Jaime. Oh. The night’s shocking events flooded back to her. She wanted the images to go away; she did not want to think of what she saw. She shuddered. She tried to put it out of her mind. She just can’t – won’t – think of it. It was…vile…and absolutely none of her business.

After a while, Jon returned, normal again. He was still quite pink in the cheeks. He hurriedly dressed, glancing at her with a shy smile. “Good morning,” he said sheepishly.

“Good morning.” Brienne smiled at him, fervently hoping it would be a good morning.

Chapter End Notes

Brienne seems okay. Thank goodness. Also I put a shout-out to a A Midsummer Night’s Dream in there, because of GC.

Please comment and let me know what you think about this chapter. Where do you think this is leading, hmmm?

Kudos if you enjoy this fic and thanks for those who have already done so.

Thanks for reading!

p.s. Next chapter is proving to be...interesting.
Breakfast Confessions

Chapter Summary

Brienne and Jon are interrupted at breakfast.

Chapter Notes

Again, thank you for all your comments! I love everyone of them. And wow, you guys are (understandably) hard on Jaime. I know he's terrible so far, but he will change. Eventually. We all know he's good deep down inside, right?

I hope you guys continue to be open to Jon/Brienne pairing (and other flirtations). Brienne needs to explore her other options and not become completely lost in the Jaime orbit. For now at least. This is definitely a Brienne First! fic. Thank you for the trust you've put into me, truly.

I'm not sure you'll enjoy this chapter or not, but in any case, let me know in the comments!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In the past, when Brienne and Jon had ended up sharing a room or bed together, it would be after a particularly drunken night, and they would wake up exhausted and with an awful headache; Brienne, having not gotten quite so drunk, always felt comparatively better than Jon (or Robb). She would usually have to play the nurse, getting the boys to drink enough water and making them a greasy breakfast to sop up the hangover.

This morning, however, felt completely different; despite the initial physical awkwardness of the morning, there was an air of comfort and ease in the room. Jon had quickly gone out while Brienne bathed and returned with fresh bread, pastries and fruit. He made a strong pot of tea and sat her down and fed her delectable pieces of all the pastries that he had strangely cut into pieces (“So you see which ones you like best,” he’d said, insisting on her trying a piece of everything.) Jon also surprised her with a bunch of forget-me-nots in a small glass vase, their tiny blue buds lending brightness to the dining table. On further consideration, she put the midnight rose that Tywin had gifted her in among the blue flowers; the rose was still in good shape despite the wear and tear of the night’s events.

Brienne was in good spirits; the bath had all but washed away the terrible parts of the night, since – she rationalized – most of the ball was really quite lovely. Dancing with Oberyn and seeing Renly again, and feeling pretty for the very first time at a party, was something she’d never thought she would experience. After some rumination, she had even come to see Jaime’s kiss as an experience worth having (it was a good kiss, and thank gods she finally had her first kiss out of the way), and completely separated it in her mind from the horrible, disgusting vision that followed, which she did not allow herself to think about. That particular nugget of memory she pushed into the shadows.
of her mind.

“Are you full?” Jon asked, stretching his arms lazily from his chair.

Brienne yawned. “Very. I’ve never been so full.” She surveyed the plates which were still full of pastries. “You shouldn’t have, Jon. And these flowers?” She smiled at the sweet little blue buds, “They’re so lovely. No one has ever – ever-” She broke off, feeling suddenly self-conscious.

Jon shook his head, reaching to touch her hand reassuringly. “Brienne. It’s what you deserve. You should be brought pastries and blue flowers every day, if it were up to me. For the faerie queen.” He grinned puckishly.

She rolled her eyes and laughed. “I thought I was an ostrich?”

Jon grinned mischievously. “Ostrich by day, faery nymph queen by night.”

Brienne threw her head back and laughed. “Ridiculous. You’re ridiculous, Jon.”

He smiled, mock bowing, “As her majesty commands.” They smiled gleefully at each other.

Jon’s expression turned serious. He put his hand back on hers. “Are you truly all right, Brienne?”

She nodded. “Yes, Jon. I am. Truly.”

There was a knock at the door: three slow raps. Brienne hesitantly got up and opened the door. There stood Jaime Lannister, looking absolutely terrible, drawn and pale, unshaven, and with dark circles under his eyes. It did not look like he had any sleep. It was the worst she’d ever seen him look. The clothes he wore were clean but wrinkled and carelessly tossed on. When he saw Brienne, his forlorn face became eager and anxious.

“Brienne, please, I need to talk to you-”

“Jaime.” She said, her face betraying no expression.

For a moment she considered closing the door in his face. She did not want to think about him, or be reminded of last night; this morning she had been in a good mood, the best mood, but now with him here, things had shifted once again. Nevertheless, she moved aside and opened the door to let him in. He stepped in and was startled when he saw the seated figure of Jon at the table.

“Jon Snow.” Jaime said stiffly, his jaw tight.

“Captain Lannister.” Jon replied, eyeing him suspiciously. “Quite early for a morning call.”

“Yes, it is early for a morning call, isn’t it?” Jaime glanced over at Jon’s clothes and to the still rumpled bed.

Jon smirked. “Do sit.” Jaime sat down. He stared at the flowers, looked over at Jon, then back at the flowers again.

“Forget-me-nots. And Joanna’s midnight rose.” Jaime said softly, touching the dark silky petal with his index finger. He looked at Brienne.

“Yes,” Brienne put down a cup of hot tea in front of Jaime. “Jon brought the forget-me-nots. Your father gave me that rose last night, though your – your sister seems to think I’d stolen it.” Her face was unreadable.
Jaime winced at the mention of his sister. He fidgeted in his chair. Brienne put a plate before him. “Eat,” she said, gesturing to the pastries in front of them.

Jaime didn’t move, but just looked at Brienne, an expression of longing on his face. Jon scrutinized Jaime, and looked over at Brienne, whose expression was guarded. The three of them sat in uncomfortable silence.

Jaime spoke up, looking intently at her. “May I – may I have a word in private, Brienne?”

She stared at him, and exchanged a look with Jon. Jon nodded, and made a move to get up. “I ought to go back anyway.” He looked at Jaime. “I need a change of clothes.”

Brienne stood up to see Jon out. For a moment they stood close together. Jon clasped her hands in his and lifted them up to kiss them. She leaned down close to his ear and murmured, “Thank you.”

Jon nodded, and pulled her face down for a long, slow, lingering Dornish kiss; she felt the heat of his lips on both her cheeks. Before he left, Jon pointedly gave Jaime a quietly smug glance. He left. She closed the door behind him.

Jaime watched the entire exchange with narrowed eyes. He felt a stab of jealousy in his belly.

“Are you with him, then?” Jaime blurted out, more roughly than he’d intended.

She felt a flash of anger. “Is that why you’re here? To ask me if I’m fucking Jon?”

He flinched. “No, of course not-” He shook his head. “I’m sorry, I don’t know why I said that.”

“Then why are you here, Jaime?” Brienne demanded, walking over to the window and looking down at the increasingly busy morning street. Jaime got up from his chair and walked over to where Brienne was standing.

“I wanted to explain. What you saw last night.” Jaime’s voice was pleading.

She turned to face him, her face hard and closed. “I think what I saw last night, in the garden,” Jaime winced at her words. She continued, “does not need an explanation. I found it perfectly clear.”

Jaime sunk down on the settee, shoulders hunched, head in his hands. The perfect, beautiful image of despair, she thought.

“I just…I just fucked up. I wasn’t thinking,” he said into his hands. The looked up at her, his eyes red, “I’m sorry, Brienne. I’m so sorry. I didn’t want that to happen. I’m weak. I’m an awful man.”

“Jaime, you don’t need to-”

“Yes, yes, I do. I want to. I told her it was over. I thought it was over. I found out she was cheating and I cut her off, but still I couldn’t resist her. Even after what she did to you. I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.” It was terrible to behold his face, haunted, tortured and so obviously hating himself. Brienne wanted to reach out, comfort him, touch him, but she restrained herself. He bent over, head in his hands, and was trembling, shoulders quietly shaking. It dawned on her that he was crying; her heart squeezed. She sat down beside him, and after a moment, tentatively placed a hand on his back. At the touch, it was as if the floodgates burst open; Jaime crumpled into her, sobbing wildly, hugging her torso desperately, crying right into her lap. Loud sobs racked his body; heaves of tears tossed him about as if in a storm. She couldn’t help but hold on to him, try to steady him. She rubbed his back soothingly, stroked his hair, squeezed his shoulders. Eventually, the storm passed; his body began to still. Little hiccups were what was left of his tears, and his breathing steadied and
slowed, but he continued to cling to her. Finally, he unwound himself from her and sat up. Wiped his nose and eyes with a handkerchief from his jacket pocket. Brienne looked at him in silence, her gaze not as cold as before, but still detached.

“I’m sorry.” Jaime said, after some silence. “I don’t know what came over me.”

Brienne looked at him with sympathetic eyes. “It’s all right. It’s good to cry sometimes.”

She walked away and brought him back a plate of pastries and his tea. “Eat,” she said, “I have a feeling you haven’t eaten in a long while.” He looked at her in near disbelief, then nodded. He began to eat a little, then ravenously. She moved a little away from him. When he finished, they sat quietly. He was looking at her with near yearning.

She avoided his gaze, then said quietly, “The other time we talked, you said you were in love, that you’d only been with one woman. That was Cersei.”

He nodded, pale and troubled. “Since we were thirteen we’ve been together. We told ourselves we were one person in two bodies, that we belonged together….” Jaime laughed bitterly. “At least I believed that; she was probably lying to me all this time.”

“Jaime,” she said.

He looked at her, his eyes haunted. “The children – Joffrey, Myrcella, Tommen, they’re mine. She wanted it that way, and I always gave her what she wanted.”

Brienne inhaled sharply, suddenly horrified. Children between brother and sister, between twins. She lowered her eyes, unwilling to have him see her reaction. Now that she knew, it made sense. The children looked exactly like Cersei – and Jaime – and had no Baratheon appearance at all.

“You should be disgusted.” Jaime’s voice was harsh. “I’m disgusted, when I think about it. And to think about how Joffrey turned out.” He hung his head. “We are an abomination.”

She had no words. No words of comfort or even of derision. She was shocked and yes, disgusted and unsettled. She couldn’t think of anything to say.

“I know how my sister is – she is not a good person – she’s cruel and vindictive and hateful; but I only realized recently that she had always been that way, even though I had a version of her that was the innocent maiden in my mind. And to think how I always chose her over Tyrion, how she abused him and hurt him as a boy, and I always took her side.” He looked down, ashamed at himself.

He looked up at her, his gaze suddenly desperate. “I swear, Brienne. I thought it was over. I had ended it. I wanted it to be over. I was so angry when she said those cruel things to you, when she grabbed your arm. I wanted her to disappear.”

“Jaime, please. You mustn’t.” He paused, looking at her questioningly.

She shook her head. “You don’t have to tell me these things…it’s really none of my business.”

Jaime stared at her, disbelieving. “Not…not your business?”

She looked at him calmly in the eye, her gaze steady. “Listen. I won’t tell anyone about what I saw or what you said or about your sister and the children. You won’t have to worry about me.”

“Not worry about you?” His expression suddenly turned fierce. “Wench, if you think I came to you
crying and pouring out my guts just to make sure you won’t reveal my secret, then your opinion of me is lower than I thought.” He stood up, angry, and turned to go.

Brienne, alarmed, grabbed his arm and turned him roughly back. “Jaime.” He stared hard at her. “That's not what I think. I know you’ve been…truthful, I know you have. I just don’t know why you’re choosing to tell me all this.” Jaime narrowed his gaze and looked at her with an intensity that made her heart beat faster. He stared at her hand, which was still gripping his arm. She let go. He stepped suddenly toward her, close enough that their bodies were almost touching. She could feel the heat coming off his body. He smelled of sweat and tears. She widened her eyes.

“Why do you think I kissed you last night?” He demanded, almost angrily, his face coming even closer, his lips almost touching hers.

She stared at him. “Why do you think I kissed you, Brienne?” He repeated in a low growl. His fingers reached out to touch her neck. She gasped.

“I – I – don’t know.” She grabbed his fingers on her neck and lowered his hand down, then let it go.

“I thought, it was the night. The setting, the full moon, the dress, the music. It was an enchanted few moments. I think you got caught up, and just kissed me.” Her eyes were wide.

“You think I kissed you by accident? Without meaning to?” He stared into her eyes, then lowered his gaze to her lips, as if he could still taste her.

“Yes. I mean, how could you mean it? You’re in love…with someone else. And look at me. And someone like you wouldn’t…” A pause. They stared at each other. Jaime suddenly deflated; a hopelessness flit about his face.

“I mean, it was a nice kiss. A great kiss. I’m glad it happened. But you know, I never thought that it would go anywhere. But I was glad it was you that gave me my first kiss. I’ve always wondered how it would be.” Jaime’s face crumpled further. He stepped away from her.

“Your first kiss?” He repeated, seemingly to himself. She nodded, and looked at him with confusion.

“Brienne.” He seemed on the verge of telling her something, but stopped himself.

He hesitated. “I must go.” She nodded.

“Again. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. Believe me, Cersei and I are over,” his voice was urgent.

“Jaime. It’s okay.” She nodded. She was still caring, still kind, but it was as if a wall had come over her face; he couldn’t read her – as if overnight, she had closed her book on him. She followed him to the door, and turned him toward her before he left to go.

She reached up to cup his cheek. “Please. Take care of yourself. Jaime.”

He nodded, his eyes wet and glistening, and swiftly turned to go.
Jaime, huh? Do you think he's realized the magnitude of what he's done? Lemme know.
I love comments, short or long.
Thanks for the kudos! And hit that button if you like the story.
Stupendous thanks for letting me lead you through this journey so far.
Tyrion was rudely woken up by the noise of his bedroom door slamming closed. Loudly. Then he heard a frustrated groan and then the scraping sound of someone pulling up an armchair next to his bed. The next thing he knew, his blankets were being yanked down.

“Tyrion, Tyrion, wake up.” Damn. It was Jaime. Tyrion’s head felt like the size of a very ripe watermelon. That punch, he remembered. How many bottles of rum did he pour in there? A rough hand shook him. “Tyrion!”

“Jaime. Please go away and let me sleep.” He pulled his blankets over his head. He willed his brother to vanish.

“It’s eleven in the morning. I waited as long as I could. Tyrion. Wake up.” Jaime’s voice devolved into a whine. Again, he pulled down the covers.

“I’m tired. Leave me be.” Tyrion felt like a dozen gruff creatures were in his throat and head.

“Please. I need your help.” Something needy and desperate and troubled in Jaime’s voice made Tyrion slightly more awake. There were only a few other times when he sounded like this, and in no circumstance would he ever have woken him the morning after a party. This was a first. Tyrion
scrunched up his face and rubbed his eyes. He sat up. Jaime looked awful, like he hadn’t gotten any sleep last night; he was unshaven and had terrible shadows under his eyes.


“I fucked everything up.” Jaime said dully. “The wench – Brienne – saw us, in the gardens. She ran off, I saw her but I stayed. With Cersei.” He closed his eyes in pain at the recollection.

Hearing those words, and what words they were, Tyrion was now wide awake, his eyes open in shock. “Brienne saw you fucking Cersei. And you didn’t stop and go after her.”

Jaime groaned, and protested weakly, “Technically we weren’t fucking, she was – you know, her mouth. Oh gods.” He threw his head in his hands.

“Let me get this straight,” Tyrion said slowly. “Brienne saw Cersei sucking your cock. And you saw her see you and you just let her run away, all the while continuing to enjoy said sister’s cocksucking. I hope it was worth it.” He made a disgusted face. “I’ll need a strong drink after this conversation. And a bath. With lots of soap.”

Jaime moaned into this hands. “I thought it was over between us. I told her it was over between us when I basically caught her fucking Lancel the other day. I thought it was over when I kissed the wench-”

Tyrion started, gripping Jaime’s shoulder. “What? You kissed Brienne?”

“You told me to go after her, so I did. And it was wonderful. I’ve never had such a kiss.” Jaime smiled wistfully.

“Gods, Jaime. How could you make a move on her when Cersei-”

“I told you, I thought it was all over. I wanted it to be over. And I – I didn’t plan the kiss, it just happened. She just looked so beautiful and she was so good and everything I wanted at that moment. So I just…kissed her. And she kissed me back.” Jaime’s face first softened at the memory, then turned somber.

“It was her first kiss.” Jaime said despairingly.

“What?” Tyrion really felt he needed a very big drink after this, then he needed to sleep off this nightmare of a conversation. Then a bath. Tyrion could imagine it all too well: Brienne’s anguished face, her terribly devastated, sad eyes; it even hurt him to imagine how they would look. He felt an anger at his brother for the first time in a long time.

“The wench told me. When I went to see her this morning.” Jaime looked down miserably at his hands.

“You went to see her this morning? Why?” Tyrion rubbed his forehead, troubled at the turn of events.

“I needed to explain…. Tyrion shook his head. Jaime was selfish, insufferable….

“You needed to explain how our sister was sucking your cock and you were enjoying it too much to stop?” Tyrion laughed uncontrollably. Jaime gave him a glare.

“It was early. Jon was there. At her apartment.” Jaime scowled.
“Ah. The plot thickens.” Tyrion gave an arch look to his brother. It wouldn’t surprise him if Jon acted on his feelings towards Brienne at this moment; it was certainly what he would do if he were in love with the intriguing giantess.

Jaime looked disturbed. “Do you think he spent the night with her? Are they actually together?”
Jaime stood up, ran his hands through his perfect golden hair, and started pacing.

Tyrion smirked. “I think, Jaime, that is particularly none of your business at the moment. Considering.”

“I wanted…I wanted…”

“What did you want, Jaime?” Sometimes, his brother was pathetic. He had literally all the advantages in the world: looks, money, status, his father’s esteem, and intelligence. Well, the intelligence part could be debated at the moment. Tyrion had to remind himself to be nice.

“I wanted the wench to forgive me. I wanted to apologize.” At these moments, Tyrion was reminded that Jaime had the emotional maturity of a love-sick greenboy. What did one expect, for someone who learned how to love at Cersei’s teats? That would be like a mouse being raised by a poisonous cobra, he thought.

“And did she forgive you?” Tyrion asked, trying to not sound sarcastic.

“I honestly don’t know. I told her everything. I was crying into her lap for god’s sake. She was kind, she’s always too kind. She fed me. She told me to take care of myself.”

“She fed you.” Tyrion had to hand it to Brienne. She was incredibly good-hearted. Even in the face of this dung heap that was his big brother.

“But?”

“It was strange. She promised that she would never tell anyone.” Jaime frowned, as if remembering the moment.

“So she thought you came there to make sure she didn’t tell anyone about your incestuous…secret?” Tyrion raised an eyebrow. He poured a goblet of water from his bedside table and drank it.

“Yes. No, I don’t know. She seemed distant. I couldn’t read her face like I always could before. She was kind, but it wasn’t the same.” Ah, so Brienne did know how to put on the veil; he wasn’t sure if she was capable – every conversation she’d had with him she was so open, transparent, even endearingly so. This was an interesting development indeed.

“Ah. I see.” Tyrion looked at his brother, who seemed utterly lost. His need seemed palpable. But isn’t that very quality, his need for love, was what led him to be so blindly devoted to their dear sister?

“And she said our kiss was nice, that she was glad it was me. But it was strange. She thought I didn’t want to kiss her, I didn’t mean to kiss her. Because I was in love with Cersei…because she’s somehow not attractive to men?”

“Well, that doesn’t surprise me, considering how she feels about her looks and how people have treated her in the past. Present company included,” Tyrion said pointedly.

Jaime groaned, shaking his head.
“Anyways, you’re losing the point.” Tyrion thought again, of how useless advice-giving was, how the old adage ‘you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink’ was particularly true in Jaime’s case. Tyrion had known for many years that a part of Jaime knew, absolutely knew how horrible Cersei was, how selfish, irredeemable, how incapable of love she was, yet he still, still(!) went on loving her with the fierce devotion of an orphaned puppy.

“The point?” Jaime looked at him sideways.

“She saw you fucking your twin sister. Do you think she’d want to be with you after that? She probably wants that moment scrubbed and scoured from her memory. It wouldn’t surprise me if she took comfort in Jon after that.”

“But what should I do?” Jaime rubbed his eyes in consternation. He sat down again.

“What do you want?” He gazed at his brother with his one green eye and black eye.

“I want Brienne in my life. I want us to be friends.” He bit his lip. Tyrion could feel his brother’s longing from where he was. Jaime’s affection for Brienne was curious, though considering she was the most decent woman he’d ever had interaction with, it was hardly surprising.

“And you want to fuck her.” Tyrion looked at him, head cocked.

“Yes, but…” Jaime bit his lip.

“Jaime. Are you really done with Cersei?” For Jaime’s sake, and for his own sake, Tyrion sincerely hoped this were so. It should have been done decades ago; heck it should never have even happened. There was nothing normal or natural about the twins’ sexual relationship; it had always been sick and twisted even while Jaime maintained that they were one soul in two bodies or some such nonsense.

“Yes, I swear,” he vowed. Tyrion was a realist; thus, he was skeptical of this declaration.

“Are you sure you won’t return to her when she opens her legs for you? Puts her mouth around your cock again? Could you resist?” Jaime glared at him.

“That’s never happening again.” He snarled vehemently. At least Jaime sounded convincing this time, he thought.

“Then I’m glad. But I would want to see you follow through. Really be free of her.” Tyrion sighed. “Do it for yourself at least, and not just for Brienne. You have needed to do this for many years. She is our dear sister, but she has no kindness in her, no heart. Your wench is the complete opposite of that.”

“I just want her to forgive me.” Jaime moaned.

“You shouldn’t ask that of her. Forgiveness is something she should be able to freely give. Without being asked, I may add.” He hoped Jaime wouldn’t persist on badgering the woman to forgive him every time he saw her. That would be indeed pathetic.

“Fuck.” Jaime cried, burying his head in his hands.

“Fuck, indeed.” Tyrion readily agreed.

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The superficial cuts on the arms and legs had already healed, most of them leaving faint marks which would fade over the next day or two. The deeper cuts that needed stitches were well on their way to healing and might leave very light, white marks on the woman’s body. Brienne had earlier examined the woman’s vaginal area, which had also thankfully fully healed.

“Does anything hurt?” Asked Brienne, looking at her gently.

Ros shook her head. The bruises on her face had already disappeared and the woman’s full beauty was readily apparent, especially now, when her face wasn’t distorted with tears. Her red hair hung in waves past her shoulders and emphasized her full bust and round hips; her face was that of a sensual Maiden: full lips, delicate nose, and pale hazel eyes. Ros had been kept in a safe house for two weeks while she healed, and had only recently returned to Chataya’s in the last few days, though she had not yet resumed work. Chataya had wanted a doctor to check her over, and Ros had insisted on having only Brienne look at her.

Jon had demanded to come along and Brienne was glad of the company, although she knew it wasn’t strictly necessary, especially when they were visiting in the day time, when the house was closed. Brienne didn’t bother on dressing as a man this time either; she was a professional after all, a doctor simply paying a house call.

“So, doc. Do you think I can go back to work again?” Ros asked, looking at Brienne.

Brienne nodded. “Physically you’re fine, especially if you’re not in pain.” She looked at the woman, who had seemed to have regained much, if not all, her spirit. “But do you feel emotionally ready? It must have been terrifying for you.”

Ros smiled crookedly. “Doctor Brienne, in my line of work you encounter some very terrible men. It’s not the first time I’ve been hurt by a client. You’ve got to bounce back, and get back in the saddle.” Her eyes turned dark, “Though I would like it if I never see the likes of that…that…boy any time again.”

Brienne nodded. “I’m told he’s going away soon. And I suppose Chataya is keeping him and his men away?” It had been days since the ball. So far, she had not heard from Tyrion about Joffrey’s departure, except that it was imminent.

Ros nodded. “They’re being extra careful since that time. Bronn’s been hired to keep a lookout and to see to any trouble, if it comes around.” She looked at Brienne oddly. “I’ve got to go back to earning money, doc.”

“And Chataya treats you well here?” Brienne asked, curious.

Ros laughed. “Well, no one’s ever asked me that before, aside from other whores, I mean. But yes, this is the best place I’ve been, us girls here are pretty lucky. Chataya actually cares for us, you know? I can’t say the same about other girls in other houses or the poor ones who work the docks, mind you.”

Ros smiled at Brienne and got up. They left the room. In the hallway, she found Jon waiting for her. Ros looked him up and down in appraisal, and smiled flirtatiously at him. Jon blushed, avoiding the woman’s eyes. “Ros, this is Dr. Jon Snow. We work together.” She turned to Jon, “Jon, this is Ros.”

Jon shook Ros’ hand, and Ros smiled at him. “What a gentleman. Handsome too,” she said,
looking at Brienne. “He’s yours, is he?”

Brienne opened her mouth for a denial, but Jon quickly answered before she could. “Yes,” Jon smiled uncomfortably, “I’m all hers.” Brienne gave Jon a look, but he avoided her glance, smiling to himself.

They met Chataya at the bottom of the stairs. The small, slim, elegantly dressed woman was as beautiful and composed as ever. Ros said to her, “The doc gave me the all clear.” Brienne nodded in confirmation.

“As long as you’re sure that you have protections in place for her safety?”

Chataya nodded, “We are making sure no one associated with that client comes here. And we have Bronn now.” Brienne was reassured although she knew that Tyrion still had rooms there; she supposed it wasn’t too much of a conflict of interest since Tyrion hated his nephew.

Just as they were about to leave, a tall, slim woman with wavy blonde hair approached them. She looked shy and could barely meet their eyes. Chataya said, “Barra, what is it?”

Barra stared at them with huge green eyes. “It’s Dancy – she’s feeling ill, throwing up, not eating. If these are doctors, I was wondering…”

Chataya looked at Jon and Brienne, who looked at each other and nodded. They followed the girl to a darkened room, where a small, delicate girl with long dark hair lay on the bed. The girl sat up when she saw them. “Barra, I told you I was all right.” She looked over at Jon and Brienne.

“Dancy, they’re doctors. Nice ones. She helped Ros.” At this, Dancy shot them an interested glance.

“Well they needn’t bothered. I know what’s wrong. I drank too much moon tea.”

“Too much moon tea?” Brienne asked as she began to examine the girl, checking her temperature, pulse, breathing and auscultating her chest and stomach for sounds.

Barra piped up. “Well, we girls have to drink moon tea every day to…” she looked embarrassed but continued, “To keep babies away. Sometimes what we drink is too strong and makes us sick.”

Dancy added, “It only makes us sick every once in a while. Lately it’s just been bad for me for some reason.”

Jon looked interested. “Do you brew the same amount of tea every day? Drink the same amount?”

Dancy looked at Jon and nodded. “Our tea comes from the Vale, sometimes out East, or North, sometimes even from Tarth. It all depends. We can never be sure how strong it will be.” Jon nodded, thoughtful.

“Well,” Brienne said, after examining Dancy. “You’ll be fine in a day or so. But it’s never good to vomit too much. It’s best to replenish yourself with broth or juice if you can’t take solid food. But if this worsens, let me know. I’m at the hospital. Ask for Dr. Tarth or Dr. Snow. Or ask Tyrion to come get me.”

“See, Barra?” She turned to the doctors. “Thank you doctors, for your help. If we need you, we’ll send for you.”

Barra walked them to the entrance. Ros came by and handed them their cloaks.
“Thank you to you both.” Barra seemed a lot less shy now. She looked Jon up and down. She smiled. “If you are in need of me, I would give you one for free,” she said to Jon, moistening her lips and looking at him seductively. Brienne stifled a giggle. Jon looked mortified.

Ros laughed. “Don’t bother with that one, Barra. He says he belongs to the doc there,” she said, gesturing to Brienne. Barra smiled and looked over at Brienne. “Well, I could do them both.” Ros laughed.

Brienne smirked, still looking at a horrified Jon. “Thank you for the offer, but that won’t be necessary. We entertain ourselves fine enough, don’t we, Jon?” Jon blushed a very pretty pink. Brienne laughed. “He’s such a maiden,” she said conspiratorially to the two women.

Barra giggled. “Awww, aren’t you two sweet?”

Ros smiled, “They truly are.”

Brienne turned serious. “You will contact us if you are in need of help, won’t you? Especially with what happened.”

Ros nodded somberly. “Yes doc. You’re so good. Thank you.”

They went out the door and into the street. Instead of taking a hansom cab, they decided to walk. Soon, Jon turned to her, giving her a sidelong glance. “What was that about? Me, a maiden?”

Brienne laughed, “You started it, Jon! You’re all mine?”

Jon looked embarrassed. “Well, they were propositioning me!”

Brienne shook her head, “Oh I’m sure it was awful to have an offer of free sex from very beautiful, alluring women.”

Jon shook his head, and said stubbornly, “I don’t want free sex from beautiful, alluring women. I mean not from those women, I mean it’s not because they’re prostitutes, I mean I wouldn’t be interested even if they weren’t…oh gods, I’m babbling.”

Brienne looked at him strangely. “I don’t think any man would turn away women who looked like them. Don’t be absurd.”

Jon fidgeted. “I wouldn’t. Be interested.”

“Really.” She said with sarcasm. Those women were beautiful, exactly the type any man would fall for.

“Really. I like a woman who’s more unique. And taller.” Jon said, looking at her with big eyes. He reached to take her hand, and lifted it to his lips. He lowered their hands, but strangely didn’t let go, continuing to hold her hand as they walked down the street. Brienne felt warm, and a little embarrassed, but she liked holding Jon’s hand, no matter how foolish they might look to onlookers. Sod them, she thought.

“Oh!” Jon all of a sudden pulled her across the street in a different direction, toward a theatre with a brilliant, lit up marquee. “Look! Brienne, have you ever seen motion pictures before?”

Brienne shook her head. “I’ve heard of them, but never got a chance to, with medical school and all.”
Jon was enthusiastically pulling out money to buy them tickets to a show. “It’s on in five minutes,” Jon grinned excitedly. He practically pulled her into the theatre. He really was abnormally strong, she thought.

“Jon! Hang on!” Brienne laughed. He was excited to show her the posters. There was a poster advertising a movie about trains: “Into the Station!”, one set by a beach “The Waves”, and one called “The Kiss”.

“These all sound rather boring, Jon,” she said.

“Well, maybe,” he replied, “But at least they’re short, under five minutes each.”

They went into the theatre and sat in the back, as they had arrived close to the show’s starting time. The theatre was beautiful, with red velvet curtains and seats, and ornate white and gold carvings along with murals of cherubs on the walls.

“How grand,” said Brienne, awestruck, as they sat down. She was excited. Jon looked at her with eager eyes.

“I think you’ll like it,” he whispered to her, his mouth close to her ear. She shivered at the sensation. She turned her face to look back at him and realized that their faces were close, very close indeed.

The lights started to dim. They both turned to look straight ahead at the screen. The lush velvet curtains slowly parted open, and the piano player, who sat in front of the audience but below the raised stage, started to play. A column of light flickered and lit the screen. Brienne gasped. She was amazed to see a real moving image of a train coming into a station, and people getting off the train. It was like a moving photograph. Everything was perfectly captured from life, but was translated into black and white. It was astonishing. The movement was a little quicker than real life, but the camera captured the objects and people exactly.

In the next movie, set on the beach, she could almost smell the sea air, and feel the waves rushing into shore. It was thrilling. And it reminded her so much of the seashore at Tarth. She excitedly looked over at Jon to gauge his reaction, and discovered that instead of the screen, he was looking at her, his expression inexplicably tender.

The next film was interesting. It showed a couple, a middle-aged man and woman, sitting on a bench, talking to each other and kissing over and over. Brienne was amazed to see human facial expressions so big and up close on the screen. She could see every blink, every twinkle of the eye. Every kiss. They kissed a lot. She began to feel herself blushing. Watching them was so strange and intimate. She looked over at Jon, who was again looking at her, his face illuminated by the flickering lights, his gaze lowering from her eyes down to her mouth. He licked his lips. She couldn’t help but stare at his full, shapely lips, the cute little dip in the centre of his bottom lip. She saw that his face was coming closer and closer to hers, and she could feel his breath on her skin. His eyes were glittering in the dark, and she couldn’t help but close her eyes and lean closer, until their lips met, softly, oh so softly, and pressed to each other. His lips were warm on hers, and she felt a thrill when his mouth closed over hers, moving ever so gently. She wanted him closer, she wanted to taste him. She suddenly reached up with both hands and cupped his face, kissing him harder. Jon moaned into the kiss, opened his mouth to lick her lips. She hummed at the sensation of his tongue and opened her mouth, and soon she was tasting him too, exploring his tongue and lips and the inside of his mouth.

All of a sudden there was clapping all around them, people were applauding, the noise thunderous. Startled, they abruptly moved away from their kiss. It took them few seconds to remember where
they were, and that the show had ended, and the lights would come on very soon. Brienne could feel herself blushing. She could hardly believe that she ended up kissing Jon, and not only that, but in public. Her cheeks burned. She looked over at him, who was smiling at her softly. He looked very happy. They remained seated until everyone else had left. Jon grabbed her hand and kissed it, this time sensuously licking his tongue over her knuckles. She let out a loud sigh. His eyes were dark and filled with want. Wanting her, it gradually dawned on her. She stared at him to make sure and she saw that it was true. Jon wanted her. Desired her. It was true. And, she slowly realized, as the curtains again rolled closed over the screen, that she also wanted him.

Chapter End Notes

The films shown here are a tribute to the early films by folks like the Lumiere brothers and Edison and the like. "The Kiss" was based on an Edison film (1896) which was deemed quite controversial at the time (but there wasn't as much kissing in it as there is in the version of this story!). I thought it would be fun to have a date in the period of early cinema!

As always, thanks for reading. Kudos if you like!

I love all comments!
A Photograph

Chapter Summary

Brienne's walk home with Jon is interrupted by unexpected news.

Chapter Notes

Again, thanks for all your lovely comments. Your reactions are just so pure and enjoyable for me to read.

Let me know in the comments what you think about this chapter!

They walked back to Brienne’s place slowly, both feeling like they were in a dream, holding hands all the while and smiling at randomly at each other. They talked about the cinema, how it miraculously captured time. How you could actually see people as they were, and how moving pictures seemed to get at a person’s very essence. How maybe even your children or your children’s children could get to know you even after you were dead.

If seeing the movies seemed like a dream, so did their kiss. But like the black and white images on the screen, their kiss was indelible in her memory: its sweetness and passion, and the way Jon’s mouth felt against hers. She looked at him and she thought she could read eagerness and excitement in his eyes. She couldn’t wait for them to be alone.

They stopped short when they saw Tyrion waiting for them at the front of the building, his expression serious and grim. Nearby was a carriage with a driver, ready to go. Tyrion took in the two of them, still absurdly holding hands, and said, “You must come. There’s been an accident.”

It was Robert. He was terribly hurt, likely dying. A hunting accident, Tyrion explained. Robert had gone with Renly, Lancel and two other men, and he’d been drinking. Too much, they say. Somehow his shotgun backfired while he was holding it and he got hit in the gut. According to Lancel, who was the only one there, he staggered and fell over a steep embankment and impaled himself on a sharp rock. Renly and the other men had been on the other side of the forest, pursuing a stag.

Instead of the hospital, they had taken him to the Red Keep, so he could be comfortable in his home when the time came. Tywin was already there, and Brienne and Jon were asked to come on the small chance that surgery could save the man; Robert, who was in pain but still conscious, had also specifically asked for Jon Snow.
The Red Keep could not have been more different from the last time Brienne saw it. There was no gaiety or resplendent decoration; everything seemed hard and cold and somber. She came in and saw the two youngest children sitting with Renly, who smiled sadly when he saw Brienne. Cersei sat on the divan with Joffrey, looking bored and surprisingly unconcerned. Nearby hovered a young man, with classic Lannister colouring, who looked pale and ill. She assumed this was cousin Lancel, who witnessed the accident. Jaime sat on his own in a corner, but gave a start when he saw Brienne and Jon come into the room. She could feel his eyes carefully follow her as she moved toward Tywin.

Cersei raised her eyebrows when they came in with Tyrion.

“Why are they here?” She demanded. “Surely we don’t want strangers here when the family is in mourning.” Her eyes were glittering. Brienne could not bear to look at her for too long.

“Might I remind you that your husband is not yet dead.” Tywin sternly admonished. Cersei looked away, peevish. “I asked Dr. Tarth and Dr. Snow for a medical consult. It is my opinion that he should be moved to the hospital, but you and Robert don’t agree. And as you know, daughter,” he added icily, “Robert has asked to see Dr. Snow personally.”

Tywin turned to them. “This way, doctors.”

They were led to a sumptuous room, decorated in black and gold, the walls hung with mounted stag heads. In the middle was an enormous bed, on which the larger-than-life figure of Robert Baratheon was placed. A private physician sat at bedside, hovering anxiously.

“Ah, Tywin! Dr. Tarth! Jon Snow! Come, come look upon my corpse,” Robert joked, managing a weak laugh. His usually booming voice was strained and low.

He looked terribly unwell, pale and sweating, his breaths laboured. Around his middle was wrapped enormous white bandages, through which blood was seeping.

“Now Robert, you’re not dead yet,” said Tywin, his expression tight.

“Come doctors, take a look at me. See how I fare.” His eyes were unfocused, gazing at each one of their faces.

“Are you in pain? Do you need medicine?” Brienne asked, concerned. She took his wrist to check his pulse.

“Ah Dr. Tarth. How good to see your face again. But no pain. The good doctor here has given me more than enough morphine, eh, doc?” The physician nodded.

They carefully unwrapped the bandages, as blood continued to seep through the white cotton. Robert’s wound was grievous; the bullet had penetrated his stomach, which was leaking stomach acid; there were enormous gashes in his abdomen, which had ripped apart much of his organs underneath.

“He needs surgery.” Jon said, frowning.

“Right away. He’s bleeding too much,” agreed Brienne.

Tywin nodded. “Robert, you need to go to the hospital to be operated on, as I said when you arrived here two hours ago.”

Robert shook his head dismissively. “Doctors, what are my chances of surviving this even if I let
you operate on me?"

Jon, Brienne and Tywin looked at each other silently and imperceptibly shook their heads. They all knew in their minds that it was no use, that the prognosis was grim.

“Robert. If you don’t let us operate, you’ll die here. At least you might have a chance if we do.” Brienne insisted. She desperately wanted to do something to help.

“A slim one, I’d say. I’ve seen the state of my guts. Looks like I’ve been plowed. No amount of sewing is going to repair that.” Robert insisted.

Brienne knew he was right; Robert’s organs were shredded, and with the bleeding and the bullet wound, it would be a miracle if they could fix the wounds with surgery. Blood loss was already a concern.

“Anyway, my loving...Cersei doesn’t want me to go to the hospital either, and let it be known that my final act before dying is to indulge my wife’s wish.” He grinned ghoulishly.

Brienne turned to Tywin. “We can try to stitch what we can here, so he will last a little longer.”

Robert guffawed. “Don’t bother. I’d sooner die than linger here in pain with the lot of you. Just bandage me up tight, make me presentable so I can see my children before I go.”

They did as they were told, bandaged him, gave him more pain medication, and made him comfortable.

As they turned to leave, Robert called out to Jon. “Jon Snow. Open that drawer,” he said, indicating his bedside table. Jon opened the drawer and pulled out a small photograph of a beautiful dark-haired young woman in a silver frame.

“Ah, that’s it,” he said as Jon handed him the picture. Robert looked at it a long while, then passed it back to him. “That’s for you, that picture.” Jon looked confused. “Now that’s Lyanna Stark, by betrothed who died before I could marry her. She was your aunt. A real beauty, with fighting spirit that one. Many a time I wish I had married her instead of Cersei. Take it. I want you to have this picture of her, now that Ned’s gone too. I’ll be joining both of them soon, in any case.”

Jon looked stricken, near tears. He caressed the picture frame and stared hard at the woman who was his aunt. He looked at Robert now. “Thank you, Robert.”

Robert nodded. “It’s a shame that I didn’t get to know you, doctor. You look so much like Lyanna and Ned. I wonder if we would have become good friends. In another life, perhaps you could have been my son.” Robert’s voice was strained, weak. Jon looked stricken.

He groaned. “Who would have thought that a great big man like me would be felled by a stray bullet and a fall. Damn that drink.” Robert wheezed.

He looked to Tywin. “Now bring me my children. And my brother. I wish to see them before I die. Not your daughter though, Tywin. I wish my end to be peaceful. Go. The physician will see to my pain.”

Tywin nodded, and they all left the room.

They arrived again in the sitting room; no one seemed to have moved, as they were sitting in the exact same spots as when they left. Tywin spoke quietly to Renly and he and the children left to see Robert. Jon sat uneasily in an armchair near Tyrion, clutching the picture frame. He looked
sorrowful and deep in thought.

Jaime got up from his seat and walked toward Brienne. Cersei followed his every move with her gaze.

“Brienne.” Jaime bowed. “Will you take a walk with me?” Brienne glanced at Tywin and Jon. She nodded. They walked outside to the veranda. Brienne felt the faint echo of walking with him out there the night of the ball, and their kiss. But things were so different now, she thought.

“It was kind of you to come,” he began. Jaime appeared nervous, running his fingers through his hair.

“I was asked, so of course I came.” Brienne chewed her lip, looking down. “I’m sorry about Robert. He’s in bad shape. Not likely to live.” She paused. “We couldn’t do anything. He refused to go to the hospital, he refused surgery. Not that he had much of a chance anyway, but still….”

“He’s a willful man.” Jaime said. “And I agree with him,” he mused, studying her face. “I’d rather die surrounded by the ones I love than alone on the operating table.”

Brienne nodded. “That’s a fair point.” She shook her head. “We surgeons think sometimes we have the gift to snatch life from death’s hands, but that’s actually never the case. It is the Stranger who gives us a gift whenever he fails to take a soul.”

Jaime shook his head slowly, looking at her carefully. “I don’t know how you do it. To have someone’s life in your hands.”

Brienne looked back at him, forehead furrowed in thought. “It can be scary. But in the operating room, I’m a surgeon, not Brienne Tarth, and I have a job. It’s rather very simple.” She frowned in concentration. “But we all have other people’s lives in our hands at some point. It’s just harder in real life to realize it.”

“Speaking from a man whose job it is to end lives, none if it is easy.” Jaime let out a bitter laugh. “Your job is to save people, mine is to kill them.”

Brienne gave him a sharp glance. “You do your duty to protect others. To save the innocent, surely.”

“Save them or kill them? Sometimes I don’t even know.” He sighed. “I have been a soldier too long.” He looked down at his hands. He shook his head.

Jaime turned his face to take a long look at her. He smiled sadly. “Brienne. You look well.” He paused. “Are you well?”

Brienne smiled back tentatively. “Yes. I am very well, Jaime. Thank you.” Something was different about Jaime today; she sensed none of the sarcastic edge which always existed in previous conversations. He seemed…melancholy. It must be Robert, she thought.

He glanced out toward the water. “You know, I haven’t been back here since that night. It feels strange.”

There was an awkward silence. That thought had occurred to her too. But she stopped her thoughts before her mind could go too far back to that night.

Brienne glanced toward the doors, and saw Jon looking at them. “We ought to go back.”
Jaime hesitated, as if wanting to say something, but nodded instead. They walked back into the
room.

Jon walked over, and murmured in her ear, “Are you alright?”

Brienne nodded. “And you?”

“Yes. I would have liked to ask Robert about my aunt. But I’m glad I have this.” He handed her the
photograph to look at. The young woman was lovely, with the same eyes as Jon, and nearly the
same look.

“You look like her.”

there was a statue of her in the crypts, but seeing how she actually looked is astonishing. She seems
more like a real person now.”

Brienne squeezed his hand. He smiled at her with sorrowful eyes, then looked around the room. He
came close and whispered in her ear, “We should go.” Brienne nodded, agreeing.

They sat in strained silence, waiting for the chance to say goodbye. Tyrion offered them drinks,
which they both turned down. Brienne was acutely aware that they were intruding in this private
time, and was acutely uncomfortable.

Finally, Cersei spoke up. “That settles it, doesn’t it? With Robert gone, Joffrey is to be heir. He
can’t possibly be sent off to god knows where.”

Jaime said bitterly, “As father reminded you earlier, sister, your husband is still very much alive at
this moment.” He looked at her coldly, “Besides, Robert wanted Joffrey to go away. To improve
himself.”

“I will not have my son killed in a random war. He doesn’t have a death wish, unlike you, brother.”
Her eyes pointed daggers at him. Jaime laughed dismissively.

“Jaime is correct,” declared Tywin, looking between the twins. “Joffrey will be going to Essos as
arranged. Plans have been made.”

Cersei stared at her father. “Surely, with Robert dead, he can’t be expected to go off by himself?
That would be cruel, even for you, father. Surely the boy belongs with his mother.”

“The boy is eighteen years old, last I checked.” Tywin stared at her. “He can’t hide behind your
skirts forever.” His eyes were green and hard. “In any case, I believe Joffrey actually wants to go,
the last I spoke to him.”

Cersei fumed. “He has no idea what he wants. He has these delusions about making his way, being
a famous commander like his…uncle. Then in the next minute he says wants to stay here, with his
family.” She glanced at Jaime.

“Perhaps Lancel can go with him, to keep him company,” Tyrion interjected. “What say you to
that, cousin?”

Lancel, silent all this time, paled. He looked at Cersei and drew closer to her. Cersei glared at the
unfortunate boy. He spoke with a thin voice. “I think not, cousin. I want to be as near my family as
possible during this time.” He continued to look at Cersei, a strange doting expression on his face.

Brienne cleared her throat. All eyes turned to her.

“If you would excuse us, we will go, as there is nothing medical we can do. We don’t want to further intrude on your private time.” She looked to Tywin, who nodded.

“Finally.” Cersei said. “It hurts me to look at you, dearest doctor. And your unfortunate clothes.”

“Cersei, shut up.” Jamie growled, glaring at his sister.

Brienne refused to look or listen to her. She got up to leave and Jon followed closely behind.

Jaime took a step toward them. “I shall drive you home, if you’d let me.”

Cersei glared. Tywin looked intrigued.

Brienne shook her head. “No. Thank you for the offer, Jaime. You should be with your family. We can find a cab. It’s not too late.”

“Nonsense!” Said Tyrion, looking slowly from Jaime to Brienne. “Take the same carriage in which you arrived. I believe the driver is already waiting outside.”

They got into the carriage, which was indeed waiting for them. Both of them were physically exhausted and emotionally wrung out. They were mostly silent during the ride back, but leaned against each other for comfort. Jon seemed downcast, his gaze far away. She took his hand and continued holding it until they reached the hospital. He smiled at her gratefully as he left the carriage. The carriage drove on. Brienne thought about the events of the day: Jon’s kiss, then suddenly learning about Robert’s impending death. How the magic that had pervaded earlier in the day had slowly dimmed. Brienne returned to her rooms, wanting nothing more than to sleep, wondering what else life and circumstance would bring.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Robert and his hunting accident. Here we are getting back to more canon-inspired plot points, but I hope you enjoyed spending time with Robert and the Lannisters (maybe enjoyable is not a great word when it comes to the Lannisters?).

Thanks for those who have given Kudos, and please consider hitting that button if you are enjoying this story.

As always, I love reading your comments.
The Funeral

Chapter Summary

Robert dies and we attend his funeral.

Chapter Notes

I'm constantly amazed and tickled at the comments you readers are leaving on this story. I've laughed a lot, and many of the comments have helped me think about and reconsider the story. Plus, a great deal of your speculation is quite perceptive. So thank you!

We are sticking with the Lannisters for this chapter and the next. Then, there will be much more Brienne time.

Poor Robert. We hardly knew ye.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Robert died in the early hours of the morning, surrounded by his brothers Renly and the recently arrived Stannis. As the night wore on, Robert’s breaths became shallower and shallower with each inhale and exhale, his skin growing paler and paler from blood loss. He took more and more morphine as his pain increased, until eventually he slipped quietly into unconsciousness. After that, it was a matter of waiting for the next breath, and the next, the next. Even then, the unexpected silence as the final throaty rattle left his body was a surprise. Renly crumbled, openly weeping for the much older brother he never really knew and would now never know; Stannis, stiff and formal, remembered how they used to spar each other on the practice field, each of them never wanting to yield. The brothers, who were often at each other’s throats in life, were at this moment, united by death.

The rest of the Keep barely slept. Jaime spent the night lightly dozing in the library with Tyrion, who had brought bottles and bottles of liquor to fortify them against The Stranger. They both decided against finding a bed, for there was little chance they’d be sleeping that night. Jaime, for one, had a lot on his mind that particular night.

Earlier that evening, Jaime had stumbled across Cersei and Lancel talking intently in the garden. She certainly likes gardens, he thought irritably. He couldn’t make out their words, but she was speaking to the boy fiercely, and he was listening just as intently, looking love-sick and slack-jawed. He wondered if he ever looked at her in that absurd way. He probably did, he thought, and still would have been if Tyrion hadn’t told him about his sister’s infidelities. She kissed the boy, a long sensual kiss that he eagerly leaned into. Lancel collapsed into her, embracing his sister fervently, while her hands roamed his back. Jaime’s stomach lurch; he quickly walked away. His thoughts turned to the wench then, recognizing that this was nearly the exact same situation he had put her in, but in her case, the circumstance – and the act – Jaime winced – was much worse. He let
himself wonder, for a moment, if he hadn’t been fool enough to follow his sister to the gardens, if he would be with Brienne now. He wanted her, to be sure; he even more than wanted her. Somehow the wench found a way into the caverns of his heart, such a damaged thing that it was. He imagined his heart was probably a grey, hollow thing, already carved out by his dear sister. He wondered if she would have liked him if he hadn’t been with Cersei. If she could ever like him now.

After Robert died, Cersei moved quickly. She didn’t even pretend to be a grieving widow, Jaime observed with interest. If it hadn’t been for her widow’s weeds, no one would ever have known that her husband had just died in a most unexpected manner. There had certainly been no love lost between Cersei and Robert; by the end they could barely be in the same room together, but Jaime remembered how hopeful Cersei was when she first embarked on the marriage; Robert in his prime had been heroically handsome and fantastically rich. But he was mooning after that dead Stark girl, and Cersei became cruel; Robert was even crueler, insisting on his rights as a husband when he was staggeringly drunk. It made Jaime angry and helpless, and he was reminded of Aerys and the rapes of his wife that Jaime had to endure and do nothing about twenty years ago. He remembered wanting to save his sister, like a knight from a fairy tale, but she chose to stay in the marriage, as she believed there was no other choice for her. In any case, they had been leading separate lives for many years, and barely touched each other since they (allegedly) conceived Tommen. Now his sister was a widow. She seemed to already relish in her new found freedom and power. She insisted that the funeral be held right away, despite protests from the Baratheon brothers. She got her way. So, Robert’s service was held only three days after he died.

Despite the short notice, the service was well-attended. For all his numerous faults, Robert had been gregarious and well-loved by most. The Lannister and Baratheon clans came out, along with the Tyrells who were in town. The Cleganes were there. Petyr Baelish, the operating officer for Baratheon Industries, also came, sticking close to Cersei and Joffrey. The funeral was even covered by Varys, who was the editor of the Westerosi Times. Jaime idly wondered if the write-up would be a canonization of the great industrialist or an exposé about the man’s drinking and whoring habits. Oberyn Martell, Jon Snow, and Brienne were also in attendance. He couldn’t help noticing that the wench looked exceptionally well; she had on a new high-necked black suit dress that made her look both serious and elegant. He longed to go to her. Jon Snow was at her side, as usual, and Jaime noticed that they stood close to each other, casually touching shoulders, arms, hands. He chewed his lip, contemplative.

Jaime acknowledged that had Robert died just a few years ago, he would have been ecstatic; he would have gotten into his head that this was his chance to finally be together with Cersei. Surely there would be no scandal for a widowed sister to live with her devoted bachelor brother? He would have celebrated Robert’s death with every living breath. He would have spent every single hour by his sister’s side, fucking her or wanting to fuck her, listening to her, or being a loving barnacle around her. Which he was sure would have annoyed Cersei to no end. But now, he felt none of those things. He actually felt sorry for the man, who was dumb as aurochs, and who was terrible to Cersei, but well-intentioned and good-hearted in his own limited way. He wondered if he had taken up Robert on his offer to go hunting with him, the man would have died so foolishly. He was alone with Lancel when it happened. Something about that piqued his curiosity.

Cersei was standing with the children and the Baratheon brothers, thanking people for coming. As always, Cersei looked beautiful; black suited her well, giving her shiny beauty a starker, more magnificent contrast. He noted dryly that even in mourning, Cersei managed to show off her bosom in a relatively modest gown with a low-cut neckline. Yet for all her black clothes and outward signs of grief, Cersei’s eyes glittered and she positively looked gleeful. He knew that she hated her husband, but this was a poor showing indeed.
“Cousin.” A voice interrupted his thoughts. Jaime turned to find his young cousin, looking pale and troubled in his suit.

“Lancel,” Jaime replied, noticing that the young man was fidgeting and avoiding his eye.

“Come, let’s walk,” he said, putting an arm around the boy and leading him away from the crowds. *And away from the eyes of Cersei.* He could feel the fragile bones of his young cousin as he led him by the shoulder. Lancel had gotten paler and thinner, and the hollows under his eyes increased since the last time he saw him. Jaime felt an inexplicable surge of sympathy for the boy even while he remembered the him in Cersei’s arms. He was only sixteen, he reminded himself.

“It must have been difficult for you, Cousin, to witness Robert’s accident,” Jaime said carefully.

Lancel’s eyes watered. “Yes…yes, it was. I didn’t expect it.”

“None of us expect death, Lancel, but-”

“No, I didn’t expect that it would happen that way.” Lancel said in a soft voice. The hair on Jaime’s neck prickled.

“What did you expect to happen?” Jaime asked gently, probing.

Lancel looked down at his hands. “She told me to give him wine, she told me to encourage him to drink it, she said it was stronger than normal, that there was a little sleep added in it.” Jaime’s head started to spin. He felt a tightening in his chest.

“And he was sloppy, already reeling when we were separated from the party. I told him that I’d seen a huge boar, that it’d be better for two people to hunt it than a larger group,” Lancel continued, in a soft barely-there voice. His eyes were far away; it was as if he were speaking from a dream.

“He’d been fumbling with his shotgun. It was easy enough to replace black powder with smokeless shells to cause the backfire. He was reeling, he didn’t notice the change in ammunition, and he was on the verge of falling with every step. All I had to do was lead him to a steep edge.” His cousin’s voice became as thin as watered milk, his eyes dim. Jaime recoiled at his cousin’s words. A shiver ran down his spine. He had to ask.

“Who?” Jaime whispered.

“Cersei,” the boy’s voice came out in a breathy sigh. “She said we’d be together. She said it was easy, to just give him the wine, replace the ammunition. She said she loved me…” Lancel’s eyes watered. “She made me feel so good, I just wanted to be with her. But since Robert died, she won’t let me touch her anymore. She said I disgusted her, she said I had milk in my veins.”

Jaime closed his eyes in pain; this poor boy. He couldn’t help but hug the poor, dim wretch. Just a boy, he was just a boy. His young cousin’s story seemed intimately familiar; he could have been talking to himself twenty years ago.

“Lancel,” he said to the boy, looking at him in the eye, “I know my sister better than anyone. She can be sweet, and she will say things to make you believe she loves you. But my sister loves no one save herself. Though she is good at making you believe in her love.” He longed to tell his cousin of his own decades-long experience with his sweet sister, but refrained.

Lancel looked at him, wide-eyed. Jaime forged ahead. “She manipulated you to do her bidding. What you did to Robert is wrong, and that is something you must live with for the rest of your days, as I live with my own sins. But my sister is full of hate. She cannot love. You may not
believe me now, but she is no good for you.”

How ironic that he was able to give this advice so easily now but failed to follow it in real life. Jaime rubbed the young man’s back; he really was terribly thin. “Don’t tell anybody else what you did. Try to forget and live your life to atone for your actions if you can.” He looked sadly at the young man. “You are young yet. Forget this happened. Forget about Cersei. Make a life of your own.”

He turned the boy to look at him. “Perhaps one day you will find a wen – a woman – who will love you and give you her heart, as you give her yours. Perhaps you will trust her enough to tell this story to her. Perhaps one day you will do something to deserve her love.”

Lancel nodded, tears in his eyes. Jaime added, speaking urgently. “And get away from King’s Landing. Away from her.”

Jaime left his cousin and walked back towards the house. He passed by the rose garden, saw the bush of midnight roses, looking more blue than purple in daylight. He passed by the alcove where the wench saw Cersei pleasuring him. He winced, and quickened his strides.

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The service at the Sept had been full of pomp as was expected of a wealthy industrialist. Brienne saw a sea of black-garbed people, nearly all of them looking mournful, as if they had truly regretted the passing of such an amiable immensity of a man. All except his widow, Cersei, who wore the black of mourning extremely well; but even her fine, black lace veil could not hide her contented expression. Her eyes smiled; Brienne had never seen her look so happy.

She approached Renly and Stannis, who were standing together, not speaking. Renly’s face lit up as he saw Brienne approach.

“Brienne. It is good of you to come,” he said, grasping both her hands in greeting.

She smiled shyly; his face would never cease to please her, she thought. “Renly. I’m so sorry about Robert.” He smiled, squeezing her hands.

She looked over at Stannis. “Mr. Baratheon, I’m very sorry for your loss.” Stannis, who was standing up very straight, looked at her distantly and nodded. She remembered Renly telling her that his middle brother had never been a warm man. So different from Renly. Beside him stood a little girl, of about ten years of age, looking up at her in awe. Brienne noticed that the girl had the tell-tale facial scars of greyscale on half her face.

“How do you do, Shireen. My name is Brienne. You’re very brave to be here today.”

The young girl stared at Brienne for a moment, and gave her a slowly blossoming smile that lit her entire face. “Brienne,” the girl repeated, shaking her hand. Stannis, observing the exchange, gave Brienne a kind and grateful glance. She smiled at him. He looked mildly pleased.

Renly looked over at her and gave her a wink.
She took a place near the back of the pew, sitting at the end of the row. Oberyn and Jon sat beside her in the same row. From her vantage point, she could see that mourners were starting to pay their respects to Robert’s remains.

The body was encased in an immense, shiny black coffin, half of which was open for display. Robert was dressed in a black suit with gold accents, as fitting house Baratheon. Brienne thought Robert looked peaceful in death, as if he finally understood the one great joke of the world. The children were dutifully dragged to view their father’s body (their father and yet not their father, Brienne thought, cringing inwardly); Joffrey looked handsome and brooding, while beautiful Myrcella openly wept. Little Tommen was so frightened of the body in the coffin that Cersei had to roughly drag him to the altar, where Robert lay in death. Angry and glaring, she whispered to the boy, and the boy started sobbing. She squeezed his arm hard. He wailed, pulled his arm away, and ran past the pews and out the Sept. Without thinking, Brienne ran after him, afraid he may trip and fall down the Sept stairs. She found him curled into himself, sitting at the far end of the steps. She sat next to him. At her arrival, Tommen looked up, red-faced, tears pouring from his eyes.

“Dr. Tarth?” His voice wobbled.

“Call me Brienne, Tommen.” He nodded. She put her arms around him and embraced him, as he cried quietly.

She noticed Jaime had come out after them, his figure elegant in black, making him seem even more resplendently golden. He carefully sat on the other side of Tommen, then slowly started stroking the boy’s head. “Uncle Jaime,” Tommen cried, letting Brienne go and embracing him.

“Shhh. It’s okay. It’s okay, Tommen.” He murmured. Soon, Tommen’s sobs subsided; Jaime wiped his face with a handkerchief.

“Mother’s gonna be angry.” Tommen sighed.

Brienne looked at Jaime in alarm.

Jaime exhaled loudly. “Maybe, Tommen, but your mother still loves you, in her own way.”

“I don’t wanna go back to her. Or to Joff,” the little boy protested.

“I’m sorry, Tommen. I know it’s hard.” Jaime sent a hopeless look at Brienne. Tommen spent some time twisting his handkerchief.

The boy scrunched up his face in thought. He looked up and asked, “Where did father go?” Jaime frowned.

Brienne spoke up. “Well, Tommen. Your father’s body is gone, but his spirit is with the Seven. He’s happy there."

“Won’t he be bored?”

“Well, I don’t think so, because where he went to, you get to do all the things you love.” Brienne smiled reassuringly.

“Really?” Tommen perked up.

“Really. What did you father like to do?” Brienne asked, her head tilted.

“Hmmmm. He liked to drink wine. He liked to eat. He liked to ride horses. He liked to hunt. Oh.”
Brienne rubbed his shoulders. “He’s up there, eating and drinking his most favourite foods and
drinks, hunting the biggest stags, and riding the best horses.”

“Oh! That’s nice.”

“But I’m sure he misses you, and will look check on you to make sure you’re okay, even though
you might not know it.” Brienne rubbed the boy’s shoulder in comfort.

“Really?”

“Yes, Tommen. Really.” Brienne stroked the boy’s golden head. She looked up and saw Jaime
looking at her with a queer, tender expression on his face.

“Okay.” Tommen said, “I’ll go back in now.” He nodded resolutely.

“Good.” Brienne said. “Your uncle will take you, okay? Come, hold his hand.” Jaime nodded his
thanks at Brienne, and took the young boy’s hand. Brienne watched as their two blond figures
ascended the stairs. They really were similar, Brienne thought. A father and his son.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know your thoughts on this chapter! I’m curious to know what you think about
Jaime.
I love reading all your comments, so keep them coming, short or long.

Thanks for your kudos so far, and please hit that button if you like the story.

Thank you, thank you for reading.
Robert’s will was clear. Joffrey was to be heir and gain majority control of Baratheon Industries, while Tommen would have a minor stake in the company when he came of age. Myrcella was left with a hefty dowry, and Cersei would get a generous monthly stipend until she got remarried. However, the surprise to others present at the reading of the will was that Robert’s finances were a mess; he had been a negligent businessman at best, and a careless one at worst. His lavish lifestyle had been funded by the business, and were not for loans from Tywin, he would have already gone bankrupt. Robert had a tremendous reputation as a visionary and a tycoon, but when it came to the everyday running of the business, he was disinterested, preferring sensual pleasures to actually overseeing his fabric factories. In any case, it was decided that Cersei and the children would be staying in the Red Keep, although it had never been a Baratheon property, but rather a Lannister one.

All in all, Tywin was disappointed at the sudden turn of events; while Robert had his excesses and moods, when he was pressed to make certain decisions, he would do so readily, always siding with Tywin. He brought stability to the family and reined in Cersei’s impulses. Now, Tywin’s plans had fallen apart. The main issue was Joffrey and his unfitness for anything other than a prison cell, though he hated to admit this of his own flesh and blood. It was a shame that Robert did not get the chance to change his will. They together had agreed that the boy would sail to Essos to learn some self-control and discipline in the army; he was to have left the day before, but Robert died, and there was the funeral. Cersei was becoming the main problem now. She flatly refused to let her son leave her side, and fed him nonsense about him taking over his father’s business and being heir to a fortune. As if the boy needed to feel like he had more power, Tywin thought sardonically. Now the boy was insistent on being the face of the business, though it appeared that he would be leaving the day-to-day activities to his mother and Petyr Baelish. How Cersei thought she could run a vast fabric empire he did not know, but believe it she did. With these issues in mind, he had summoned his children to a family meeting in the firmest fashion. He knew none of them would decline.
He had to stifle his irritation and disappointment every time he saw all of his three children together. Jaime had his usual half-smirking, half bored attitude, as if he’d rather be fighting a war instead of attending this meeting. The stunted Tyrion gleamed with mischievousness, ready to use his perverse wit to skewer a family member or two. Cersei, dressed in black, was beautiful in her mourning; since Robert had his accident, he could not help but notice a triumphant, glittering and hard look on her face. He had quickly realized that the look she had was happiness; she was utterly delighted that her husband had died, presumably by accident.

“Father, why have you called us here? I have urgent business to attend to.” She sighed. She appeared extremely put upon.

“And what business might that be, daughter?” Tywin said with tight lips.

“Cersei believes herself a business tycoon,” Tyrion piped up, grinning broadly.

Cersei’s face darkened with anger. “No one spoke to you, you deformed half man!”

“Cersei, would you please not?” said Jaime, irritably. Tywin raised an eyebrow. He observed that the twins had been particularly distant lately; Jaime was no longer staying at the Red Keep. He was well pleased; he disliked their abnormal and perverted closeness. And it seemed that his golden son had shifted his interest elsewhere.

“Oh, you defend the dwarf now, brother? How that’s changed.” She sneered, looking Jaime up and down.

She turned to Tywin. “Well father, I happen to be helping my son, the heir of Baratheon Industries, to run the business.”

“And what makes you think you’re qualified to do so?” Tywin said in a dry voice.

“I’m not an imbecile. I’ve been around Robert enough to see how it should not be run. In any case, Petyr Baelish has been helping me come up with a plan to maximize profits and minimize costs.” She pronounced those final words with real pleasure, smiling smugly.

Tywin gave his daughter a hard stare. “Cersei, you’re well aware that Joffrey is being sent away.”

She laughed, then fixed a level gaze at him. “You are mistaken, father. He is staying here as rightful head of the business. You shall not have him. In fact, I’ve surrounded him with the most loyal, vicious guards; you will never lay hands him.”

“Joffrey’s behaviour needs to be stopped.” Tyrion interjected, alarmed at the news.

“What? The trifle with whores? They deserve it, as far as I’m concerned. In any case, I’ve talked to him. He promises not to cut any more whores. Are you satisfied?” Her words sent icy prickles of rage down his spine. This was abominable. Tywin always thought she was a fool, but he had not realized until then to what great extent of a fool she actually was.

“He nearly killed a woman!” Jaime suddenly yelled, his eyes wide with indignation.

“From what I’ve learned, the injuries were superficial cuts. The whore in question has already returned to that whorehouse, resuming her duties of lying flat on her back. Isn’t that what your Dr. Tarth determined, that she was fit to serve?” A creeping sensation went up Tywin’s neck. He wondered what exactly his daughter was playing at.

“Where did you get that information?” Jaime demanded harshly.
“Oh please, it was hardly a secret. Why, she was seen visiting the whorehouse just the other day with that sullen Jon Snow. Doing a house call, bless her heart. She is so very good, isn’t she brother?” Cersei smiled like a cat playing with its prey.

Tywin had enough. He stiffened his spine and looked menacingly at Cersei. “You will stay away from Dr. Tarth, daughter.”

“Oh I forgot, she’s your little creature as well. My mistake. But she’s not so…little, is she?” Cersei’s eyes burned with merriment.

Jaime stood up and pointed at his sister and said in a dangerous tone, “If you lay a finger on Dr. Tarth, I’ll—”

“You’ll what, brother? Glare at me to death? I have had enough of those from you of late. You have become awfully boring since you met that she-beast, brother.” She waved her hand as if to dismiss him.

Tywin intervened. “Stop this nonsense at once. Cersei, whatever plots or vindictive follies you have planned for Dr. Tarth will cease.” His jaw clenched. He glowered at her. “You seem to be under the delusion that you can control your son’s behavior.”

“Of course I can, he’s my son.” Cersei said confidently.

Tyrion raised his voice, his eyebrows furrowed in anger. “You can’t even control him hitting Myrcella or Tommen! Myrcella will flower soon; given Joffrey’s perversions, aren’t you a little worried, sister? Especially considering your own…proclivities?” Cersei widened her eyes and twisted her face in fury.

“He will do no such-”

“Tommen and Myrcella are already afraid of him.” Jaime added, pointedly.

“If you are suggesting that I send them away—” Cersei’s cheeks flushed; her eyes glowed prettily.

“What I’m saying,” said Tywin resolutely, “Is that they will come to live here with us. They would be still with family, at close distance, and you will have time to concentrate on running of Robert’s business and keeping an eye on your beloved Joffrey.”

“Absolutely not. My children belong with their mother,” she protested.

“You barely spend time with them as is. They see more of their Septa than they ever do of you, dear sister.” Jaime remarked sarcastically.

“I will not—” She stood up.

Tywin had enough of this farce. “You forget Cersei, that Robert’s business owes a great deal of money to the Lannister family. We, and we meaning I, effectively own the business.”

“Then good. It keeps things in the family.” Cersei said, misunderstanding.

“What I mean is that I can take away that business of yours in the blink of an eye.” Tywin remarked matter-of-factly.

“You wouldn’t.” Cersei’s eyes widened.

“Since you are clinging on to your son and refusing to give him up, this is your only option.”
Tywin stood up, as if to dismiss them. The meeting was highly irritating and troubling. The last thing he wanted at this moment was to play peacemaker with his idiot children. He would need to keep a closer eye on his much deluded daughter, it seemed. He sighed. He had hoped to return to Casterly Rock immediately after the funeral.

Tyrion stood up to go, then turned back to his sister, saying with a grin, “Think of it, sister. You’ll have all the time in the world to maximize profits and minimize costs alongside your darling first born.”

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When Jaime returned to his rooms, he found Cersei waiting for him, looking sweet and demure in black. She clasped her hands in front of her. Playing the maiden, he thought.

“Jaime.” She took a step toward him, her eyes warm and gleaming. “I’ve missed you.” She ran her fingers through her long, wavy honey-coloured locks, letting loose her scent of jasmine and spice.

“I sincerely doubt that, dear sister, with Lancel so close by your side,” said Jaime lightly, his voice not betraying emotion. He had an absurd notion to flee.

“Lancel was a mistake.” She pouted her ripe, red lips. “I don’t love him. I love only you.” Her eyes were beseeching. He remembered how those words once thrilled him, how he couldn’t get enough of hearing her say that she loved him. Back then, he would have accepted her lies and forgiven her for anything.

He remained silent. Now her words left him cold, when even month ago he would have believed her entirely. She seemed practiced in her seduction, her lies. It was as if he finally recognized her playbook and the well-worn methods she employed. It was so obvious to him now. How could he have fallen for it so many times? Everything between them had been a passionate push/pull, of fighting and making up, with sex being the sole crux of their union.

She moved close enough to touch him, and she felt her breath warming his neck. “Jaime. Why don’t you move back to the Red Keep?” She slid her arms around his neck, her breasts pressing his chest, her lips near his. “We can finally be together, as a family.” She said it; she was offering what he had always wanted, to be with her, and only her. A part of him wanted to sink into her and get lost in her body, but he remembered Lancel. The boy’s look of complete adoration; his physical and emotional devastation at Cersei’s hands. How he was so frail and thin. Once upon a time he would have eagerly lowered his lips onto hers. Instead, he placed his hands on his sister’s shoulders and gently pushed her away. Her face flashed in anger.

“You had Lancel kill Robert,” Jaime accused. “The boy told me everything.”

Cersei laughed her pretty laugh. “Don’t be a fool. All I did was tell Lancel to give Robert some wine. God knows he’d been drinking it all day. The bloody rock killed him. And his own fumbling with the shotgun.”

“In any case,” Cersei added, her eyes lowering alluringly, “Robert deserved what he got. Lancel protected me like you never protected me, brother.”

Jaime’s jaw clenched. He needed to get out of there, and made a move to go. Cersei, quick as lighting, moved to stand between him and the door. “Do you remember all the times when I was first married when Robert forced me to fuck him? And you did nothing? So many times when that
boar was inside me that I wished my brother, my lover, would pull him off me and cut his throat. But you just stood aside, didn’t you?”

His mouth was dry; he was speechless. He remembered those moments vividly. He had wanted to protect her, yes; he wanted to take her away to somewhere they would never find them, and live as a simple man and his wife. But she never wanted that, ever.

“Cersei, you never wanted – I asked you so many times to marry me, for us to run away together.”

“That’s the problem with you. You’ve always been a romantic fool. Don’t you see how this is so much better? I have the business, and we’ll have money. We can live together now, be together. You know I always want you. You know I’m always wet for you.” She looked at him enticingly and leaned her lithe frame against the door.

She smiled arrogantly. “I know you’ve always been faithful to me Jaime. You’ve never wanted another woman, have you? Whatever this Tarth beast has on you-”

“Leave her out of this,” Jaime warned.

Cersei tittered. “I know you can never get it up for her. She’s such a brute.”

“Stop-”

“And miracle of miracles, she doesn’t even seem to like you anyway, brother. She’s obviously fucking that brooding Northern bastard….” Jaime had enough; his irritation increased to an unbearable pitch.

“Cersei, move out of the way, now.” Jaime said firmly. Cersei smiled, her eyes wide, and she tilted her head playfully.

“Do you remember all the times you fucked me against this door? It felt so good every time you were inside me, brother. The way you fit in me made me want to scream with pleasure.” She smiled, looking at him with lowered eyes.

Jaime took a step toward her. Cersei smiled triumphantly, licking her lips and reaching out for him. He shook his head, and said, “Move away, Cersei.”

She stood her ground, and started to unbutton her dress, displaying the tops of her firm, full breasts for him. “I know you could never be with another woman, Jaime. You’ll always only want me.”

Jaime felt a wave of disgust and arousal flood his body. He needed to leave. A sense of panic overtook him and he grasped her shoulders and roughly pushed her aside. He found the door knob and turned it to get out. His sister nearly stumbled to the floor but caught herself in time. She glared at him in surprise. She hissed, “You’re going to regret that, brother. Remember, you’re mine, and will always be mine.”

How different those words sounded to him now, Jaime thought as he walked out the door. Those very words were the same ones that ignited him when they were fucking, that pushed him off the edge into bottomless pleasure. Now they were being used as a threat. How hollow those same statements were now, how completely empty, the thought, as he walked away.
Do you think Jaime is finally DONE? Do you think I won't have to write any more scenes of Cersei trying to seduce her twin brother? I certainly hope so. Tell me in the comments!

Thanks for reading and for supporting this story. I love you all.

Kudos if you like and haven't already please ;-)
Bonbons and Steel

Chapter Summary

A pleasant afternoon at Rose House with the Tyrells, Baratheon, Jon, and Brienne.

Chapter Notes

Once again, thank you for your comments, and I'm sorry I can't respond to each and everyone of them (I'd rather use that time writing more chapters, lol). But I love them and read all of them.

Did someone mention they wanted more Stannis? Here you go.

I hope you enjoy this chapter, after the frustration and heaviness of being with the Lannisters for a while. In the next few chapters, more lightness with Jon and Brienne.

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See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Those poor children, they’re still so young,” exclaimed Margaery, popping a chocolate bonbon into her mouth.

“To be left with Cersei as the sole parent, those are unfortunate children indeed,” agreed Loras, frowning as he sipped a cool glass of summer wine. It had been a few days after the funeral, but all they seemed to be able to talk about were the Lannisters.

“Look at how Joffrey turned out,” Margaery added, “That was all her doing.” She suddenly turned to Stannis, who had been carefully cutting up melon slices on his plate and forking each piece in his mouth with great attention. “Stannis, can’t you take Myrcella and Tommen away from her? Robert was their father, after all.”

Brienne squirmed. Jon turned his head to look at her curiously.

Stannis paused in his eating, swallowed, and spoke. “Unfortunately, it is never the best option to take children away from their mother, according to the accepted notions of society.” His steely blue eyes turned thoughtful. “However, I can always propose that they visit for a few months; Shireen would surely love to be in the company of her cousins.”

“Even that will be a difficult thing to achieve, knowing Cersei. Robert was going to send Joffrey away to the East you know, but all that fell apart.” Renly shrugged his shoulders. Brienne frowned at this new development. She certainly hoped that it wasn’t the case. She only met the boy once during the ball, but she could not shake the lingering feeling of disquiet that he had left her with.

“Yes. Such unfortunate timing,” Stannis said soberly.
Brienne thought the Baratheon brothers could not have been more different, in both looks and temperament. Renly was the perfect dashing dark prince: lean, elegant and with finely wrought features, while Stannis was tall and broad-shouldered, balding, with hollow cheeks and thin lips. She had not spoken to him at length, but Stannis seemed to have very determined and rigid notions of right and wrong. And yet it seemed that he was not unkind.

“One of the only positive things you could have said about Cersei is that she loved her children,” Loras declared, with a tilt of the head, “But I’m not exactly sure if that is true any longer.” Renly nodded in agreement.

Brienne remembered the woman’s hard grip on Tommen’s arm at the service. “I don’t usually like to say bad things about people,” Brienne began tentatively, “But she seems to be one of the most… mean people I’ve ever met.”

Jon nodded and turned to her, his expression serious. “She certainly seems to have a special dislike for you, Brienne.”

Stannis gave her an inquiring gaze. “I can hardly believe that anyone would find you offensive in any way,” he said stiffly. Renly looked on, curious.

“Well, I think, mainly, she is offended by my…looks?” Brienne blushed, recalling all the times Cersei had insulted her over their very limited interactions.

“Pshaw!” said Stannis, dismissively. “You’ve got a decent, honest face, which is one thing I cannot say about my sister-in-law. And your eyes,” he turned his pointed gaze at her, “Are nothing if not extraordinary.” Brienne started at his words. He nonchalantly returned his attention to his plate.

Renly’s own eyes were bright with amusement. “Here, here! Tarth blue certainly beats Baratheon blue when it comes to eyes.” He lifted his drink in a toast to Brienne. Grinning, Jon joined in.

“Oh, I don’t know about that,” murmured Loras, turning to Renly and gazing at him with a dreamy expression.

Brienne and Jon exchanged glances and smiled.

“Oh, let’s stop this horrible talk about the Lannisters,” Margaery declared. “I think we need some excitement to brighten up the dour day.”

“What do you propose, dear sister?” Loras asked, smiling lazily.

“I suggest we go to the armory and see who can rattle the most swords,” Margaery announced gleefully.

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The armory at Rose House was moderately large and housed a number of fine swords, fencing foils and sabres, some even hundreds of years old. Although in this day and age, combat in the field had turned almost exclusively to firearms, many men still trained in sword fighting in their youth. Brienne was one such example, for after her mother and Galladon died, she spent increasing amounts of time with Master Goodwin, who was kind and taught her how to fight with the
weapons. One of the things she was proudest of, aside from becoming a doctor, was her skill with swords. She knew she was good, and could beat most men at the sport. However, she hadn’t had the time or found a venue in which to practice since she arrived in the city. In King’s Landing, there were several exclusive clubs, but they all barred women.

This afternoon though, she was intensely happy to be back amongst the weapons, and to be out in the field to hear the sharp whistle of steel cutting the air. Margaery and Brienne sat on a blanket on the grass, ready spectators. Surprisingly enough, Lady Olenna, along with the two male valets (whom she called Left and Right because she couldn’t tell them apart) joined them. She graced herself on a chair that was carried out for her.

“Time for male sports, my dears?” She called out to them as she finally made herself comfortable. “Boys and their blood sports. At least it keeps them distracted and away from us women.” She smiled conspiratorially at them.

Margaery laughed. “Oh grandmother, you know that the whole purpose of encouraging the men to play with their swords is so that we can watch them at it!” She paused, looking thoughtfully at the men assembled in front of her. “Although for me there is really only Jon I can appreciate,” she said, slyly looking at Brienne.

Olenna smirked. “There is also Renly, my dear.”

The pretty young woman laughed. “Of course, grandmother. How could I forget!” She looked over at Renly, who was being helped out of his jacket by Loras. “He is very pretty to look at, don’t you think, Brienne?”

“Errr…yes, he is very handsome,” Brienne agreed, embarrassed.

“But he’s not as handsome as your Jon Snow.” Olenna winked knowingly.

Brienne could feel a blush flood her face. “I suppose,” Brienne answered vaguely, consciously focusing on the men.

Olenna tittered and exchanged an amused glance with her granddaughter, then charged Left and Right to bring a table with some refreshments for when the men get tired.

The practice was interesting to watch. The men had stripped to their shirts, removed their ties, and rolled up their sleeves. They picked up their blunted swords and organized themselves into pairs, with Renly fighting Jon and Loras with Stannis. Brienne’s fingers itched to wield a sword. She watched as the pairs swished, ducked, parried, and circled each other; she was fascinated and utterly absorbed in the action. Between Renly and Jon, Jon was the better swordsman, moving with quick, compact movements, the slash of his swords economical, while Renly’s form was lanky and almost languorous, and his attacks were always sloppy and slightly out of control. In the end Jon bested him, getting Renly to yield with a feint and sudden blade to the throat.


Loras and Stannis were a little more evenly matched, with Stannis having years more experience than his opponent. But Loras had a natural skill and a swiftness that could not be denied. They went back and forth, parried and retreated. Their swords met and blocked, until Loras finally prevailed, wearing down his opponent with a series of lightning-quick moves that ended up with a sword at Stannis’ heart.

The men sauntered back to the women, bodies glistening with sweat, their shirts damp. They
congregated around the refreshments, then sat on the blankets. Jon plopped down right next to Brienne, pink-cheeked with exertion. Brienne thought there was something very appealing about a sweaty Jon, whose eyes were bright and whose skin glistened attractively. Even his black curls were a little damp from sweat. He smiled brightly at her.

“Well done, Jon.” Brienne moved a lock of hair from off his forehead. Jon grabbed her hand and pressed it to his lips, giving her a playful look.

“Isn’t it your turn, Brienne?” Renly looked over at them. “As I recall, you were training pretty hard with that Master Goodwin of yours.”

Margaery sat up and practically bounced. “Brienne, you know how to sword fight?” Margaery shouted.

Olenna turned a very interested eye on Brienne. “Aren’t you full of surprises, my dear!”

Brienne blushed, while Jon nodded vigorously next to her. “We’ve sparred. She’s bested me quite a number of times while we were in medical school.”


“You must show us, Brienne.” Margaery said brightly.

Brienne looked down. “I don’t know. I don’t have proper clothing,” she said, gesturing to her new day dress.

“Nonsense,” declared Olenna. “Loras, aren’t there old clothes and practice garments in the armory that will fit Brienne?”

Loras was thoughtful. “I think so, grandmother. There were some that fit Renly the last time he was here and he and Brienne are of the same height.” He stood up and held out a hand to Brienne to help her up. “Come, doctor. We mustn’t disappoint grandmother.”

Just as Olenna had predicted, Loras found white breeches long enough for her, and a lightweight, white cotton shirt that had an open v-neck and billowy sides. She felt comfortable in the clothing, which was similar to the things she used to wear everyday on Tarth when practicing. As she tucked in the shirt, she noticed that the white pants were cut very slim, but as she stretched and bent her knees to test it, she realized that they were really quite perfect for her body and allowed her to move well.

She walked out and immediately felt all eyes on her and her outfit. Jon looked speechless and awed, while Loras and Stannis seemed openly impressed. Olenna smirked. Renly and Margaery beamed.

“Oh Brienne. You look like a Maiden Warrior come to save the day!” Margaery exclaimed.

“I believe those are the longest legs I’ve ever seen on a woman,” remarked Stannis dryly.

Jon nodded in agreement, still mute.

Brienne waved her hand in dismissal. “Come on then,” she called out, looking at each man in turn. “Who’s to fight me?”

“I think not me,” Renly demurred. “I’m afraid she would wallop me in half a second. Brienne beat me when she was fourteen and I can’t imagine how much better she’s gotten.”
Loras looked at Renly in surprise, then moved to look at Brienne’s confident face. “Well, if you’re that good, I suppose I wouldn’t mind giving you a try. Though I’ve never sparred with a woman before.”

“I’ll take it easy on you,” she taunted.

Loras smirked.

“Let’s go, Loras,” she called to him, walking away from the seated group.

Brienne was pleased; out of the group, Loras seemed the most skilled, although Jon was quite good himself. She was excited though, to spar with a new opponent. She tested a few swords and picked a blunted shortsword that felt right in her hand. As she held the weapon by the hilt, she felt a surge of power run through her, and felt near invincible in her confidence.

They circled each other, each one hesitant to make the first move. At last, Loras pounced at her with a blistering attack, his arm swift and sword slicing toward her. She fended off his attack, but barely, as she used her superior strength to push him back. He looked surprised at her defense. Although she was out of practice, it only took her a few moments to reacquaint herself with the feel of the sword. He quickly countered with another attack from a different angle, just as quick as the other, but she beat that one back easier than the first, now that she was familiar with his speed and fighting style. He stared at her, impressed by her skill. He grinned, then attacked again. They went back and forth, with Brienne defending and attacking, and their swords rang and pushed against each other, and this seemed to go on for ages, and Brienne felt incredibly alive. Her blood was pumping, and she could tell from the glint in Loras’ eyes that he was equally enjoying the dance.

Then all of a sudden it was over. Loras leaned a little too far in an attack, and Brienne was able to sweep a long leg under him, causing him to fall on the ground. She quickly disarmed him of his sword, and loomed above him, sword at his neck. “Do you yield?” she asked.

Loras, stunned at the turn of events, said soberly, “I yield.”

She held out a hand to help him up, and he gratefully took it. There were no hard feelings; as they walked back, Loras looked at her with a combination of fascination and admiration.

Margaery was squealing and jumping up and down; Renly smiled from ear to ear, even though she had beat his very good friend. Stannis even looked impressed, a small smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. Jon seemed happiest of all, eagerly coming up to her and hugging her and giving her a soft kiss on the cheek, much to her surprise. “A favour for you, my lady,” he whispered in her ear.

Jon and Brienne volunteered to put away the swords, since Brienne still needed to change back to her dress. Olenna told her to keep the practice clothes, however, and Brienne was grateful to have something that fit her so well. They brought the swords back in the armory.

“I was impressed with you today,” said Jon, wiping down a sword. “I’ve never seen you fight so fiercely. Now I suspect you were holding back when you were fighting with me.”

Brienne smiled. “Well Jon, that’s because you were the one that always held back with me. You were always afraid to hurt me.”

Jon lowered his head and nodded. “That’s probably true. I knew you were probably better than me, but still, I never wanted to have the chance to do you any harm.” He paused, looking at her. “And it’s not because you’re a woman. It’s because…I…I couldn’t bear to see you get hurt.”
Brienne stepped toward him and put her hand on his cheek. He closed his eyes for a second and looked at her. “You’re very sweet, Jon.” He reached up and took her hand and gently kissed her palm.

“As are you, dear doctor Ostrich.” He looked up at her again, his eyes warm and languid.

His hand slowly reached up to finger the collar of her shirt, tracing the v of the neckline. His fingers felt warm as they skimmed over her neck, shoulders, collarbone and the top of her chest. Brienne trembled at his light touch and felt blood rush through her. “I like this shirt on you,” murmured Jon. She leaned closer to him, until she could smell the salt and sweat on his skin. She had a strange impulse to lick the salt off his neck.

The door to the armory opened. Jon and Brienne stepped back in alarm. Margaery came through the door, her face bright, and she paused a moment to scrutinize each of them. Her eyes positively twinkled with mirth.

“Oh, Brienne! I came by to help with your dress.” She looked at them slyly.

“Th – thank you Margaery,” Brienne stammered.

Jon nodded, embarrassed, mumbled his excuses then quickly turned to go, closing the door behind him. Brienne knew she was turning pink.

“I hope I wasn’t interrupting anything?” Margaery smiled innocently at Brienne.

“No, nothing.” She turned her back to the woman. “You know I don’t actually need help with the dress,” Brienne said, quickly taking off her tunic and breeches, and stepping into the day dress she’d been wearing earlier.

“Oh I know,” said Margaery, looking at Brienne as she made quick work of the buttons at the front of her dress.

The young woman bit her lip. “I needed to talk to you.”

Brienne suddenly felt apprehensive. “Okay.”

“I wanted to let you know that Renly and I, well, we’re courting.” Margaery looked at her with a steady gaze.

Brienne’s jaw dropped as she could not hide her surprise. “What?”

Margaery, avoiding her eye, looked down at her fingers. “We’ll, it’s going to be announced soon that we’re engaged. I wanted to tell you first.”

Brienne was speechless and confused. The moment with Renly at the waterfalls ten years ago flashed back to her. Had she misunderstood? Margaery looked up at her, and seeing her confusion, smiled reassuringly. She approached Brienne, gesturing for her to sit, and started to redo her hair, which had come loose during sparring.

“But I thought Renly…” she couldn’t find the words.

Margaery nodded, making a clicking sound with her tongue. “That he and Loras were together? Well, they are.” Brienne turned a sharp gaze at her.

“Brienne. Look, I’m not the same as you,” she said, as she started pinning Brienne’s hair into a
complicated updo. “I don’t need love to be married; I don’t even want to be in love with my husband if I can help it.”

Brienne stared at Margaery in disbelief.

“I know about Renly. I know he loves Loras, and Loras loves him. But Renly is handsome and rich, needs a wife, and may be Lord of Storm’s End one day if Stannis doesn’t have a son. Plus, I like being around him, and he’s a good person.” Margaery smiled at Brienne.

“Renly is fine with this?” Brienne couldn’t help but wonder.

“Well, yes. It’s a convenient choice for him. He’ll get to be with Loras, and I’ll have someone who will escort me to events and be a good friend.”

“But, don’t you want to find someone who will actually love you?” Brienne looked at her quizzically.

Margaery tilted her head and sent her a frank gaze. “I don’t think I’m entirely made for love. I’m too much like grandmother that way. In any case, I can always take lovers if I long for that sort of intimacy.”

Brienne could see that the decision would make sense for all parties, but she couldn’t help wondering if it was the best decision for her friend. Nevertheless, she was glad that Margaery made her choice, and she knew that there was nothing she could do to change her mind.

“Then I’m happy for you, Margaery,” Brienne said sincerely.

Margaery broke into a huge smile and exhaled loudly. “I’m so glad, Brienne. I knew you would be!” She pulled her into a tight embrace. Brienne squeezed back lightly.

“Come, let’s go back.” Margaery smiled, leading Brienne by the hand. “We’ll probably have to rescue Jon from Renly and Loras flirting with him.”

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think about this chapter in your comments!

Kudos if you like and haven’t done so.

Thanks for reading, folks!
The Rehearsal

Chapter Summary

Jon has an idea, and Oberyn has an even better one.

Chapter Notes

As you know, in this story, Jaime/Brienne has always been endgame, but I've always been clear (from the tags, at least), that Brienne will have other romantic opportunities/experiences and a whole other life. So I really thank you readers for giving Jon/Brienne a chance, while Jaime sorts out his various issues (we all agree that present Jaime is not the best match for our Brienne, right?). But I totally understand if you want to bail from this story or return near the end. Totally. So no hard feelings, and thanks for reading so far.

That being said, the next two chapters lean heavily into Jon/Brienne. You have been warned.

Also, I'm messing with some medical stuff here, making stuff up. The surgical residency Jon and Brienne are doing is just for a year (not realistic, but in that early world of medicine? acceptable). And Sam's work, obviously is not reflected in our real-world timelines.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“It’s fascinating, really, how the concentration of the active agent fluctuates with the geographic region the moon plant is from,” Samwell Tarly said, gesturing to the samples of dried plants in bottles in front of him. “For example, samples from the Vale and your island, Dr. Tarth, have the highest, while those from the areas around King’s Landing have the lowest concentrations.”

They were gathered in Sam’s chemist laboratory, sitting around a large table. Jon had earlier told her to meet them there so he could show her a surprise. She was curious. It appeared that their visit to the brothel a couple of weeks ago had sparked an idea in Jon, and he had initiated the project with Samwell, the awkward but brilliant hospital chemist. Gilly, who was being courted by Sam, had also been brought in on the meeting. Brienne couldn’t hide her surprise when she came into his laboratory and saw the immense quantities of the herb that were organized on the table. Jon gazed at each of them and began to speak.

“As you all know, women have been using moon tea to prevent pregnancies for centuries, but it seemed nonsensical that we haven’t developed a way to regulate the dose of the plant. We’ve all heard stories of the tea not working.” Jon remarked.
“It’s true,” mused Gilly. “Three of my sisters got with babe while they were taking moon tea. We always knew there was a risk that the tea wouldn’t work.”

“And too much moon tea can make a woman sick, as we saw at Chataya’s.” Brienne added.

“Exactly,” resumed Jon. “I thought that there must be a way to regulate dosage and concentration so women would know exactly how much they were taking. It seemed strange to me that every day women would drink tea without really knowing if they were getting the proper dose, too little, or too much.” He looked to the gentle-looking man. “So I thought the best person who would be able to figure that out is Sam here.”

Sam looked embarrassed and nodded. “The trickiest part was obtaining the samples from each region. Luckily I have a vast network of herbalists in my circle - it’s a hobby of mine to mix up unofficial tinctures for various ailments, you know,” he said conspiratorially with a lowered voice. Brienne raised her eyebrows.

“The next bit was distilling the active ingredient in the moon plant, which took some trial and error.” Sam smiled. “But I’ve managed to capture it into powder, and then pill form, as you can see here. It is essentially the compressed powder form of the medicinal ingredient of moon tea.”

Brienne leaned close to look at the small muddy coloured pills. This was fascinating.

“The dose is measured for each pill, so there is the same amount of active ingredient in each one. No more trial and error in making the plant into a tea, which eliminates certain variables and human error. As long as the woman takes this pill every day, she won’t get with child.” Sam continued his explanation.

She looked up and stared intently at Sam. Sam cleared his throat, nervous about the scrutiny. Brienne continued to stare at the chubby, baby-faced man and suddenly broke into an immense smile.

“Sam...this is...incredible!” Brienne burst out. “What you’ve created here is revolutionary!”

Jon laughed and Gilly squealed with excitement, clapping her hands. Sam blushed and bowed his head, looking pretty pleased at himself.

She turned to Jon. “This idea of yours will change the world. You know that, don’t you?” Jon nodded, grinning and looking proud.

“It’s all Sam’s work,” said Jon, looking at his friend fondly.

“Well, I wouldn’t have gotten the idea if not for Jon,” supplied Sam.

“And I wouldn’t have gotten the idea if Brienne hadn’t taken me along to Chataya’s,” Jon reminded them.

“Oh you all are incredible and ridiculous, each one of you.” Gilly laughed. “You could just say that everyone had a role, and everyone is to be congratulated.” They laughed with her.

Brienne examined the pills again. “These will need to be tested for effectiveness and safety.”

Jon agreed. “An informal test for now, to make sure it actually works. Then, Sam, you can make yourself rich by selling these to a medicinal company.”

Sam looked down. “Oh, I don’t know about that.”
Jon looked at the two women. “I was thinking that we could get a small group of women to volunteer to test the pill.”

“Some ladies from Chataya’s,” Brienne murmured.

“My sisters. They’d be interested.” Gilly paused. “And me.” Jon and Brienne looked at her in surprise. Sam blushed, looking down. “There’s no shame in it, I’m from the Wilding states; anyway, I like Sam.” Gilly said defiantly.

Brienne nodded. “And me. I’ll be a tester.”

Jon turned sharply to her. Sam and Gilly looked at her curiously. Brienne blushed. “I mean, I’m not - not - you know, doing that, but I want to test it to see if I get any side effects. I’d like to experience that myself.” She felt she could die of mortification. She could feel Jon’s scorching gaze. She suddenly felt very embarrassed and warm.

She was nearing the half-way mark of her surgical residency at King’s Landing, and Oberyn had determined that she was ready for surgery as lead surgeon, with Jon and him assisting. Brienne felt nervous, but it was the sort of nervousness that excited her. She was looking forward to this. The surgery would be an appendectomy, the removal of the inflamed appendix that was causing the young man who owned it great pain and discomfort. The surgery was to happen tomorrow, but Oberyn had called her and Jon to his laboratory to prepare and make sure she was ready.

Oberyn welcomed them, and she saw that he had placed an empty operating table in the middle of the room.

“My proposal is that we could rehearse the surgery by you demonstrating each step for us.” Oberyn announced. “This will help you find the landmarks for the surgery, help set your pacing, and allow you to vocalize the procedure as you go along.”

Brienne nodded, agreeing eagerly. It would be helpful to go through the procedure with them step by step. It would certainly help her confidence and calm any nerves.

Jon looked around, curious. “Are you bringing in a body, Oberyn?” In these instances, a body from the morgue would be usual.

Oberyn smiled, shaking his head. “Unfortunately, we are all out of bodies today. So we will have to make do.”

“Make do?” Brienne asked, noticing the mischievous glint in his eyes. She wondered if she should be concerned.

Oberyn nodded. “I’m afraid you will have to make do with a live model,” he said, looking pointedly at Jon.

Jon looked back, stunned at the turn of events. “You want me to…?” Brienne raised her eyebrows at the realization.

“Well, it’s either him,” Oberyn said, gesturing to Jon, “Or me. I actually don’t mind,” he continued, starting to undo the top buttons of his shirt. He looked at them playfully.
Jon looked at Brienne and back to Oberyn. “Ok, ok, I’ll do it. But I’m keeping my pants on.”

Oberyn smiled an almost predatory smile. “You may leave your pants on, but we will have to lower them…significantly.”

Jon rolled his eyes. He started taking off his shirt. Brienne was mortified, and instinctively turned around to give him some privacy. She noticed that Oberyn did no such thing, however.

“Wonderful, Jon. Get up on the table. Ahh, that needs to come a little lower. Yes. Look, I’ll even put a drape over your hips, for your modesty.” She could imagine exactly what was going on. She was sure her face was a deep pink.

“Brienne? You may turn around. Jon’s ready for us.” She steeled herself and turned around. Jon was lying, bare and shirtless, on the operating table, a cloth just covering the top of his pubis. Brienne swallowed. She was seeing a lot of skin, and Jon was very…beautiful. His chest muscles were well-defined, and his nipples were hard from the cold of the room. She could see his very prominent abdominal muscles. He was lean, without an extraneous ounce of fat on him. A near naked Jon looked like an ancient marble sculpture of ideal male beauty. She had to remind herself to breathe. She could hear Oberyn chuckle softly. She suddenly looked up at him, and saw that his gaze was amused but also contained simmering desire. She looked down at Jon, who had been carefully studying her face as she ogled his body. He was smirking.

“Don’t be so vain,” she grumbled to Jon.

“You’re looking at me like I was dessert, though.” Jon protested, smiling smugly.

Oberyn grinned, but spoke. “While this…flirtation may be amusing, I suggest we proceed with our task. Jon, close your eyes. You’re unconscious, remember.” His tone became professional and matter-of-fact. Brienne envied his ability to do switch from playful to serious in a second.

She nodded. Oberyn had provided surgical tools which had been blunted. To mark the incision, Brienne would be using a pen and ink to help her find the relevant landmarks on the body.

“First, orient yourself to the body. Then mark where the appendix should be.” Oberyn instructed.

Her hands hovered over Jon’s torso. “Mustn’t be shy about touching the patient,” Oberyn reminded her.

She nodded, and tried to focus. She touched Jon’s abdomen and ran her fingers along its surface. He was warm. She placed one hand on his right side and the other hand moved to his hipbone, which would be the operation site. She looked over a Jon’s face. His forehead was furrowed, as if he was thinking hard about something. She shrugged.

“I’ve located the operation site.” She looked at Oberyn, who was nodding encouragingly. She took up an ink pen, and started marking where the incisions would be.

Brienne was in a good mindset now; she felt entirely in control. With Oberyn by her side, she rehearsed the incisions with the blunted scalpel, and described what she was doing step by step. Her words and actions were precise and efficient. Oberyn made encouraging sounds, and occasional suggestions here and there. Finally, the mock appendectomy was at its end.

“Wonderful job, Brienne.” He looked very pleased. He looked over at Jon, who had since opened his eyes. “My apologies. I must go to a dreadfully boring meeting right now, but I trust that you’ll clean up our patient and move back the operating table?”
Brienne nodded.

“Oh, Brienne,” Oberyn turned towards her again. “I suggest you not think about the surgery tonight. Try to relax and distract yourself. Get a good night’s sleep. Worrying will lead to a poor mindset tomorrow.”

She nodded. Oberyn smiled at them, turned and left, his steps quick and confident.

Brienne turned to face the still supine Jon.

“Okay Jon. Just continue to lie there a moment. I’m going to get a wet cloth to clean you up.” Brienne opened a cupboard and retrieved a cloth. She ran it under water to wet it, and picked up a bar of soap. She approached Jon with the warm, soapy cloth. Jon stared at her. She started to slowly wipe away the ink marks from his stomach, then wiped the suds off with another wet cloth.

“There, it’s coming off pretty easily,” she said. “Oh, but you’re all wet, let me just get a towel to dry it.”

She reached over to retrieve a towel from cupboard and turned back only to find Jon sitting at the edge of the operating table, his legs dangling down. He continued to stare at her. Brienne started to wipe away at Jon’s wet abdomen, but Jon suddenly grabbed her hand that was holding the towel.

“Stop. Brienne, you’re torturing me,” Jon pleaded, his eyes liquid and dark.

Confused, Brienne turned to him, concerned. “What? Did I hurt you? Did I accidentally cut you?” She ran her hands up and down Jon’s sculpted abdomen to check for injuries. Jon closed his eyes and moaned. Brienne arrested her hands, surprised at the sound.

“You’re torturing me,” Jon repeated, his voice thick. All at once, he pulled off the cloth that had been draping his waist. She looked down. His trousers were sitting very low on his hips, but through it Brienne could see a very distinct bulge. She could feel her eyes widen. She looked up at Jon, whose expression was clouded with desire. “Ever since you touched me from the very beginning. I’ve been trying by best control it, but obviously that didn’t work.”

“I did this?” Brienne asked in a low, unbelieving voice, gesturing at his crotch while suppressing the urge to touch it. It had been two weeks since they kissed in the theatre, and they had been so busy with Robert’s death and work that they just continued on as if it never happened, aside from that brief time at the armory. Over time, she had come to think of the kiss as a sweet, unforgettable dream.

Jon nodded, smiling softly. His hands slowly encircled her waist and pulled her closer to him, so that she was standing between his legs. He leaned his face close to her. “I can’t control myself when I’m around you.”

Brienne stared at him, still disbelieving. Jon leaned even closer and kissed her on the lips, his mouth firm and warm, pressing urgently and moving against her. Brienne sighed into his mouth and soon she was kissing him back, tasting him, feeling his tongue moving with hers, and they pressed their mouths harder and harder into each other, wanting to get even closer. He drew her body tight and flush against his and wrapped his arms around her. She could feel his naked chest against her, and she explored his muscular back with her hands. Jon moaned into her neck, and began kissing her there, and suddenly she felt herself swooning, the pleasure of his lips moving on her throat was so good. She felt herself growing increasingly warm and wet down below. She pressed closer and she could feel his hardness against her, straining from his pants. He gasped as he felt her heat against him.
“We – we – should stop,” Jon burst out, breathing heavily. Brienne nodded, but couldn’t help but press herself, her core, against his cock one last time. Jon threw his head back and moaned. The sound he made seemed attached to her cunt, and she felt herself getting even wetter.

“You are torturing me, aren’t you?” Jon murmured, his forehead against hers.

“I think the feeling is mutual,” responded Brienne. Jon smiled, and gave her brief, innocent kiss.

“Good,” he said. He looked at her with pure desire in his eyes. It made her shiver.

Brienne gazed at him for a few moments. She looked at him carefully and asked, “Will you come over tonight? So we can end this torture?”

Jon widened his eyes, the black of his pupils large and wide. “Are you sure?” Jon whispered.

Brienne nodded. “Very.” They touched lips again, this time in a not-so-innocent kiss.

Chapter End Notes

What do you think of Oberyn? Is he matchmaking or was that a real legit way to prepare for the solo surgery?

Let me know what you think about the chapter!

Thanks for the kudos so far and please consider hitting that button if you haven't already.

Again, thanks for sticking with this story, even if you don't love Jon/Brienne for now.
The bell at the front of the shop chimed as the door opened. Tyrion looked up from his desk, annoyed. “Pod?” he called, “Pod?”

“Yes, boss?” the boy popped his head in from the back room, balancing a stack of books in his arms.

“The bell rang. Would you see to that? And get rid of them if it’s a customer?” Tyrion gestured toward the door.

“If it’s a customer, I can sell them a book, Mr. Tyrion.” Pod said as he walked toward the front of the shop. Tyrion grumbled. He was very much deep into the outline of his new work, and was loathed to be interrupted.

Pod walked back after a few minutes. “It wasn’t a customer, Mr. Tyrion.” The boy looked a tad nervous, but then didn’t he always look a bit nervous all the time? Tyrion shrugged. “Oh? Pray tell, who was it?”

“Oh, it was Dr. Jon, he is going up to visit Dr. Brienne. He’s going to come through here to get to the back door, if that’s okay.” Tyrion lifted his head immediately, looking intensely interested.
Sure enough, Jon hesitantly walked toward them, smiling shyly. Jon was a good-looking man, but today, Tyrion noticed, he was looking particularly handsome, with his well-cut suit and curls laying on his head just so...perfectly.

“Oh, hello, Jon,” Tyrion said casually. Jon was carrying a paper bag, rather gingerly in one hand, and in the other, a bottle of wine. Interesting, Tyrion thought.

“Tyrion. Hello.” Jon cleared his throat. “Uhh...Pod here said it was okay for me to come through?”

“Oh course!” Tyrion grinned. “I’m sure Brienne would prefer it to you throwing rocks at her window to let her know you’re here.”

Jon looked embarrassed. “I’ve...uh...done that, actually. You’re right, she didn’t like it.” Tyrion laughed. He was suddenly very delighted that Jon was here.

“Pray tell, might I enquire what’s in that paper bag you’re holding so carefully?” Tyrion was nothing if not curious.

Jon looked down, as if surprised to see himself holding the bag. “Oh, just blackberries, the last of the season.” Pod, ever interested, looked inside the bag. “Oh, they look lovely, big and juicy!” he exclaimed. Tyrion suppressed a laugh.

“And you’re also bringing wine,” Tyrion observed, smiling wider. “Are you hoping to get our dear doctor drunk tonight, Dr. Snow?”

Jon looked uncomfortable. “Err...no. She has her big solo surgery tomorrow. But I thought a glass might help...”

“To relax you? Both?” Tyrion finished for him, raising his eyebrows.

Jon nodded. He gestured to the back door. “I’d better get going.”

Pod hesitated. “Umm, sirs?” Jon and Tyrion looked at the boy. He fidgeted. “Dr. Brienne having a solo surgery, it’s a big thing, isn’t it, sirs?” Jon nodded. “Maybe we should...” he boy awkwardly trailed off.

Tyrion broke into a smile. “Pod, you’re brilliant. You want to throw her a little party upstairs, don’t you?” The boy nodded eagerly.

Jon grinned at the boy. “I think that’s a great idea. She’ll be thrilled. But embarrassed.”

“Leave it to us, Jon. Just bring her back at a reasonable time tomorrow, will you?”

“I’ll try.” Jon nodded and left by the back door.

Pod stood there, grinning. Tyrion wagged his eyebrows at the boy. He was glad Pod suggested the party, since he would be able to figure out what exactly was going on between the two doctors. The two innocents, he mused. He was immensely interested at how nervous the handsome doctor was just now. What an intriguing development, Tyrion couldn’t help but think.

Brienne opened the door and let Jon in. He had changed from what he’d been wearing at the
hospital, and was now wearing a blue suit which fit close to his body; she could tell that his dark hair was still damp from a bath. She sighed. He looked like he stepped out of a Romantic painting, like the ones she used to gaze on in longing at Evenfall Hall. The fact that he seemed to have made an effort made Brienne even more nervous. Ever since she came back from the hospital, she had run over and over in her mind the moment when she invited him to her home, each time inwardly cringing with embarrassment. It seemed the easy and natural thing to do at the time, but since then she had regretted it. Many times. She was nervous and scared and didn’t know what was going to happen; she didn’t even know what she wanted to happen.

Jon stared at her for a few moments, looking her up and down and smiling softly. “You look lovely tonight,” he said, his eyes tender and large. She blushed and looked down at herself. Unlike Jon, she was decidedly not dressed up. She wasn’t even wearing a dress, but instead a light blue blouse which clung to her frame, and doe-coloured breeches that were soft to the touch and very comfortable, both of which were part of the new wardrobe supplied by Mistress Nysterica.

“I’m not even dressed properly, Jon.” Brienne looked at him. “You, on the other hand, look like you’re ready to go to the theatre or something. You look very handsome,” she added, blushing.

Jon smiled, and stepped closer to her. “I like what you’re wearing. The blue makes me think of the summer in your eyes, and your breeches simply make me think of how incredibly long your legs are, Brienne. You just about drove me crazy when you were sparring in those breeches the other week.”

“Oh, Jon,” she said, blushing violently.

He handed her the berries and wine. “I know we shouldn’t drink too much tonight, but I brought some wine in case…”

“We needed to relax a little?” Brienne finished, chuckling. “Thank you, Jon.”

They stared at each other, at a loss for words. She could palpably feel their combined nervous energy. She gestured for him to sit as she opened up the wine and poured the blackberries into a bowl. He perched himself on the settee. She handed him a glass of wine. Not knowing what to do, she started eating a blackberry. The fruit was incredibly sweet on her tongue.

“Hmmm,” she moaned, “These are delicious.”

“Are they?” Jon asked in a mild voice, looking at her.

“Here, try it.” She took a berry and offered it to him. He took the berry into his mouth, lightly sucking on Brienne’s fingers in the act. She shivered.

“They are good,” Jon said, looking into her eyes.

She broke their gaze and looked down, twisting her fingers nervously. “Look, Jon,” She glanced up to meet his eye. “You don’t have to do anything if you don’t want to. I didn’t mean to be so forward this afternoon.” Jon was silent, staring at her. “I mean, I understand if you don’t want to, you know – I mean, I’m not exactly attractive-”

“Brienne. Just stop what you’re saying. Of course I want to be here. I’ve just been so nervous about it all afternoon. Did you know I changed five times? And washed my hair so it would sit right?” Jon gave her a heated look. “I’ve been afraid that you’d change your mind. And I also want to say that we don’t have to do anything you don’t want to. We don’t have to do anything at all. I like the way we are.”
He put down his wine glass and moved closer to her. “But to answer your question, of course I want to. I want you, and have wanted you for months. And seeing the way you look tonight….” He parted his lips, and looked at her with an open, serious expression. As always with Jon, she could tell he was being sincere and telling her the truth. She nodded.

“Okay,” Brienne said, setting down her wine.

“Okay?” Jon asked, smiling, reaching to grab her hand, playfully pulling her toward him. Suddenly she was very close, her torso half on top of him on the settee and their faces nearly touching. Their lips met, pressed together and opened, as their tongues explored each other’s mouths, tasting blackberries and sweet wine on each other. They kissed and kissed, their mouths moving together as if in a dance, advancing, retreating. Long, lingering kisses were interspersed with brief, sensual nibbles. Jon tasted warm and sweet and she felt she could drink her fill of him. She felt heated but felt shivers run up and down her body as they kissed. Finally, they broke off. Jon’s eyes were dark and wanting, his lips red and wet.

“Is this okay?” Jon asked, moving to kiss her cheeks, then her jaw, then her neck. Brienne moaned as he licked her sensitive neck. “Oh, yes, Jon, very okay.” He continued to lavish kisses on her neck, moving from side to side, sucking harder, then softer, and her breath hitched because it felt so good, and she was slowly falling backward on the settee until she was lying down and Jon was on top of her, continuing to kiss her mouth and her neck, and she could feel the warm, solid weight of him and feel his body between her legs and oh, the hardness of him rubbing on her womanly core. They both groaned at the contact. She kissed his ear, his neck, and wrapped her arms around him, pressing him even closer on to her. “Oh, Brienne,” he said, huskily. He slowly moved off her, giving her soft little kisses. She sat up, kissing him back. She looked into his eyes, which were consumed with lust. “Come to the bed,” she whispered into his ear. She led him a few steps to the bed and they stood together.

“I’ve never done anything like this before.” Brienne confessed. Jon reached out and caressed her face and hair.

“This is relatively new to me too. I did it once, but I didn’t – I didn’t spill inside her.” Jon started to unpin her hair, dropping the pins to the floor. “But I know what to do,” he reassured her. He unwound her bun and ran his fingers through her fine, light blond hair. “And we can learn together.” She closed her eyes at the sensation of his hands through her hair.

“And Brienne, we can take it slow, discover things at our own pace.” He murmured into her hair.

“Thank you, Jon. I don’t know if I’m ready for – uh – penetration tonight, but maybe other things.” Brienne blushed.

Jon smiled, amused at her shyness. “Of course.” He began to kiss her cheek and neck. “I plan to make you feel good tonight. I promise.”

She looked at him seriously, then slowly asked, “Can I undress you?” Jon smiled and nodded. She carefully removed his jacket, hanging it on a nearby chair. Then she unbuttoned his shirt, leaving him in his undershirt. He gazed at her with desire and amusement as she pulled off his undershirt, leaving him bare chested. She then proceeded to undo his belt then she started to unbutton his trousers, conscious of his very evident bulge. He bit his lip as her hands grazed his cock, and he looked at her intently as she knelted down to pull off his pants and slip off his shoes and socks. He was only left in his smallclothes, his manhood straining against its confines.

“My turn,” Jon said, as he started to unbutton her blouse. He gasped as he parted the shirt, realizing she wore no corset or underclothes beneath. “Hmmm,” he said, appreciatively. He pulled
down her shirt, leaving her torso completely naked. “I want so much to touch you, Brienne,” Jon murmured, looking at her with an expression of yearning. He moved on to her breeches and undid them, pulling them to the floor. She stepped out of them. Like Jon, she was left with only her smallclothes. He used both hands to lightly stroke her shoulders, her arms, the small swells of her breasts. Brienne gasped at the feather-light sensations that surrounded her. He began kissing her neck and collarbone and moved his hands down to her breasts, cupping and squeezing with both hands. She moaned, feeling like she might fall faint any second. She gasped as he pinched her light pink nipples, which had already pebbled under his touch. She keened as he kissed and licked her breasts and sucked her nipples, swirling his tongue around each hard bud. He was groaning with the pleasure of just touching her, and she felt she had to move toward the bed, to lie down, or else she would just collapse.

“Jon, that feels so good,” she called softly. She guided him to lie next to her and she kissed him fiercely, her hands running through his dark curls. She felt him rock hard against her thigh. He hissed at the contact of his hips against hers, and started running his hand all along her back and squeezing her ass. She groaned into his lips. He squeezed her breast and ran his hands all down her torso until his hand met her cunt and pressed firmly. “Ohh…” she moaned, surprised at the sharp pleasure his touch gave her, as he continued to rub her back and forth over her thin garment. “Jon,” she moaned. She could feel herself swell and get wetter and wetter. She wanted more.

“Please, Jon, touch me.” she said, almost begging. Jon nodded and slowly nudged her smallclothes down until she was entirely naked. Jon lay on his elbow and looked down, as if trying to memorize her face. His fingers teased the rough hair on her mound, and slowly his fingers explored her slippery folds, all the while looking at her to learn her reactions. His fingers slid to touch her slit and dipped inside her; she inhaled sharply. “Brienne, you’re so wet,” he groaned. Slowly he rubbed his fingers back and forth, spreading her slickness. He gently circled her sensitive nub; she cried out softly, and louder as the pressure of his fingers increased. He kissed her then, plundering his tongue into her mouth, moving his mouth on her almost roughly, and she began to feel her pleasure around her cunt build and build, and she climbed higher and higher until she cried out in exquisite pleasure, her body bucking over and over with her release. His kisses became gentle then, tender explorations of her mouth. She needed a moment to catch her breath. “That was incredible. Oh gods,” Brienne exclaimed. She looked up at Jon and he was looking down at her with stars in his eyes. “You’re wonderful, Brienne.” He kissed her. “I love seeing you come.”

Jon kissed her again, and started to move his kisses all along her neck, shoulders, breasts, abdomen. She was still in a daze. He settled himself between her and stroked her legs back and forth. “Hmmm. I dream about these legs,” he said, as he started to kiss them, ending with nibbles all along her inner thighs. He touched the blond hairs of her cunt and looked up at her. “I want to taste you, Brienne,” he murmured as he lowered his head down to kiss her mound. She nearly screamed, and she could feel herself gushing. He pushed his tongue into her dripping hole. She gasped. Then he was licking up from her opening to her nub. He slowly inserted a finger into her as he started to lick gently at her clit. “Oh Jon, oh gods, yes,” she cried. She couldn’t help but writhe under his tongue and at the sensation of his finger moving in and out of her. He inserted a second finger in her, making her feel even more swollen and full, and she just about lost her mind when he started plunging his fingers faster in and out of her, and curling them to nudge an unusually sensitive part of her that she didn’t even know existed. As he moved his fingers harder and sucked and rolled his tongue on her nub, she felt her whole being rise and rise to pleasurable heights, the incredible feeling rolling over her in wave after wave until she suddenly broke open. She let out a strangled cry. Her climax took over her entire body, and she felt her hips bucking, her spine arching in release. She cried Jon’s name over and over. He held her hips as she came down from the clouds. He moved up and kissed her hard, and Brienne could taste her musk on his mouth and tongue. She could also feel his insistent hardness tenting from his smallclothes. She lay there,
catching her breath for a few moments as he held her. Then she sat up and pushed Jon down on the bed.

“Your turn.” She said, as she deliberately pulled his smallclothes off and carefully freed this stiff member. She sat on the bed next to him and stared at the large, insistent rod in front of her. It was long and thick and flushed pink at the tip and sticking straight up against dark curls. Seeing it so alive like that made her both excited and nervous. Jon gazed at her with impossibly dark eyes. “You’re gorgeous,” she breathed. Her hands began tentatively to explore his body, running down the muscled planes of his shoulders and chest and abdomen. She experimentally kissed and sucked at his nipples, and he groaned helplessly, his cock bobbing up and down as if it had a life of its own. She ran her fingers to touch all over his pubis area, stroking just around his cock, touching his balls. Jon whimpered and groaned at every movement and stroke of her hands. Finally, she gathered up her courage and grabbed his shaft, feeling how completely rigid he was but surprised at how incredibly soft the skin was. He moaned, desperately clutching the blankets under him. As she rubbed the wetness from the head of his cock all around the head, Jon’s hips involuntarily bucked. He was looking at her touching him, his eyes wild, and that made her insides warmer and wetter.

But now she was unsure about what to do. She looked at him, asking, “How do I…?” Jon smiled, and guided her hand on how to touch him, how much pressure to use and how fast to move her hands. After a short while she took over and rubbed him up and down the way he showed her, while her other hand touched him everywhere: his thighs, his hips, then finally settled to cupping and gently squeezing his balls. This made him thrash violently and soon he was thrusting up into her hand, faster and faster and as she continued to squeeze his balls Jon suddenly gasped out her name and shuddered over and over, his cock spasming forcefully in her grip, squirting a whitish liquid all over her hand three or four times. He lay back, his eyes unfocused, seemingly exhausted. Brienne gave him a quick kiss before grabbing a cloth to wipe away his seed. She returned to bed, laying down beside him. They breathed together and rested. After a few minutes, Jon lay on his side and turned his body toward her. His cock lay soft on his thigh. He pulled her face to him and kissed her long and languorously. His eyes gleamed and he couldn’t help smiling. Brienne giggled. “That felt amazing. So wonderful. Thank you.” He kissed her again. “For me too,” she said, smiling bashfully. Brienne felt a sense of well-being that she rarely felt and all she wanted to do at that moment was hold on to Jon.

“Thank you, Jon, for helping me relax before my surgery.” Brienne giggled some more, and Jon joined her in giggling. He pulled her into his arms. “Now for a good night’s rest,” he whispered in her ear and reached over to turn off the light. He pulled her face to him and kissed her. Brienne felt all of her body relaxing, and she could barely think. Exhaustion and sleep pulled at her, and she quickly drifted off, feeling comforting arms around her.

Chapter End Notes

I'm not used to writing smut, so let me know what you think!
Also as you can tell, we're having a party the next chapter.

Kudos if you like and thanks for those who already have hit the button.
My goodness 85K+ words and finally a non-incest love scene! Yay!
She awoke slowly, with a sense of well-being and feeling oddly well rested. She was warm, and she could feel arms around her – Jon – and suddenly she remembered what happened last night, what she did and what he did to her. She felt heat flood her face from the memory, of their kisses, his hands, his fingers inside her, hers on his manhood – she could hardly believe it all. What had she done by being so bold? She wondered, if in the bright light of day, that he would regret what they had done, with her. He was her friend, her very best friend, and she wondered, if by wanting him, that she had ruined what they had.

“Hey,” Jon’s voice interrupted her thoughts. She turned her body to face him. His hair was tousled from sleep and his face was relaxed and smiling. Gods, he was adorable.

“Good morning,” she said softly.

He examined her face, looking closely into her eyes. “Why do you look worried?”

She blushed, embarrassed. “I don’t know. Last night, I thought maybe-”

Jon’s face turned serious. “Do you think it was a mistake?”

Brienne bit her lip. “I mean if you regret it, I understand-”

“Do you regret it, Brienne? Because I don’t-” His face took on a fierce expression.

“You don’t? Are you sure?” Brienne raised her eyebrows skeptically.

“No. And you?” His gaze was insistent, heated on hers.
Brienne shook her head. Jon groaned with relief. He pulled her into a slow kiss, and suddenly all her doubts fell away at the feel of his lips on hers. He wrapped his arms around her body and pressed into her. She could feel him hard, so hard, against her thigh.

“Jon! You’re…you’re…”

“You see how much I don’t regret it?” He looked at her fervently. She nodded shyly. He kissed her again, longer this time. She felt his manhood twitch on her thigh. With a groan, he pulled away.

“Look, Brienne. I know we have to talk. Talk about what this is, what we’re doing.” He stroked her forehead and her hair. “And we will. But you have your surgery today.”

Brienne started. “Oh, I completely forgot!”

Jon laughed. “I’m glad I made you forget about it, at least.” He sat up in bed and started to dress.

“It’s still early, but have to go back and clean myself up and get ready. I wish I could stay.”

Brienne nodded as he continued to put on his trousers and his shirt. When he was done, he came back to bed and leaned over to plant soft kisses all over her face. He got up and walked across the room.

Turning back to her, he called softly, “I’ll see you soon at the hospital, doctor.” His smile was gentle. She nodded and smiled to herself as he closed the door behind him.

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In the end, the offending, inflamed appendix was easily removed from the cecum, cut loose by a very sharp scalpel in Brienne’s steady hands. She marveled at how this worm-like piece of pink flesh could cause so much pain. It was an unremarkable, routine operation; everything went as expected and according to plan. Perhaps buoyed by the rehearsal the day before, or the distraction of the night’s events, Brienne was not at all nervous. The moment she stepped into the operating theatre, she took command; she instinctively sensed where both Jon and Oberyn were in relation to her movements, and was reassured by the knowledge that they were there to support her.

The operation was quick and efficient, and it hardly seemed like any time had passed at all, and the next thing she knew, she found herself closing the incision. The next twenty-four hours would be key, she knew, as it was for any operation. All could go wrong if the patient doesn’t wake up from the chloroform, or if the patient develops a fever or infection sets in. Although the operation was a success from the surgeon’s point of view, this did not mean that the patient would necessary recover and get well. She fervently hoped that this was the case, but she of all people knew that the workings of the human body were mysterious, and how the body responds to trauma is unpredictable for each individual.

As the nurses rolled the patient away, Brienne let out a huge sigh of relief. She looked at Jon and Oberyn, who were looking at her with pleased expressions. Oberyn smiled broadly, and Jon looked proud.

“That was very good, Brienne. It went as well as it could have.” He raised his eyebrows and nodded. “You really took control the moment you stepped into the theatre. I was impressed.” He looked at her with a probing, curious expression. “It’s good to see that commanding side of you emerge. I’d like to see more of that…in the future.”

Jon smiled broadly at her, nodding. “You really were amazing, Brienne. No hesitation
whatever.”

“Thank you,” Brienne said to the two men. She felt pleased with herself, relieved to have her first solo surgery out of the way, and excited for the future.

All three of them moved to the back room to take off their soiled uniforms and scrub their hands.

Oberyn looked at the two of them with a knowing expression. “Would you two come for a celebratory drink, or do you already have plans?”

Jon opened his mouth to speak, but Brienne answered first. “I was planning to stay with the patient for a few hours, at least, to make sure he is recovering well.”

Jon frowned. Oberyn looked at Jon and then to Brienne. “While I applaud your dedication, Brienne, and I see that you have taken what I say to heart, I believe in this case it is not necessary for you to stay. The appendectomy is a simple operation, and I’m sure there will be minimal complications, especially with how well the procedure went.” Oberyn smiled reassuringly. “Besides, I think Jon here might have plans for you.” He winked at Jon.

Brienne turned to Jon, who was looking at her hopefully. Oh, she thought. She remembered that they had to talk...about the night before. She felt herself colour.

Oberyn chuckled. “I will leave you to entertain yourselves then.” He looked to Jon, his eyebrow raised. “By the way, next appendectomy is yours, Jon.”

Jon grinned and nodded. “Absolutely, doctor.”

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Jon tried to convince Brienne to leave right away, but she was adamant that she would stay until the patient woke up. Luckily, even with that compromise, they were able to leave within the hour. Jon had said something about wanting to talk to Tyrion, but to Brienne it was apparent that was a thinly veiled ruse to visit her place and perhaps have that talk or entertain themselves like the night before, which wasn’t something she was opposed to, if she were to be entirely honest with herself.

When they arrived at her place, the lights in the bookshop were already off; even though it was still relatively early, she guessed that Tyrion had called quits, if he actually had shown up at all, remembering the numerous times that the bookshop remained closed for an entire day without opening.

They went through the door and walked up the stairs. When they reached the landing she noticed that the door of the apartment opposite was ajar, though the apartment seemed dark.

“That’s strange,” she said to Jon, gesturing at the open door.

“Oh?” Said Jon, raising his eyebrows.

She slowly walked toward it, calling, “Hello? Hello? Tyrion?” She was tempted to fetch her dagger by her bedside. She entered the door and flicked on the light, and she was bombarded with shouts of “Surprise!” which made her jump in her skin. Her eyes widened in shock and amazement. She saw the dining table heavy with food and drink, and the bright beaming faces of Tyrion, Pod, and even Jaime. Jon entered in after her and put his arm around her waist, leading her closer to the
table. Tyrion raised an eyebrow.

Brienne looked at each of their faces in turn. She was confused and shocked and disbelieving of what she was seeing. “What is this?” she asked.

“Jon told us that it was your first solo surgery today, so we decided to have a party on your behalf.” Tyrion announced, smiling and handing her a flute of champagne.

“It was Pod’s idea,” supplied Jon, next to her ear. Pod nodded and blushed. Brienne remained speechless and could only just gawk.

“What’s the matter, wench? You didn’t kill the poor man, did you?” Jaime teased, smirking.

Tyrion interjected, “My apologies for my insensitive brother here. By the way, I just wanted to let you know that Pod and I were at the house and we were planning this party, and Jaime here eavesdropped and insisted – insisted – on coming….”

“Tyrion,” Jaime growled.

Tyrion looked carefully at Brienne, examining her face. “Uh… the surgery did go well, didn’t it? He’s not… uh… dead?”

Brienne blushed. “No, it…it went well.” She stammered out the words, noticing a tightness in her throat. She was finding it difficult to talk because there was a growing lump in her throat and her eyes began swimming with unshed tears. She sensed all their gazes on her. They were warm and kind and they liked her. “I’m sorry, I…I…” And with that, Brienne’s chest tightened and she burst out crying. Jaime suddenly stood up from his chair and moved toward her, but Jon was already there, taking her in his arms and embracing her as she cried into his neck. She could feel him rubbing her back to comfort her. But soon enough, the tears stopped, and Jaime offered her his handkerchief to wipe her face, looking concerned.

“I’m sorry,” she sniffed, moving away from Jon’s embrace. “This is just one of the nicest thing anyone’s done for me. I’m not used to it…” She looked around at each of them and smiled a beatific smile. Jaime pulled out a chair for her. She looked at him, nodding, and sat down. She widened her eyes at the food: roast chicken, potatoes, gravy, vegetables, bread. Pod loaded her plate up with food and set it down in front of her.

Jon started to tell them about the surgery, but soon his descriptions started to put the men off their food. When Brienne looked up from her plate, Tyrion, Jaime and Pod were beginning to look green.

She gave Jon a look, saying “You’d better change the subject, Jon. I think they’re going to lose their dinner at any moment.” She giggled. “We always forget that the things that are normal to us – the blood, the gore, the bodily fluids – are not necessarily pleasant dinner conversation topics.”

The food was delicious – Pod had gotten food from the restaurant next door, he’d admitted – and Brienne felt warm and full.

“How are Myrcella and Tommen?” Brienne asked, remembering that the last time she saw them was at the funeral.

“Good, now that we’ve gotten them away from the clutches of Cersei,” Tyrion remarked gleefully.

Brienne raised her eyebrows in surprise. “Oh?” She remembered the little boy’s declaration of not wanting to go back to his mother, and was glad that his uncles had removed the younger children
from the home.

Jaime cleared his throat and gave Tyrion an admonishing glance. “Yes, the two children are living with us in Tywin’s home now. Oh, along with their Septa and their nanny. We thought…uh…it was best for them in the long run. They do seem much happier.” Jaime gave her a long, warm look.

“Tommen is particularly happy since Jaime’s fulfilled his life-long dream of getting kittens.” Tyrion added.

“Kittens?” Jon laughed.

“Oh yes,” added Jaime. “A tabby named Sir Pounce, a grey one called Lady Whiskers, and a black and white one called Boots.” He counted off the cats with his fingers

“Oh, three of them!” Brienne exclaimed, giggling.

“You must come to visit them,” suggested Jaime. “I think Tommen would like to introduce you to them. They’re very cute.” Brienne looked at him and nodded shyly.

“And how fares your sister? It must be difficult to be without Robert. And being away from her children.” Jon asked, his brow furrowed.

Brienne saw Jaime’s smile drop and his jaw clench.

“Ah our dear sweet sister could not be better, I’m here to report.” Tyrion smirked. “Widowhood has really agreed with her, strangely enough. And of course she can be with her precious first-born.”

“Joffrey is still here?” Brienne frowned, concern on her face. She opened her mouth to speak but appeared to remember herself, glancing quickly at Jon and Pod, aware that they did not know about the extent of the boy’s depravity.

“I’m afraid so,” Jaime remarked, his eyes serious and troubled. “Cersei won’t let us near him, and he’s surrounded himself with a gang of thugs that call themselves, most ironically I must add, ‘The Brave Companions’.”

Tyrion shook his head. “It’s rather a mess. I hear rumours that the Brave Companions are going around extorting a ‘safety tax’ on fabric stores, tailors, and dressmakers. All this while our dear sister is implementing all sorts of cost-cutting reforms in the factories with Petyr Baelish, that noodle of a man.”

“Meanwhile, our dearest father Tywin is going back to Casterly Rock next week. I believe he is getting quite tired of being around his loving sons.”

Brienne was silent, trying to absorb this new information. It was disturbing and upsetting that Joffrey was still around. She made a mental note to herself to visit Chataya’s soon to make sure the women there were safe. She also supposed that Jaime had quit living with his sister for good. Unbidden, she remembered his anguished cries declaring the end of the relationship with his sister when he paid that early morning call.

“Things are safe at your other home, Chataya’s?” Jon asked Tyrion.

“I’m afraid I’ve moved out of that place since the children moved in with Tywin.” Tyrion said. “I figure they need more of my influence than the delightful whores at that brothel.” He paused. “Bronn is still working there though. I believe the traitorous sot likes working there more than he
ever did with me.”

Pod cleared the table of the food and Tyrion topped up their champagne (“Courtesy of Tywin
Lannister,” he announced as the produced bottles of the alcohol). Jaime got up and moved to the
kitchen, and came back carrying a large cake, placing it in front of Brienne. Everyone clapped.

Brienne stared, her eyes wide. The cake was surrounded by white icing, and had blue flowers
decorated all around it. In the middle was...something...she looked carefully at the figure on the
cake.... “It’s beautiful. Is that in the middle a... blue pen?”

Tyrion threw his back and laughed. Pod giggled.

Jon leaned in. “It’s a blue feather,” he guessed, confused. Tyrion roared with laughter.

“Oh...my...Jaime, I told you...” Tyrion could barely form words from laughing.

Jaime made an annoyed clicking noise and looked at Brienne.

“Wench. Look carefully.”

“A blue oar!” Guessed Brienne.

“Wench.”

“Just tell her, Jaime.” Jaime threw an irritated glance at his brother.

He sighed. “Fine. It’s a scalpel. A blue scalpel.”

Brienne and Jon looked at each other for a moment, then Jon started giggling, and so did Brienne,
and soon everyone was laughing, including Jaime.

“Brienne,” Tyrion leaned over the table toward her, as if to speak in confidence. “When Jaime
invited himself to this party,” Tyrion paused as Jaime groaned a protest. “He insisted on cake. And
he gave our cook extra money, and asked her to bake a cake. But he was very particular about the
decoration.”

“Tyrion, this is boring, just stop.” Jaime complained.

“He had the cook redo the colour of the icing six times. He kept on saying it was the wrong shade
of blue. Lighter, or deeper, or more brilliant. Until finally she got it right. She spent so much time
figuring out the right shade of blue that she did not have time to draw a decent blue scalpel on your
cake.” Tyrion paused in thought. “I don’t believe she even knew what a surgical scalpel looked
like.”

“The right blue?” Brienne asked, puzzled. Jaime stared at her, silent.

Jon looked from Jaime to Brienne. He turned to her. “Your eyes. He wanted to match the exact
colour of your eyes.”

Brienne turned to Jaime and they locked eyes. His gaze was steady, open, calm.

“I think I got it right,” Jaime murmured.

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After cake, the party started to break up. Pod wanted to go home and Tyrion offered to drive him. Jaime volunteered to clean up and would stay at the apartment for the night. Brienne insisted on helping him with the cleanup.

Brienne pulled Jon to the side for a quiet word. He looked at her warmly.

“Thank you for this,” Brienne said. Jon shook his head. “I did nothing. It was all Pod and Tyrion.” He paused, looking at Jaime standing in front of the sink. “And Jaime, I guess.”

“Still…thank you.” She said softly.

“You deserve it. You were great today, I mean it.” He squeezed her arm. He hesitated. “I guess I should go.” He stared at her with his dark eyes. She could feel the warmth in them.

“You can…come to my rooms, if you’d like,” Brienne said shyly. “Probably just to sleep though, I’m pretty exhausted.”

Jon grinned. “Nothing would make me happier.” He leaned in and gave her a Dornish kiss on her cheeks. “I’ll see you soon.” Brienne smiled as he left the apartment. She looked up and saw Jaime looking at her with an enigmatic expression. He immediately dropped his gaze when she noticed him looking at her.

She picked up the dishes on the table and piled them on the counter in the kitchen.

“I’d never thought I’d live to see Jaime Lannister wash dishes.” Brienne joked.

He laughed. “It is a rare sight indeed. It must be your lucky day.”

She smiled. “I think it was my lucky day. I had a great day.” Jaime beamed at her answer. The wide smile made him look young and full of hope.

“Thank you. For this. For the cake.” Jaime nodded and smiled as he scrubbed the dishes. Brienne picked up a towel and started drying the dishes as he rinsed them.

“It was entirely my pleasure.” He turned to stare into her eyes. “I’m glad I got the colour right. Your eyes.”

Brienne blushed. “I’m glad you invited yourself.”

“You’re glad I barged in? That’s a first,” he said, grinning crookedly. His face turned thoughtful. “I was incredibly impressed to hear about your solo surgery.” He shook his head. “When I think about all you’ve had to go through to get here…I just can’t imagine how strong you must be to handle it.”

She shook her head, as she wiped dry the last of the dishes. “Looking like me and being the way I am, I don’t think I had much choice but to pursue the unconventional. And I just wanted so much to be a doctor. I wanted to have been able to save my brother, or my mother, who all died so young. I mean, I suppose that’s why I got into medicine.”

He gave her an admiring glance and nodded thoughtfully. “You are so…good-hearted; being a doctor suits you. I admire that you have that passion and drive. That’s what Tywin always wanted me and Tyrion to have…but I never knew what I wanted to do with my life. At least Tyrion has his writing. All I wanted until recently was…” he hesitated, breaking off.

“To be with Cersei?” Brienne guessed. Jaime nodded, ashamed. “Yes. And now that’s done, I
don’t even know what to do any more. My life…I haven’t done anything with it.”

She gave him a sympathetic look. “Jaime, I think you’re wrong. I know you only a little, but you are an honorable man. Look at what you did to protect innocents from Aerys, to the detriment of your reputation. And you’ve served the realm and are a commander.”

“Wench, you think too highly of me. You should hate me, after all you’ve seen.” Jaime said bitterly.

“Jaime.” She grabbed his hand and held it. “You mustn’t think about yourself like that. You’re trying. That’s what matters.” She let go of his hand. Jaime nodded, staring at the hand that she touched.

They were just about done. Things weren’t pristine, but everything was put away and the dishes washed. The cleaning lady would take care of the rest the next time she comes.

“I’d better go,” Brienne said. Jaime looked up and stood in front of her.

“I wanted to ask you something.” Jaime began. Brienne looked at him quizzically. “It’s a favour.” She nodded encouragingly.

He cleared his throat. “Myrcella…well, she’s twelve years old. And she’s living in a household of men. I don’t think – ah – her mother has talked to her about flowering. I was wondering, you, as a friend–” Here Jaime looked at her uncertainly. “And a female doctor, could talk to her about it? I know she admires you. I mean I could ask her nanny or Septa–”

“No,” Brienne interjected, “Not a Septa. I – I would like to talk to her. I haven’t had too much of a chance to speak with her, but she seems like a gentle girl–”

“She is, she is a very kind girl.”

“So I would love to, of course. I feel honoured that you would ask me. Thank you.” Brienne gave him a grateful smile.

“You’re the best person I know, wench.”

She shook her head. “Nonsense, Jaime.” She chewed at her lip in thought. “I’m free tomorrow, if that’s not too soon? If not tomorrow, then you’ll have to wait another week.”

Jaime nodded eagerly. “That’s perfect. Perhaps we can leave together. In the afternoon, perhaps? 1pm?”

“Sounds good.” Brienne turned to go. “Good night, Jaime.”

He looked at her, his expression full of relief and gratitude. “Good night, Brienne. And thank you.”

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When she arrived back to her rooms, Jon was already in bed, sleeping. She smiled. He looked peaceful and darkly angelic. She took off her clothes, leaving only her chemise and her smallclothes, turned off the light, and slid in beside him.

“Hmmm, Brienne,” mumbled Jon, half asleep. He nuzzled into her body and hugged his arms around her.
“Shhhh…Jon. Sleep. Sleep.” She stroked his hair. Jon moaned lightly and kissed her neck and pressed his body even tighter. She smiled, a warmth suffusing her whole being. She lightly kissed him on the forehead, and closed her eyes.

Chapter End Notes

I would love to hear your thoughts on the morning after and the party. Are you starting to like Jaime a little bit more? Comments, suggestions, speculations are all welcome.

Thanks for those who have given kudos! Please consider hitting that button if you're enjoying the story.

As always, I have so much gratitude for you readers. You encourage me and keep me writing.

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The Talk

Chapter Summary

Jon and Brienne have a conversation. Brienne visits the Red Keep.

Chapter Notes

Happy Thanksgiving to US residents out there! I'm in Canada, so we celebrated a month ago (that's why my spelling has all those extra 'u's, lol.) I enjoyed reading your reactions to the party and to Jaime. He can be a sweetheart if he wants to be.

I also got a lot of story planning done yesterday. Yay!

In this chapter, Brienne and Jon get clarity and we talk to Myrcella. And yeah, Jaime is there. Also, there is a paragraph of Jon/Brienne smut in the first section which you can skip if you want.

The smell of frying bacon filled the air, reminding Brienne of the mornings after a night of drinking, when Jon and Rob were asleep, and she’d get up before them and fry up a greasy breakfast. She looked over at Jon, who was still sleeping, blankets tangled around his legs. She would have to wake him before the breakfast gets cold. She suddenly remembered that Jaime was staying next door, and thought about how kind he’d been last night, even bringing her a special cake. He was also quite the vision washing dishes yesterday; one never thought any of the fancy Lannisters doing much of anything resembling housework. She smiled. She grabbed a plate and loaded it up with eggs, bacon, and toast, and after a quick look at Jon, went across the hall. It was possible that he was sleeping and wouldn’t answer, which was fine, but if he was already up, he may be hungry. She knocked on the door.

After a few seconds, Jaime called out with a muffled voice, “Come in.”

The room was dimly lit by the morning light which shone through the windows. She could make out Jaime, struggling to sit up in bed, putting on a housecoat. His golden hair was ruffled and he had the look of a tousled lion.

“Good morning, Jaime. Sorry to bother you.”

“Brienne. What a surprise.” He raised his eyebrows and smiled at her, eyes crinkling in the corners.

“I brought you breakfast. Bacon, eggs, and toast. I made too much of everything, so I thought I’d
bring a plate over.” She set the food down on the dining table.

Jaime jumped out of bed, pulling his robe closed and walked toward the table. He looked at the food for a moment, then looked up at her with mild disbelief. “Thank you, Brienne. This looks wonderful.”

She could feel him gaze at her fixedly, as if trying to search for something in her countenance. He quirked his mouth into a smile. “Won’t you join me?”

Brienne demurred and shook her head. “I must get back. Jon will be waking up soon.”

He started at those words, his face crumpling for a moment before settling into a neutral expression. “Ah. Of course. Jon stayed over.” He bit his lip. He paused. “Thank you for breakfast.”

She nodded, giving him a small bud of a smile. “I shall see you at 1pm to visit Myrcella, then.”

He nodded, giving her a strained smile, and she left as unobtrusively as she came in.

When Brienne returned to her room, Jon was still soundly sleeping, his bare chest rising and falling with even breaths. His black curls fell across his forehead and he looked innocent, free of care and trouble. But breakfast was getting cold and she decided to wake him.

“Jon,” she called softly, but there was no response. She reached out a hand, stroking his hair and neck. He stirred. She took the opportunity to really examine his firm chest, and she slowly traced her fingers across his pectoral and abdominal muscles. His dark eyelashes fluttered, and slowly opened. He met her eyes with an unfocused, sleepy gaze, and smiled. “Brienne,” he murmured.

“Wake up. I made breakfast.”

He continued to look at her drowsily. He reached out with his hand to unknot her blue robe, and tugged it off, letting it drop down to the floor. Then his other hand reached out and pulled her on top of him. “Jon!” She squealed. He pulled her down tight, and she struggled to lift her weight off him. “I’m too heavy! Let me up.” She wriggled up and put her knees on either side of his hips, straddling him. He sat up and pulled her face down to kiss her. She felt his soft lips, the stale taste of his mouth, the growing fervor of the press and nip of his kisses, the lick of his tongue. His hands were at the small of her back, under her camisole, exploring her skin. Her core tingled. Her hands encircled his neck, pulling him closer and she adjusted her hips to be right on top of his and oh she felt that hard length of him through the thin smallclothes, his erection straining. He moaned at the contact, and planted feverish kisses on her collarbone and chest. Brienne felt that now familiar ache in between her legs and needing to relieve it, she ground herself down on his hardness, rubbing through their smallclothes, and felt his cock becoming even stiffer. Jon growled at the sensation, pulling open her chemise to suck at her nipples, his hips rutting up to meet her movements, and together they created delicious friction that rubbed roughly at the bud of her, and faster and wilder they went, their movements frenzied and desperate, until Brienne rose and shattered with a high cry, as Jon held her hips hard and moved more and more frantically against her, and then, half collapsing, roughly grunted his release, his whole body shuddering. They held each other for some minutes, just catching their breaths. They kissed softly. Brienne’s body hummed.

She then realized how wet and sticky they were, having found their release in their smallclothes. They cleaned themselves up, and finally sat down to eat breakfast, which had long grown cold.

“Brienne, this is the most delicious breakfast you’ve ever made,” announced Jon, biting into the last strip of bacon.
She rolled her eyes. “I seriously doubt that. It went cold, because of you.”

“I rather enjoyed the appetizer that came before breakfast,” he replied, eyes twinkling in merriment.

She shook her head, smiling. Jon looked up at her, his teasing smile turning serious.

“I guess we should talk?”

She nodded. He got up from the table, and taking her hand, led them to the settee. She looked at him nervously. They sat in awkward silence.

She cleared her throat, and began hesitantly. “I guess I don’t know what this thing is between us.”

Jon nodded. “I don’t really know myself.” He looked at her earnestly. “But I know I love kissing you and touching you and making you feel good.”

Brienne blushed. “I like that too. I’ve…I’ve never done this sort of thing before, I’ve never been close to anyone but you. I like how you make me feel, and I like…making you feel good too.”

Jon took her hand and held it tenderly. “I’m glad.”

“I just don’t know what it’s supposed to be like…being in a relationship with someone.” She chewed the inside of her cheek. “I wouldn’t know what to do.”

Jon looked at her with a calm, sober expression. “I’ve never been in a relationship either. There’s just been only a couple of tavern…girls that Robb introduced me to, but this, here, is completely new to me. I’ve never been in love. I don’t even know what being in love feels like.”

“I guess it’s the blind leading the blind, then.” She smiled, partly in relief.

Jon nodded, looking at her with a warmth of expression. “Brienne. I never thought this would happen between us. I wanted it to happen, but something always held me back.” Jon frowned in concentration, pausing in thought. “I was so focused on becoming a doctor, and trying to earn money for school that I didn’t give romance a second thought. But then I began to notice you more and more, and it got to the point where I could no longer resist you.”

Brienne waved her hand dismissively. “Jon, that’s – not possible – you weren’t able to resist me?”

Jon looked at her fondly. “I wish you could see yourself the way I and many others see you. You’re strong and fierce and gorgeous and have the most beautiful eyes I’ve ever seen.”

She blushed but willed herself to believe him. “I – I just never thought any man would want me. All my life, I’ve been told I was ugly, that I was a freak.” She looked at him with a certain wistfulness. “Jon, you were the first person to like how I look, to be attracted to me, and suddenly I was feeling things that I kept hidden from myself. Desire, longing, wanting, the idea of feeling good in my body.” She looked down, blushing. “When we kissed and did…those other things, it felt right and natural.”

Hearing these words, Jon put his arms around her and squeezed. “I love being close to you, I love touching you. It feels perfect.” Jon said softly.

Jon’s face turned melancholic. “But I have to tell you that I never thought I would get married. Because I bring nothing to the table: I’m a bastard, have no family nor family name, no wealth. No decent woman would have me, I think. For example, I – I would bring shame to your noble house,
Brienne."

She cupped his face with both hands, and spoke forcefully. “Jon. That’s just silly. I don’t care about that. You may be a bastard, the woman who loves you wouldn’t care about that. Like she wouldn’t care about whether you have money, or social status. Anyway, you’re a goddamn doctor and future surgeon, which is more than I can say about any man out there with a noble house.”

“Really?” He raised his eyes to hers.

“Really. I certainly don’t give a damn.” She paused, looking at him with a glint in her eye and the hint of a smile. “But I don’t want to marry you. I don’t think I want to marry anyone right now.”

Jon grinned. “Turned down before I even proposed!” He shook his head. “I don’t want to marry you or anyone either.” They grinned widely at each other. Brienne leaned over and gave him a soft kiss.

“But Jon,” she said, her eyes searching his face. “In six months, when we’re done our residency…."

“We will likely be parted.” Jon frowned. “I know I plan to go back North.”

“And I don’t know where I’ll be.” Brienne bit her lip.

“I guess that’s…fine? I mean, it will have to be fine.” He kissed her cheek, then her lips.

She kissed him back on the cheeks, then looked at him quizzically. “But Jon – we’re not engaged, we’re not courting. What are we?”

Jon tilted his head in thought. “We’re friends. Best friends…."

“Intimate best friends.” Brienne furrowed her forehead in thought.


Then she looked at him anxiously, worrying her lip and furrowing her brow. “But is what we’re doing improper? Maybe we shouldn’t?”

Jon squeezed her hands. “We can stop if you want. Now or at any time. It’s not technically proper, I suppose. I don’t personally care. But it more has to be your decision because I think a woman would suffer more in society than a man would in these kind of situations, if it were to get out.”

Brienne thought about the marriages she’d recently seen: Robert and Cersei, who both cheated on one another; Olenna’s matter-of-fact revelation that she had lovers before, during and after her marriage, and most recently, Margaery’s nonchalant plan to take lovers if she felt lonely. The truth often betrays the façade, she thought. Most of those men who visit Chataya’s were also presumably happily married. Even her father had been known to take on lovers, unsuccessfully hiding them from her as she grew up. There was a huge underbelly of so-called improper behavior that was being masked by propriety and society turning a blind eye. But what she and Jon were doing, it didn’t feel improper, but felt quite the opposite, she thought.

“I’ve never cared about what society thought of me,” she said, with defiance.

“Me neither,” Jon said.
“Is it wrong that I don’t want to stop what we’re doing?” She asked suddenly.

“Gods no,” Jon said with relief.

“I like it…a lot.” Brienne looked up at him shyly with lowered eyes. “It’s fascinating…I want to learn all about your body and how it works.”

Jon raised his eyebrows. “Ever the scientist.” He took her in his arms. “I will enjoy you learning all about my body very much, Brienne.” He kissed her. She kissed him back, softly.

She suddenly remembered. “Oh Jon, this afternoon I’m going with Jaime to Tywin’s. He asked if I could talk to Myrcella about womanly things, her flowering and such.”

“That’s a good idea. She’s surrounded my men. I’m supposed to meet with Sam later, so it works out.” Jon’s face turned serious and he frowned. “You know that Jaime Lannister is interested in you, don’t you? The handsomest man in Westeros?”

Brienne laughed. “That’s absurd! Why would the handsomest man in Westeros be interested in me? His only interest in me is as a friend.” She tilted her head in thought. “He doesn’t have many of those, you know.”

“I don’t suppose he does,” said Jon, thoughtful. “He has been less of an ass of late, I’ll give him that.”

Brienne giggled, and kissed Jon on the cheek.

“Jon, you know I adore you, right?”

He grinned. “As long as you know that I adore you, my lovely bird.”

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Myrcella was a girl who was tall for her age, thin, with long honey-blonde waves that hung down her back. She looked a great deal like Cersei, though the resemblance was merely physical as she had a kindness in her eyes and manner that her mother lacked. Brienne thought the girl seemed shy, and the girl’s mannerisms reminded Brienne of herself when she was a child. She saw the tendency to look down, a hesitancy to speak, slouching, and a general impression that the girl wanted to disappear.

However, she noticed that the girl lit up when she and Jaime walked into the room.

“Uncle, Jaime!” the girl cried, embracing him. “You’re back. Uncle Tyrion said you were staying the night at the bookshop.”

Jaime gave the girl a kiss at the top of her head and moved towards Brienne. “I did. And I brought Dr. Tarth today. You remember her, don’t you?”

Myrcella nodded, shyly meeting Brienne’s eyes and smiling. “Good to see you again, Dr. Tarth. Tommen talks a lot about you.” She tilted her head. “So does Uncle Jaime.”

Brienne smiled at the girl. “Does he.” She said, looking archly at Jaime, who was comically avoiding her gaze. “Lovely to see you again, Myrcella. And please call me Brienne.”

The girl widened her eyes and nodded.
“How are you getting on here, Myrcella?” Brienne asked.

“It’s nice here.” She paused in thought. “I miss some of my things, like my clothes and Tommen misses some of his toys, but I like it better here. I like being around Uncles Jaime and Tyrion. Even grandfather is nice.” Brienne heard Jaime cough. She threw him a sarcastic look, and she saw him trying his best to stifle his laughter.

The girl hesitated, and asked tentatively, “Would you like to see my room? Uncle Jaime let me decorate it the way I want. Tommen’s room is terrible of course, it’s messy and he has pictures of cats all over his walls.”

Brienne nodded happily and smiled at Jaime as the young girl led her by the arm. He bowed and gave her an encouraging little wave in response.

Myrcella’s room was a wash of pink silks and wardrobes of clothes. There were also many books; it seemed the girl read a lot of tales of knights and noble ladies.

“You like stories of knights, Myrcella?”

The girl beamed. “I do. I wanted to be a knight and used to playfight with Tommen, but he was so little that I always beat him. I didn’t want to play with Joffrey though, even though he’s older, he hits you for real and he’s mean.”

“I used to want to be a knight too,” said Brienne, smiling, though inwardly disturbed at the idea of Joffrey hitting the girl for real.

“I wanted to learn sword fighting but mother says it’s not proper for a young lady and I should focus on looking my best and do as my Septa tells me. She said she doesn’t want me to get hurt or have scars from fighting because then no man would want to marry me when I’m older. Uncle Jaime says that’s rubbish.”

Brienne laughed. “Well, the threat of having scars sure didn’t stop me. I had a Septa who was always mad at me for not being proper.” Brienne said, smiling. She paused. “If it’s okay with your uncles and your grandfather, I could teach you how to fight with a sword.”

The girl stared at her in disbelief. “You know how to sword fight? Like a real knight? I thought you were a doctor!”

Brienne laughed. “Well not like a real knight, but I trained with the Master at Arms on Tarth for many years. I started a few years younger than you, actually. And yes, you can be both a doctor and a swordswoman, I think.”

“Uncle Jaime didn’t mention that you knew how to fight with swords, and he talks about you all the time.”

“Does he?” Brienne tilted her head inquisitively.

“Oh yes, he said how I could become a doctor like you. Or good like you. And how I don’t need to worry too much about my looks because they don’t really matter. How what matters is what’s on the inside” She frowned. “But mother really cares that I look pretty. I think she loves me best when I have a beautiful dress on and when my hair is curled perfectly.”

The girl sat on the bed, and Brienne, seeing nowhere else to sit, joined her.

The girl looked at her with an odd expression. “You know, mother doesn’t like you.”
Brienne swallowed. “Oh?”

“She says bad things about you.” The girl bit her lip. “But I know that they’re not true. Anyway, I’m glad I live here now. When I lived at the Red Keep, I never saw Uncle Tyrion. Sometimes Uncle Jaime would come to live with us, but he never spent time with us. He was always in mother’s room.” The girl frowned. “Sometimes I would hear them yelling and get scared. Sometimes I heard other strange sounds that they made.”

Brienne widened her eyes. “Well, Myrcella, I’m glad you’re here too.” She looked down at the girl. “Did your mother ever tell you about becoming a woman?”

The girl blushed. “No, she’s too busy. But I know about flowering. My septa told me that girls bleed to atone for the sins of being a woman. She said that’s why women get punished with so much pain when they have babies. That it’s the woman’s curse.”

Brienne pursed her lips. She supposed all Septas were the same all over, especially in the trash they say to little girls. “Well, I wouldn’t believe everything your septa says. Sometimes they’re just taught the wrong thing and believe things that aren’t true.”

Brienne continued. “It’s true that when you flower, you bleed for a few days of every month. But that just means that your body is preparing itself to become a grown woman, and one day – when you are ready – to have babies.”

“Oh, I know all about babies.” The girl said confidently. “Joffrey told me that a man’s thing gets hard and he puts it into the woman’s special hole and he plants his seed inside her.”

“Did he?” Brienne felt a faint shiver run up her spine. “He hasn’t shown you anything has he?”

“No, but she showed me some dogs that were doing it. But I always try to stay away from him anyway.”

Brienne breathed a sigh of relief. “Well, I suppose what you should know is that when you do flower, it will be for a few days, and you might have an ache in your tummy. When it does happen, ask your nanny or your Septa for help getting some supplies to absorb the blood. Sometimes it’s messy and unpleasant, but you’ll soon get used to it. Every time it happens, your body is renewing itself, preparing for the possibility of a new life. Remember that.”

The girl was curious and bright, especially when the initial shyness wore off. She seemed amazingly well-adjusted. They spoke some more in her room, and walked to the veranda where the girl asked about how Brienne became a doctor. She was happy to comply.

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Jaime sat at a table on the veranda, a glass of iced lemonade in his hands, looking at the wench talking to Myrcella. His daughter. He still had trouble thinking of the children as his, although he knew they absolutely were, considering how much Cersei wanted to cuckold Robert and how much she wanted his seed for her children. He had gone along, as he had always done where Cersei was concerned. At her suggestion, he had joined the military to avoid being married off, so he could always be with her, while he had to stand by while she got married to Robert. He looked at the young girl who was a miniature version of him and Cersei. He certainly didn’t feel like her and Tommen’s father. Even when he lived in the Red Keep on his forays back from duty, Cersei discouraged him spending time with them, thinking that people would begin to suspect. She
wouldn’t even let him hold them as babies, save for the one time with Joffrey, when he was first born. Not that he’d fought for it; all he cared about was fucking his sister and mooning over her beauty. He also realized that he was never under delusion about the cruel woman she’d become. He was a fool, and had been for more than twenty years. Strange, he had never even given it a thought before.

Brienne, looking bright and lovely in butter yellow day dress printed with tiny blue flowers, sat on a stone bench beside Myrcella, who wore pink and had her long hair pinned behind her ears. Brienne was talking to her with what he could describe as welcoming patience, and Myrcella was smiling and nodding at the wench. Seeing them interact, Jaime knew he’d made the right choice in asking her to talk to the girl; after all, the woman had a kind of unconscious magic that drew people to her. They liked her automatically, and he realized with irony that he was not an exception. He really did like her. A lot. But Brienne had become the latest in the long list of regrets in his life. He remembered how drawn he was to her and how he thought, for a moment, that she was also drawn to him. He remembered their incredible kiss, and how she kissed him back with equal passion, how during that moment he just wanted to be with her, to touch her, to feel what it was like inside her. How he thought, for a few bright moments, that he had a future, free of all the horrible things in his life that he’d done.

He winced as he remembered back to last night, how she most sweetly burst out crying and he got up to comfort her, only to find that Jon was already embracing her, their bodies close, as if they’d embraced many times before. And that kiss goodnight – not a kiss on the lips but three cheek kisses, a Dornish kiss. They could have only learned it from Oberyn. Is Oberyn accustomed to kissing his surgical residents? Jaime couldn’t help but put his head in his hands when he recalled how the wench came to his room to bring him breakfast – only she would be kind enough to think about his needs so early in the morning. And he couldn’t help but stare at her in awe and all he wanted was to be around her. She looked adorable with her messed up hair and the blue robe that matched her eyes. And the strip of delicious, freckled skin that was revealed at the ‘v’ of her robe. It made him want to lick her up and down. Jon was sleeping in her room, she’d said. Probably in her bed. He tried unsuccessfully to not imagine what they got up to alone in her rooms. He groaned. It took all of his willpower that morning to stop himself from putting an ear to her door to listen to what the two were up to. He supposed that what everyone said was true, that the wench had found love with the handsome bastard (in all senses of the word, he thought irritably). He tried to remember Tyrion’s advice, about how her relationship with Jon is none of his business, but godsdammit, he couldn’t help wishing that he was in Jon’s place, now could he? He wanted to kiss her and touch her under her robe, and feel her fall apart under his hands, crying out his name.

“Uncle Jaime,” a little voice called out to him. He startled and looked up from his hands. Tommen, the darling boy, had come to the veranda, holding a tabby cat, while two of his other kittens were at his heels. They already follow him around like a parent, Jaime thought sweetly.

“Tommie. I see you’ve brought your cats.”

The boy nodded seriously. “I want to introduce them to Brienne. Do you think she’ll like them?”

Jaime laughed. “Of course she will! Come, I’ll pick these two up and let’s walk over to her.”

Jaime picked up the two kittens and followed Tommen to where Brienne and Myrcella were sitting. Brienne looked up and immediately broke into a beaming smile which lit up her whole face. His heart gave a pang, as it always did when she was around him.

“Tommie!” she exclaimed, “You brought your cats!” Myrcella giggled beside her.

Tommie nodded seriously. “Brienne. May I introduce you to Ser Pounce,” he said, indicating the
tabby in his arms. “And this is Lady Whiskers,” indicating the grey cat Jaime was holding, “And this is Boots,” gesturing to the black and white cat.

“I’m very pleased to meet your acquaintance, Sir Pounce, Lady Whiskers, and Boots,” Brienne said, petting each one in turn. She looked at Lady Whiskers in Jaime’s arms. “May I hold her?” She asked.

Jaime nodded, handing over the docile kitten. Lady Whiskers lay nestled in Brienne’s arms, purring and kneading at her chest. Brienne had the sweetest smile on her face. Is this what she would look like holding a babe, their babe? As quickly as it came, he dismissed the thought from his mind.

Myrcella took Boots from Jaime and started to pet the little thing. “Uncle Jaime,” she said, “Brienne said she would teach me how to fight with weapons and swords!”

Brienne started and quickly intercepted. “I said I would if it was okay with you, Tyrion and Tywin, of course. She seems to want to.”

Jaime looked at Brienne in surprise. “I knew you could wield a dagger, assassin wench, but I didn’t know you were proficient with the sword.”


“I will have to take you up on your offer, wench. We have an armory here; it’s decent, though small.”

“So can I, Uncle Jaime?” Myrcella interrupted.

“Of course. As long as you don’t hurt yourself.” Jaime nodded at Brienne.

Tommen looked up at him. “Uncle Jaime, why do you call Brienne wench?”

Jaime blushed. (He cursed himself. He never blushed.) “That’s just a special nickname I have for Brienne.” He paused. “But I’m the only one that can use it.”

He looked over to the wench who was smirking. Jaime felt another pang, and felt himself sinking a little more into the sea that is Brienne.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think about the chapter! All comments, short or long, are welcome.

Thanks for those who have given kudos and please hit that button if you like the story.

I appreciate you readers putting your trust in me while I tell you this story. I’m hoping to give you an amazing progression and conclusion (many chapters from now, but still).
Parts of a Whole

Chapter Summary

We continue to spend a little bit more time with Jaime and Brienne.

Chapter Notes

I can't believe we are at 100K words. It's seriously the most I've written, especially in such a short time. Thanks so much to the readers for sticking with me in this story. I know it's a huge investment with not too much (JB or smut) payoff, so I really appreciate your attention. I have especially loved your thoughtful, funny, incredible comments and suggestions and speculation. You make me want to continue to write this story. I'm completely committed to finishing it (I have been frustrated by abandoned WIPs before, so I know the pain). Again, thank you :-)

So this chapter continues on from the previous chapter. It's a little low-key.

Also: I'm eager for you to read the next chapter, which has some exciting bits that I hope you'll like.

- See the end of the chapter for more notes

“The children are doing well.” Brienne said, threading her arm through Jaime’s. “They talk constantly about you: it was Uncle Jaime this, or Uncle Jaime that. They really like you.” What he liked was the sturdy feel of her on his arm. And she was close enough that he could almost sense the warmth radiating from the side of her torso. In her yellow dress with tiny blue flowers, Jaime thought that she looked like summer come to life, and all he wanted was just to bask in her sunshine. They were slowly strolling through the gardens to get to the front gate.

“You sound surprised, wench.” Jaime said in a light teasing tone. He then looked at her thoughtfully, expression turning serious. “To be honest, I never thought I could care for them the way I actually do. In the past, I never considered them as, in any way, my responsibility.” He realized this with a little shame, but it was completely true: he never gave the younger children a second thought – they were always just there, in the background of Cersei. In the case of Joffrey, as far as he was concerned, the boy was just a squirt of his seed, and nothing more.

Jaime continued. “It’s true that they seem to be adjusting quite well. I don’t think I knew to what extent they were unhappy living with my sister. And it’s been a gift to be able to spend time with them.” He shook his head. “She – Cersei – never allowed that, thinking someone would put two and two together.”

“I’m glad you were able to protect them.” She sent him a glance that was full of fondness.
“They’re really good kids.” Jaime felt his heart warm, as he nodded in agreement. It was a miracle that the two of them turned out as sweet and innocent as they were; they seemed to have been born uncorrupted, unlike their elder brother who seemed to have taken on the brunt of the twin’s illicit and terrible love. The fruit of their moral crime.

They passed by trees that had lost their leaves, and hedges that were neatly trimmed. Does every garden look as desolate as this one as winter looms? Jaime wondered. With winter around the corner, sometimes it was hard to believe spring would ever come. He nudged a tiny bit closer to the warmth of Brienne.

“She told Myrcella terrible things about a woman’s flowering, like how it was a curse to punish women and idiocy like that. I was happy that I was able to talk to her and correct that falsity.” She paused, looking at him with a clear, honest gaze. “Septas can do damage to a young girl. Growing up, my own Septa Roelle made me feel I was the ugliest, most unworthy, useless creature in existence.”

Jaime gave her a concerned glance, noting the heaviness of emotion laden in her voice. “You didn’t believe her, I hope. It’s certainly not true from where I stand.” He inwardly cringed, recalling all the moments in their early acquaintance that he literally called her ugly to her face. Another regret.

Brienne looked down. “I did believe her. She was the only woman in my life, and how could I not believe her when everyone else around me made fun of me for being ugly and freakish?”

“Oh, Brienne.” She looked so sad just then, lost in the memories of that awful time. He wanted to take her in his arms and hold her. He wanted to go back in time and save Brienne as a young girl from her horrible Septa. But he couldn’t do any of those things. He lightly patted her hand that was holding on to his arm.

She looked at him, suddenly embarrassed. “Things are better now, thank the gods.” She smiled, as her heartbreaking vulnerability was again tucked away from him. “I’m glad Myrcella has people in her life that love her.”

They stopped walking. It was a shame, he thought, that they had reached their destination of the carriage.

He offered his hand to help her up to the driver’s box, not into the carriage itself. Brienne smiled and climbed up easily.

She turned to him, suddenly shy, and asked. “Would you mind dropping me off at Chataya’s instead of at home?”

He raised his eyebrows in response, then nodded.

===== Predictably, Jaime insisted on coming in with her and on driving her back from Chataya’s, saying he simply had nothing better to do. She nodded in agreement, and she recognized that she felt secretly pleased to have some company at the brothel. Not that there was any risk to her reputation; after all, it was still afternoon, prior to opening hours. She found herself thinking about the man driving next to her, and was surprised to find that she was enjoying his company more and more. He was always a complicated man, a fascinating man, and there were times in the past where she wanted to figure him out, like something mechanical that you had to dismantle before seeing how
the contraption actually worked. It felt like in the beginning of their friendship, he had come to her completely disassembled and in pieces, and she almost felt at times that she was holding him together. But in these past weeks she felt like she was beginning to see the whole of Jaime: who he actually was on the inside, and how, when you overlook the damage, there was a man who was infinitely worth knowing.

The house was quiet as they approached and rang the bell. The door was abruptly opened by a surprised looking Bronn, who looked aggrieved to be standing there in front of them.

“Look what the cats dragged in, a lady doc and a posh prince. To what do we owe this honour?” Bronn said loudly, an absurdly smug look on his face as he let them in. He looked as rough and gruff as ever.

“Hello Bronn,” she greeted him.

“Bonn,” Jaime said with irritation.

Chataya, elegant as ever, came in and smiled at the sight of Brienne. “Ah, doctor! How wonderful to see you. And Captain Lannister, what a pleasant surprise. I don’t suppose you’re here to finally sample our services?” She gave Jaime an appraising look.

Bonn made a scoffing noise. Brienne smirked.

“No. I am not. I’m just with Dr. Tarth here.” He smiled charmingly and nodded toward Brienne.

“The doc is always bringing the most handsome men around and not letting us have them,” Ros walked in with a smile, looking fresh and gorgeous as ever, appreciatively eyeing Jaime.

“How’s the handsome dark-haired doc? Jon Snow.” Ros asked cheekily, coming toward her.

Brienne laughed and hugged the woman, who giggled and hugged back. “He’s fine. Still handsome, I’m happy to report. And you? You are well?”


Jaime smiled and bowed to the woman.

Brienne turned again to Chataya. “I was wondering if I could talk to the girls about testing out a moon tea pill that a small group of us at the hospital are working on. We’re hoping a few of the women here would like to try it, in a test trial along with some other women we know. If any of the girls agree, they would have to keep track of how they’re feeling while on the medication, but it’s all relatively straightforward, and I would go over everything with them.”

Jaime raised his eyebrows, listening to the conversation.

The small, dark-haired woman nodded and looked at her with extreme interest. “A moon tea pill? That would be something we’d all be interested in, if it works.” She looked thoughtful. “Indeed, that would save us a great deal of trouble and inconvenience.”

“I’d be interested,” Ros piped in. “That tea tastes something foul.” She gestured to Brienne. “Come with me, doc.”

Ros led her to the backrooms, where a number of the girls were sitting, reading and listening to records on the Victrola. She saw two familiar faces, the blonde, green-eyed Barra, and the small,
dark-haired Dancy, who had been sick from the moon tea. Both smiled and waved at her as she came in. Brienne told them about the proposal.

“I’d be interested in your test, doc Brienne,” said Dancy. “The tea does me in nearly every week and sometimes I even have to skip work if I’m sick from it.”

Barra also easily agreed. Brienne outlined what and how they were to document any side effects and other variables, and told them that the pills would be delivered in about a fortnight. She also found another woman, a short, voluptuous woman with light brown skin, named Shae, who expressed interest and was willing to collect the data they needed.

“How is Tyrion?” The exotic looking woman asked. “I miss that little lion.”

Brienne blushed. Little lion? “Tyrion seems well enough. I will give him your regards, Shae.”

Shae crinkled her brown cat-like eyes and laughed. “You do that. Tell him to visit me.”

In the end, Brienne was happy with getting the four women to participate in the study, even though there was an interest from significantly more women at the house. But they had decided to keep the initial group small, just to make sure it was effective and safe. Due to the purity of the ingredient, Samwell believed that the moon tea pill was entirely safe; however, it was important to start testing with a small group first.

When she returned to the foyer, she found Bronn and Jaime deep in a conversation about The Brave Companions. Bronn looked slightly put upon and Jaime had a furrowed and concerned brow.

“They call themselves The Brave Companions, but folks around King’s Landing are calling them The Bloody Mummers, due to their colourful clothes and their penchant to make men bloody if they don’t get paid.”

“And Joffrey is leading them?” Jaime asked intently. Brienne admired how his face glowed in the afternoon sunshine that filtered through the window.

“Used to be. But I hear they may have had a falling out, due to some internal issues. But they may still be sniffing around him and your sister, I’d say.”

“And they haven’t come round here?” Brienne asked, stepping up to them and interrupting. Jaime gave a start at her voice, but flashed her a brief grin.

Bonn smiled crookedly at her. “Not yet, they haven’t. If they’re visiting brothels they’re visiting those outside the city for now.”

“And Joffrey hasn’t been around?” she asked, her voice edged with concern.

“He’d better not be. I’d like to give that little cunt the back of my bloody hand.” Bronn said gruffly, flexing his right hand into a fist.

Jaime gave him a warning glance.

“My apologies for my language, my lady doctor.” He nodded in Jaime’s direction. “This Lannister toff seems to think you’re sensitive to it, though I reckon being a doctor you’ve heard all the curse words and then some.” Bronn laughed.

Brienne smiled. “I have heard my fair share of colourful language, I must admit. I’m pretty good at
saying them too,” she teased, winking.

Bronn looked surprised but smiled brightly at her. Jaime tilted his head and cocked an eyebrow.

She looked at the rough, lanky man. “Will you send for me if there’s anything the matter with any of the women? If they need help?”

Bronn gave her an admiring look. He nodded. “Will do, doc.”

“By the way, I think Tyrion misses you.”

Bronn grinned lopsidedly. “Tell him he can have me back for the right amount of coin.”

Jaime and Brienne made a move to go.

“Take care of this one, Jaime, you cunt!” Bronn called out after them as they left. Jaime rolled his eyes.

Jaime offered his arm on their short walk to the carriage and Brienne unhesitatingly took it. As he helped her up the carriage, Jaime turned to her.

“Where to next, wench?” He said, throwing her a winning smile.

She stared at him, not understanding. “What? Home, I guess.”

His grin grew, revealing devastatingly handsome dimples. “You have me at your disposal, wench. You just want me to take you home? We could go anywhere, anywhere at all.”

Brienne giggled. “While that offer is tempting, Jaime, I don’t want to take any more of your time. You’ve been generous enough to drive me to Chataya’s.”

He nodded. “Whatever you want. But it’s me who should thank you for your kindnesses toward my – toward the children. Myrcella, I’m sure, will be thrilled to learn some swordfighting skills from you.” He grinned wolfishly. “Who knows, I might pick up a thing or two myself.”

“You might,” Brienne smiled quietly. They were going at a good pace on the carriage now, and the air was still pleasantly cool. He looked over at her.

“So, moon tea pills? That’s quite something.”

Brienne nodded. “It’s in the initial testing phase right now, as you may have guessed. Jon and Samwell, the chemist at the hospital, found a way to distil the medicinal essence of the moon plant into regulated, precise doses in pill form.”

Jaime shook his head in disbelief. “That’s quite brilliant. I wonder why no one thought of it before. That Jon Snow,” he said, thoughtfully.

“No one’s thought of it before because it has to do with the lives of women. It will be revolutionary, if it works.” Brienne’s voice rose with excitement. “Imagine, a world where women don’t have to be threatened by pregnancy when they choose to explore their own wants and desires. They would potentially have the same freedoms as men with regards to their bodies. Women would no longer be the slaves of biology and propriety. And hopefully morality and societal expectations would follow.” She coloured, once she realized how much she was speaking.

Jaime, who had since stopped the carriage in front of her building, gave her a look of semi-concealed awe. “You, Brienne, are really quite something, you know that?”
She blushed a deeper shade. “Well, I admit it’s ambitious. For the pill, I mean, that’s the hope. Things are yet in the beginning stages. That’s why we’re in the testing phase at the moment, to see if it will actually work.”

“It’s very smart of you to ask Chataya’s girls to participate.” Jaime said.

Brienne frowned. “Well, it’s not just them we’re testing on. Married ladies, single ladies, even I’m testing it.”

Jaime swallowed visibly and coughed. “You’re taking moon tea pills?” His eyes were wide.

Brienne looked embarrassed. “Well yes; it would be hypocritical for me not to test it out on myself when I’m asking other women to take it. In any case, I wanted to experience any side effects and track how I felt on it.”

Jaime nodded, staring quietly at her.

Brienne finally looked around and suddenly realized that the carriage had since stopped and she had already arrived home. Meanwhile, Jaime had gotten down from the driver’s box and was now on her side. He offered a hand to help her down. She took it firmly, observing that his hand was dry and warm, and perhaps for the first time, she noticed that his hands were even slightly larger than hers.

She turned to face him. He looked down at their still joined hands and lifted her knuckles to his lips in a fleeting kiss.

“Goodbye Brienne. Thank you once again.”

Brienne nodded. “I will come see Myrcella. Just let me know when.”

He nodded, bowing to her, and swung back up to the driver’s box in one graceful movement before driving away.

Chapter End Notes

The "squirt of seed" line is from GRRM, when Jaime was thinking about Joffrey after his death. Such a horrible, good line that I couldn't resist.

Love comments, send them over!

Kudos if you like this story, and thank you for those that have already done so.

Thanks for reading and see you again tomorrow!
Yield

Chapter Summary

Some weeks have passed. Brienne copes with a very busy hospital. Tywin makes interesting discoveries, while Jaime picks up a sword.

Chapter Notes

Thanks for your continued encouragement and most wonderful comments around this story. I value you readers so much.

It might not be too clear, but some weeks have passed since the last chapter. As many of you remarked, things continue to brew. A few of you also predicted a sparring match...bravo!

I hope you enjoy this one.

- See the end of the chapter for more notes

King’s Landing continued to bustle and churn as the winter months approached, although it never got cold enough to snow in this part of Westeros. The city smelled more and more of coal, which people were burning to heat their homes. The city had an unsettled atmosphere in the past few weeks. One day, a fisherman pulled out a severed hand instead of a fish from his nets; another day, a severed foot. The newspapers marvelled at this latest mystery and warned the public about men with missing limbs. There was a feeling of misery and doom in the city, which Brienne felt in her very bones. Faces around her were worn out, pale, drawn. They were tired and weary, bundled up in dark cloaks and coats.

It had been a hectic few weeks for her. After Jon also successfully performed his own solo surgery, both of them had more responsibilities as surgeons. They were allowed to perform simple procedures on their own, and Oberyn took a step back in his supervisory role with them. However, they were still short of hours in the day; on top of their rounds and surgeries, they still had to help with Oberyn’s research on vessel repair, which required vast amounts of reading between the two of them. It was no surprise that Jon and Brienne barely had any time to rest, although they managed to spend nights together every so often. Most of the time, they were so tired that they just fell into each other’s arms and slept. However, some of the time they found solace – and sexual release – in each other, although they had yet to fully consummate their relationship in the fullest sense of the word.

With the cold weather came a host of ailments at the hospital. More commonly, they saw the flu, lung infections, and severe respiratory distress brought on by factory work. Mothers brought in their sick children to the hospital, hoping for a cure for a fever or cough. Brienne saw more burns
from coal fires as people tried to heat their homes, and there were always infections from being cramped in close quarters with too many people.

One of the patients Brienne saw that day was a young girl of about ten years old, pale and with short, lanky brown hair. She had a large gash on her right hand which was bleeding. She was with her mother, who looked as harried and tired as the daughter.

“Hello Lana,” Brienne said, looking at the girl’s chart. The girl nodded. Even though the wound was bleeding and she must have been in pain, the girl looked stoically on.

“How did this happen?” Brienne asked the mother.

“In the cotton factory, the machine that combs the threads – the timing was off and caught her hand.”

“She was working there? At ten years old?” She looked up, curious.

The woman gave her a weary look. “Doctor, there’s lots of children who work there. I have two others there.”

“All right, let me see.” The girl’s gash was deep, but not deep enough for nerve damage. Brienne cleaned the wound, put topical anesthetic on, and started to suture up the wound. The girl barely flinched. She seemed very tired.

“Doctor, will she be able to go back to work?” the mother asked suddenly.

Brienne looked at her. “When it starts healing, yes, in a few days to a week.”

The mother looked grim and desperate. “But I have to take her back to work tonight, or she’ll lose her job. I was only given two hours to bring her here and back.”

Brienne stared at the woman. “But it’s eight o’clock at night. Surely you can’t still be working at this hour.”

The woman’s face crumpled. “Oh, it’s terrible doc, they have us working from six in the morning until ten at night, six days a week. And if we miss a shift, we’re fired. It’s never been so bad. But I have to go back.” She pulled her daughter up.

“Madam!” Brienne called, “You can’t bring your daughter back to work. She can’t work with that hand.”

The mother bowed, and thanked Brienne. “Thank you doctor. I will try to get her to work on something else besides the machines then. I must go!” And with that, the woman strode quickly off, with the daughter at hand, matching her mother’s pace.

“We’re seeing more and more injuries from the factories,” said Jon, who had come up beside her. “Lots more cases of respiratory infections too, from all the floating cotton particles they inhale every day.”

She looked at him sadly. “That poor girl, she was exhausted. She didn’t even react when I started to sew her up.”

Jon nodded in sympathy. “I know. I’ve never seen people so tired. Maybe it’s the winter coming?”

Jon leaned over and said closely in her ear, “Come, it’s time for our break.” Instead of leading them
to the cafeteria, he led them down to her office. He closed and locked the door.

“Oh Jon,” Brienne complained, whining into his neck as she collapsed into him. His arms surrounded her tightly and he led her to the cot and sat them down. With one arm still around her waist, his other hand started stroking her hair. “I know,” he said. He started peppering soft, light kisses all over her cheeks. She was overcome with a feeling of gratitude for him. Just being there, for her. She pushed him down on the cot, so they were lying on their sides, face to face. Both of them barely fit onto the single cot, but she pulled Jon into her and threw her top leg over his hips. She kissed him sweetly at first, but the kisses soon became hungry and he kissed back, eager and panting. She felt him growing hard against her core. He groaned, kissing her again, lightly, lightly, then pulled away, looking into her eyes.

“We can’t do this here.” Jon murmured as he nuzzled his lips into her neck.

“I know,” said Brienne, moaning. “I’ve just wanted to touch you all day, Jon. I missed you.”

“Let me come home with you tonight,” panted Jon. “We’ll have all weekend.”

“Yes,” agreed Brienne, licking his throat. “But I have my appointment with Myrcella Sunday afternoon.”

“That’s okay, I have to visit Sam to go over the moon tea trials anyway that day.” They kissed softly.

“Tonight then.” Brienne gave him a final kiss.

“Tonight,” agreed Jon. They both got up with difficulty and some awkwardness.

“You go ahead,” Jon called to her as she got up to leave. “I just need a moment to…uh…calm things down.”

=====  

Tywin sat in his leather armchair in his club; he’d been a member for decades, so was his fool of a father before him, and his grandfather. He recalled how it was like pulling teeth to get Jaime and Tyrion to join, not that they came here very often, despite the exorbitant yearly fees that Tywin paid. His only child who actually wanted to join was Cersei, who was the only one that couldn’t join due to her sex. How she railed at the injustice of that, he remembered. She always wanted a man’s power and position, he knew, and perhaps she would have been a better person had she been born a man with all the privileges it afforded. Had she been born with the intellect and sensitivity of someone like Brienne, he liked to think that he would have encouraged her on a more unconventional path. But thwarted in her ambition and lust for power, Cersei had become a twisted, bitter being, full of herself and deluded into thinking herself powerful. Still, he considered, thinking about recent events and sipping from a glass of very old brandy, she had forcibly grabbed something and was holding on to it tightly.

He liked being in this room. The Lannister room, where only guests were invited. He liked that he had privacy, that he was surrounded by leather and dark wood, and expensive wool rugs from the East. One day, he thought, Tommen would join. Not Joffrey, whom he imagined would go on destructive rages and smash all the glasses and piss on the carpets. Metaphorically, that is.

There was a knock at the door. “Come in,” Tywin called in his cold, imperious voice.
The man he was expecting, a slim, compact man with cropped hair and goatee, dressed in the finest bespoke suit, walked in.

“Petyr,” said Tywin. “Grab yourself a drink and sit.” He gestured to the nearby bar, where the finest liquors were displayed.

“Dr. Lannister, thank you.” Petyr Baelish, or Littlefinger, as he was called, moved in a deliberate, self-possessing way. Tywin knew that the man was thrilled to be there. He loved the club, and had been angling for an invitation from Tywin for years. The man got himself a drink – gin, neat – and sat himself on a settee opposite.

“So, how fares Baratheon Industries?” Tywin opened neutrally.

Littlefinger leaned in eagerly. “Well, looking just at the monetary end of it, it is doing exceptionally well. In fact, it’s doing better than it ever did. Its coffers are filling up, and I suspect that soon, the Lannister debts will start to be repaid.” The man spoke in a thin, reedy voice, at once both pleading and ingratiating. He had been at the helm of operations for Robert for many years, but Tywin knew that he could not prevent Robert from pilfering the factory earnings with alarming regularity.

“This is due to the changes that my daughter’s made?”

Littlefinger nodded and paused thoughtfully. “In part. She instructed me to find as much money as possible from the factories, at any cost. I made recommendations and she implemented them without a single thought.”

Tywin gave the man an assessing stare. “And you don’t quite like that.”

He man shifted uncomfortably. “The changes she implemented are not…sustainable. They are too narrow minded. The way the business is going has bothered me, yes.”

“And these changes are?”

“Well, she lowered the employment age from seven to five years old. Cut all workers’ wages, including paying women half the pay of the men, and children a quarter of the men’s pay. As a consequence, the work day has been extended from twelve hours to sixteen hours.”

“I see.” Tywin pursed his lips.

“Now, these changes, which occurred over a very brief amount of time, have consequently increased production, profits, and lowered costs. The money is flowing in.” Littlefinger tilted his head and stared at Tywin. “However, what your daughter is not seeing are the long-term costs. Workers are tired. Injuries are increasing as a consequence. There is unrest amongst the workers. Talk of a strike. Talk of unionizing.”

“There are alarming safety issues. Machines are not being maintained properly. Fire-prevention procedures ignored.” The man paused and gave Tywin a sharp look. “Not to mention the group of criminals, who are being called the Bloody Mummers by the workers, that hang around Joffrey and around the factory. I hear stories about factory girls being targeted.”

“And I suppose you’ve tried to speak to my daughter about all these issues?” Tywin asked as a formality. He already knew the answer, of course.

“Dr. Lannister, I have tried to talk to her and explain it to her. I tried to appeal to her womanly, nurturing qualities.”
“Cersei lacks those qualities, so I can guess how she reacted to you.” Tywin said with a steely tone.

“She has threatened to dismiss me.” Littlefinger narrowed his eyes. “Regardless, I think I will resign from my post. My conscience does not permit me to continue-”

“Your conscience.” Tywin said dryly.

“Yes. She is planning to install an old man who obeys her without question, a man named Qyburn.” The man paused. “Also, this is a personal matter but…”

“Continue,” said Tywin.

“Well, your daughter is unhappy about her other two children coming to live with you. She is adamant that the children belong with her. She has been distracted by the factory lately, but I imagine she would want to get them back somehow.” The man’s gaze was sly and knowing.

“I thank you for that piece of information.” Tywin said thoughtfully.

Littlefinger leaned toward him. “Dr. Lannister, if there is anything at all, anything else I can do for you, I am at your service.”

Tywin nodded stiffly. “Your information has been invaluable, with regards to the industries and the goings-on of my daughter and grandson. I shall not forget your reports to me.” He looked at the younger man with a penetrating gaze. “Please keep in touch. I would like to know where I can find you, should the need arise.”

Littlefinger nodded, cracking his fingers and smiling.

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The young girl was a fast learner, light on her feet, open to correction, and had a harmony of movement that was rare. She took to swordplay easily, and over the weeks, Brienne soon found herself a very eager, diligent student. The lessons flew by. Brienne found herself enjoying them, as she’d been away from swordplay too long. That day, both Myrcella and Brienne were dressed in breeches and a shirt, with Brienne wearing the white practice outfit she had gotten from Olenna.

“I practice with Uncle Jaime all the time,” Myrcella said, smiling at her handsome uncle who was observing close by. “He’s very good, you know.”

“So he’s said,” remarked Brienne, throwing Jaime a smirk. The man smiled back arrogantly.

“You’ve never wanted to spar with me in all these weeks, wench. Might you be afraid of being bested?” Jaime teased, throwing her a crooked smile.

“I thought I was here to teach your niece how to swordfight, not play with her uncle.” Brienne said dismissively.

“Oh, but I like playing,” smiled Jaime, moving closer to her. “I think the doctor wench is afraid to lose to a lion.”

Brienne huffed. “Only a man who refers to himself as a lion deserves to be knocked to the ground.”

Jaime circled her. “Accepting my challenge, finally?”
Myrcella squealed. “I’m going to get Tommen. Don’t start without me.” The girl ran off into the house.

“Pick your weapon, lion.” She said mockingly.

Jaime went into the armory and quickly picked out a blunted sword, much like the type and size that Brienne was using.

They circled each other, each one weary of making the first move. Finally, Jaime attacked in a straightforward style, evidently trying to assess her skill; Brienne fended off the attack with ease, even pretending to look bored while doing so. Jaime laughed. “You’re a naughty wench, aren’t you?” He said, as he flew toward her in an amazingly swift attack, his sword arm teasing and thrashing the air as quick as lightning. Brienne was surprised at his speed; he was much faster than Loras, she thought, as she barely moved aside to avoid the cuts of his blade. He grinned. Their swords met, clanged, and rang harmoniously as if in a duet. Their bodies moved away and toward each other as if in a vicious, dangerous dance; strangely, they seemed to sense where each other would move and where their swords would be. Brienne used her size and strength to overpower him in her advances, but he fended her off with some difficulty. Back and forth they went; parry, lunge, retreat. Sweat ran down their faces and drenched their clothing; they fought until they were panting, until their hearts were thrumming with blood and adrenaline.

Then suddenly, taking advantage of his weariness, Brienne reached down with her sword and used all her weight to sweep Jaime’s feet from under him. He fell to the ground heavily, his sword leaving his hand. She straddled him and pinned his arms to the ground. She leaned forward over his face. Drops of her sweat dripped onto his skin, his lips. “Yield,” Brienne said. Jaime stared at her, his pupils wide and dark. He licked his lips to taste her sweat. “No,” he said, and in one sudden movement, flipped her body so he was on top, straddling her. He had somehow grabbed her blade and put it to her throat. He grinned. “Yield, wench.” Both of them were panting. She tried to buck him off her, moving her hips forcefully up. He ground down on her. “Yield,” he repeated, his eyes dangerous and glittering. Brienne sighed, after realizing he was too strong for her to buck off. “I yield.” Jaime remained there, on top of her for a few long moments as if he didn’t hear her. Then slowly, he moved off and offered her his hand to assist her up. She took it, still marvelling at his skill.

“You nearly beat me, wench.” He said teasingly. “No one has come as close as you to doing that.” Brienne blushed, smiling at herself.

Suddenly she was aware of little hands clapping; Tommen and Myrcella were bright-eyed, laughing and cheering for their beloved uncle. “I thought you had him, Brienne!” said Myrcella.

“To be honest, Myrcella, I thought so too. It was close.” Jaime replied. Brienne laughed.

“That was indeed very interesting to watch.” A voice declared loudly as a figure emerged from the house. It was Tywin, looking very fine in a dark grey suit.

“Father. I thought you were at the club today.” Jaime said, surprised.

“My business was finished earlier than usual.” Tywin replied evenly. He turned to her. “Brienne, your talents never cease to astonish me. I would never in my life expected to see my war commander son being so easily knocked on the ground. Bravo.” He smiled. Brienne grinned back.

“Well, he did technically win, so I suppose he was able to knock me down quite as easily. I was lucky to come as close as I did. Jaime is extremely skilled.”
Tywin nodded. “I suspect you both might want to clean up a little after that vigorous bout? I shall have someone run you a bath.” Brienne was severely conscious of how sweaty and hot she was, how ugly and red-faced she must look, so she gratefully accepted. Feeling awkward and shy, she stole a glance at her opponent.

Jaime’s damp shirt stuck to his skin, and Brienne could see the broad contours of his muscular chest beneath his shirt. His face was flushed, eyes dark and slightly wild. He stared at her and deliberately took the whole of her in, and she was again aware how closely the sweat-soaked clothes clung to her body. He visibly swallowed and gave her a faint nod as he watched her walk away.

Chapter End Notes

I fully confess things about cotton mills and its various problems were inspired by the excellent BBC miniseries North & South. (If you haven’t seen it, it’s well worth watching. It’s based on the Elizabeth Gaskell book)

Send me your thoughts about Jaime, Tywin, Jon, and all the rest. I love comments, big or small.

Kudos if you like this story. A huge thank you for those that have already hit that button!

As always, thank you so much for reading. ;-)
Little Islands

Chapter Summary

Brienne and Jon continue to be busy at the hospital, while the Lannisters have another family meeting.

Chapter Notes

I'm glad you readers enjoyed the homage to the swordfighting scene from canon. I especially enjoyed the reader speculation about the state of Jaime's loins, lol.

Although I make up some medical stuff in this AU, the respiratory treatments mentioned in this chapter are from historical fact. Pretty interesting stuff when you begin research medicine in that time.

In this chapter, we get to spend time with Jon/Brienne, as well as with the Lannisters. Win-win?

Next chapter is a monster. A very nice monster, I hope.

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Over the next two weeks, The Westerosi Times reported pockets of violence at the Baratheon factories: workers had attacked a foreman who was preventing them from going on their lunch break, then later a number of hired guards attacked workers as they left the factory. More hands and feet, and the occasional limb were fished out of the Bay; the owners of said parts were said to remain a mystery. Many people thought that these particular stories were a work of imagination by the impresario of the press, Varys, whom everyone knew was not above massaging the truth or exaggerating kernels of fact to tell a compelling story. Stories, after all, was what was selling, and the more sensational it was, the stronger the sales.

For Brienne though, these stories in the press paled to the reality she was living while working at the hospital. Instead of reading about the unrest at the fabric mills, she saw the bloodied scalps of workers and the cuts on foremen. She saw the aftermath of senseless violence. She and Jon also saw more cases of sickness brought on by factory conditions. Many men, women, and children came in with congested lungs and shortness of breath. There was no cure, just the promise of a slow decline, more bouts fighting for breath, and a gradual death. Brienne and Jon treated the acute cases with nebulized adrenaline, which stopped major attacks. For the others, the only thing they could suggest was rest and a change in the specific environment that caused the trouble, but this was impossible and unrealistic for the workers who barely had enough wages to put food on the table. They also prescribed so-called asthma cigarettes, which were made from the thorn apple plant and contained belladonna alkaloids. While smoking is generally terrible for lung disease,
these cigarettes actually helped dilate the bronchi of the lungs in cases of shortness of breath. Smoking was the only way to get the drugs into the lungs.

At busy times like these, Brienne was grateful for the time in the laboratory with Oberyn and Jon, where she could find peace in the relative quiet of papers, research, and in the discussion of ideas.

Oberyn was unveiling his new tool for the first time. He grinned at them, presented them with a cloth covered metal tray, and spoke. “I believe this new tool will change the way we look at aorta aneurysms. As you recall from the cases we’ve seen, these events are near impossible to repair. We have tried many kinds of sutures and threads, but due to the fragility of the damaged vessels, they were impossible to close and sew together.” Jon and Brienne looked on, sitting straight up in fascination.

Slowly, he lifted the cloth from the tray. On it, Brienne saw a gossamer thin silver metal net, shaped in a tube. Its threads were delicate and fragile looking, and the thing shimmered like a lovely jewel.

“It’s beautiful,” breathed Brienne.

Oberyn laughed. “It is, isn’t it?” He said. “It belongs just was well on a lovely woman’s finger as inside a person’s aorta.”

Jon nodded, staring at the tube. “Incredible. This would go inside the vessel?”

“And would fortify the weakest parts of the vessel, preventing it from rupturing and bleeding out.” Brienne reasoned. She felt a thrill up and down her spine as this new idea took root in her mind.

“Is this silver? Steel? It will work in the human body?” Jon asked, curious.

Oberyn smiled, “Excellent question. It is stainless steel, a relatively new product. But it’s stronger than silver and is safe for the human body.”

He took a seat across from them. “As you know, I have a different laboratory in Dorne, in which I think up and test my more radical ideas which the hospital may or may not frown on. So this tool has already been tested on animals, and is ready for human use.”

“It is our task now to figure out procedures, placement and use within a human body.” Oberyn concluded.

Brienne and Jon nodded.

“Shall we begin?” He asked, looking at them with barely concealed excitement.

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“The tool that Oberyn made…it’s so interesting,” Brienne sighed, sitting on the cot in her basement office, with Jon laying down, head in her lap. They had officially finished for the day, but had some time before they were set to meet with Samwell at his laboratory. She absentmindedly carded her long fingers through Jon’s thick, dark hair.

“His facilities in Dorne must be incredible, to be able to craft such fine detail into a piece.” Jon remarked, turning his body to the side, so she could have better access to his head. His hand casually began pulling up her skirts.
“Can you imagine that thing inside a person’s aorta? Acting almost like chainmail? Protecting it?” Brienne said in wonder. Jon now had a hand under her skirts, caressing her long legs from her knee and up to her inner thigh. She hitched a breath. She began to trace the planes of Jon’s jaw and neck with her fingers.

“I hope it works, though the surgery is going to be extremely tricky.” Jon murmured. He moved to sit up and started kissing her neck and jaw and ear. His fingers continued to stroke her inner thighs.

“Hmmm, Jon.” Brienne moaned. “Maybe we shouldn’t. Not at the hospital.”

“We’re off duty. I promise it’ll be quick,” Jon said, smiling into her neck.

She felt that familiar tug of desire. “Well, only because we’re off duty,” she whispered. He pressed his hand into her sex at the junction of her thighs, and she let out a small gasp; gingerly, he pulled down her smallclothes. His fingers traced her inner and outer folds as she felt herself growing increasingly warm and wet. She moaned and leaned in for a kiss. She could feel him rubbing up and down her opening, spreading her wetness until his fingers settled on her sensitive nub. She gasped.

She broke off their kiss and looked at Jon, whose cheeks were pink and eyes dark with longing. “Wait,” she said, and he immediately stopped. Continuing to look at him in the eye, she reached over, unfastened his trousers, and pulled out his thick, engorged cock. Jon gave an obscene moan that made her even wetter. He kissed her desperately, as both their hands worked frantically to stroke each other to simultaneous completion, groaning their pleasure into each other’s mouths.

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Later that evening, Brienne, Jon, and Samwell sat in the chemist lab to go over their initial findings around the tests of the moon tea pill. They had only a few female subjects, ten in total, but the data collected from the women were solid and consistent. While it was about two months into the test so far, the results looked promising.

“Let’s see,” said Sam, shuffling papers and looking closely at the data. “Ten subjects, nine of whom are sexually active,” At this Brienne looked at Jon and blushed, knowing she was the one that was not having procreative sex. Jon squeezed her knee under the table and smiled, shaking his head. “And four of whom are highly sexually active. There have been no reported cases of pregnancy so far. However, it’s still early, and I recommend we wait two more months at least to make sure the pills work.”

“And side effects?” Brienne asked.

“Negligible. A couple of people reported a feeling of being bloated for a few days out of the month, but otherwise no harmful effects were noted.” Sam said, looking up at them.

“That’s good. I think the pill shows great promise.” Jon said, smiling.

“Yes,” agreed Sam. “Continue on course, then.”

Sam cleared his throat and shifted in his seat. “There is one other matter that I want to talk to you two about.”

“Yes, Sam?” asked Jon. Brienne looked up.
“I have been getting some interest – you see, word has gotten out, as it always does – from pharmaceutical companies about the moon tea pill. Considering the creation of the pill is quite straightforward, since it involves a precise distillation of the plant itself, it might be a good idea to sell the formula for eventual wide distribution. Of course, this will have to be after our own tests conclude.”

Jon nodded. “It’s a smart plan.” He looked at Sam carefully. “But why are you bringing this up with us right now?”

“Well, I mean the project is between the three of us, isn’t it? I was thinking we split it three ways?”

Brienne frowned. “This was both your ideas. I think a split between you two is appropriate.”

Jon disagreed. “Sam, you did all the work, so you should be getting the profits. Although Brienne did handle things with the test subjects and organizing information from them,” he added thoughtfully.

Back and forth they went. In the end they decided on a 50-40-10 spilt, with Sam, Jon, and Brienne agreeing over their respective shares. Brienne thought it was a bit of a waste of time, as it was still early days in the study, and any money to be made seemed far away. Of course, she realized how incredibly privileged she sounded; she didn’t care about profits because she had her family money to fall back on; but if there were profits, the money would change the lives of both Jon and Sam, who were very much on their own financially.

However, there was one thought that stuck with her, having to do with the moon tea pill. She wondered, smiling to herself, if it was about time for her to test the effectiveness of the medication for its intended purpose in her own particular case.

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It was absurd that she had to drag herself all the way to Tywin’s to see her own children, Cersei thought. She’d endured weeks of this absurdity – or was it months now? – and still her children weren’t even allowed to come back home, even for a short visit. That will soon change enough, she said to herself. All of them, even Jaime, seemed to believe that this was the best place for the children, but that was ridiculous; children always belonged with their mother.

The children were well enough, she supposed, although she did notice that Myrcella seemed to have put on a bit of weight since she last saw her; as for Tommen, he was still roly-poly, probably still eating too much black bread and honey. Jaime had absurdly given the boy three kittens. Three! And her daughter was learning how to fight with swords or some such nonsense. This was the problem with not having a mother around. What did three grown men (well, two grown men and a half man) know about raising two children, anyway?

In any case, the children loved her and missed her, each one embracing her sweetly and giving her a kiss when they saw her. They really were quite darling children. She wished they would stay this innocent forever.

“How long will this farce last?” Cersei demanded as the adults sat down to lunch, and the children were escorted to the playroom with their Septa and nanny. “It’s been nearly three months since they’ve seen the Red Keep. When will you let them come home?”

“As far as I’m concerned,” said her father, “They are home. And appear to be thriving.”
“Thriving?” She sneered. “They appear to me homesick. They long to be with their mother.”

“They really do seem quite happy, Cersei,” Jaime added. She stared at him, hard. *Her* Jaime. He was still handsome, looking remarkably well and surprisingly at ease. *Ever the handsome golden lion, her twin.*

“Pray brother, what do you know about raising children? It’s not like you’re a father.” She said, smiling innocently.

Jaime visibly winced. Cersei wanted to laugh. He was always so easy to provoke.

Tyrion said, in a reasonable voice, “We’re just worried about Joffrey – you know he’s hit them in the past, and the children are afraid of him.”

“Do you think I can’t protect my own children?” Cersei demanded, her eyes sharp and bright green, looking at each man in turn. Her expression softened.

“Father, you know I would never hurt them. You know I love them.” Cersei pleaded, her face imploring. She allowed tears to come to her eyes, but not letting them spill. Crying in front of others is a weakness, but – ah – the potential for tears can be a real advantage.

Tywin looked at her evenly. “That may be so. But we are all concerned about Joffrey.”

“Can’t they visit when Joffrey is out of the Keep? He’s so busy with the company that he’s barely home. Anyway, Gregor Clegane is always there to protect all of us.”

“I can’t believe you’re bringing up Clegane as a selling point to try to convince us.” Tyrion remarked dryly.

“Well, little brother, Gregor Clegane has always been loyal to me, and has always done as I say. I can’t say the same about my own flesh and blood.” Cersei said coldly. She felt a white hot rage against the monstrous imp, but she reined that in. *She must appear calm.*

“Please father. I miss them so much.” She said, the voice liquid and pleading. She commanded her face into a mildness, like the painted portraits of her mother which hung at Casterly Rock. Today she even wore the same style of dress and a similar shade of green as her dead mother, whom she had very few memories of, save for the time her mother caught her and Jaime in an indecent-looking embrace that one time. They were young, and didn’t know what they were doing, but Cersei supposed they were already experimenting with touching each other in all the forbidden places. She remembered how angry her mother was, how upset. It was the first time Cersei felt that she was somehow wrong. She tightened her mouth. In any case, that was her mother, a ghost that reminded her of how she would never attain her father’s love.

“We shall see.” Tywin replied stiffly. “I shall talk to Myrcella and Tommen to see if they are agreeable to visit you at the Red Keep.”

“Thank you, father.” She said gratefully. Cersei breathed a sigh of relief. Her babies will surely want to come home, see their own things, if only for the day.

Her father gave her a stern glance. “I have heard distressing news about your factories. Labour unrest, violence.” Tywin said.

Cersei felt a flash of annoyance. Of course he would try to interfere. He must be getting that information from that fool Littlefinger, who questioned her at every turn, even though they were his own suggestions that she implemented. He probably went to tattle to her father like a naughty
boy as soon as she fired him. He was probably jealous that she had replaced him with the older, more loyal Qyburn.

“Father, those are mere rumours. Sure, there have been little skirmishes here and there, but with such an uncouth and uneducated population, fights are bound to arise from time to time.” Cersei looked at her father steadily. “Besides, the company is making an enormous amount of money. We are producing more goods, and are selling more. The demand for our product is extremely high right now.”

She looked at her father, who was expressionless as usual. She wondered if she stripped naked on the table right now if his expression would change. She licked her lips. She knew that action would certainly get a rise out of her dear brother Jaime. He never failed to respond to her. She looked over at him; he had an annoying chaste look about him, similar to the look that idiot cousin Lancel had after she got rid of him. But she knew her brother well enough. After all, they were in the womb together, sharing everything. They said he was born clutching her left foot, and it had always been like that ever since. He followed her, he did what she asked, he always wanted her body, he always wanted her love. Nothing made him happier than to be inside her, where he belonged and always wanted to return. She knew he was upset and angry at her right now because of the other men, but she knew that it was only a matter of time until he came crawling on his knees asking for her kisses, asking for her cunt. Her brother, after all, was a faithful, devoted fool.

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Most predictably, Cersei cornered him in the library, of all places. He had gone there, deliberately, to avoid her, but he supposed she knew his avoidance tactics well enough to guess that this was where he would be. He had been sitting in a leather armchair, whisky in hand, browsing a book about Westerosi islands, hoping she would leave without seeking him out.

“Brother,” She smiled seductively. She looked beautiful as usual, trying to evoke the presence of their mother, by the looks of her. He wondered if that sort of thing worked on their father; he supposed it did, if she was the one trying it.

“Cersei. What is it that you want? I don’t think we have much to say to each other.” He was in no mood to fight with her. He was entirely tired of her shenanigans. She gracefully swept closer to him.

“What do I want? I want you, brother. I need you.” She stood in front of him and absentmindedly took away his book from his lap and set it down on a nearby table.

“Well, dear sister, I no longer want you.” He made a move to get up, but she blocked him. She instead sank onto her knees in between his legs where he sat.

She stared at him with large eyes, soft and pleading. Like she just did with father at lunch, he thought. She innocently laid her head down on his knee. “I’m so sorry Jaime. I didn’t mean to cheat on you. I just felt so empty while you were gone. I’ve always loved only you. I love you.” She looked up at him.

He felt paralyzed. He felt he couldn’t speak.

“We belong together, you and I. We were born together. Never to be separated. We only feel whole when you’re inside me. Nothing feels better than when I come while you are filling my cunt. Nothing feels better than when you shoot your seed deep inside me. Please, Jaime. I’m on my
knees begging you!” She raised her head and looked up at him again. Her ample breasts were on full display from this angle. Somewhere inside his body, he felt a familiar stirring, but that feeling was far away, as if half-buried under ice. Yet the feeling of strangeness remained, and so he continued to sit there, while his twin sister knelt in front of him offering him her love. The ghost of his former self was telling him to yield. Giving in would be so easy, to just let it happen.

She looked at him with wide, innocent eyes. Her look recalled to him the thirteen-year-old Cersei who had come to his room that very first time, who had so excited his own young body. She now dragged her hands up his knee, up his thigh. She unbuttoned his trousers, and reached over to pull out his half-hard cock. He looked down at himself as if from a dream, floating from above to see himself stupidly with his cock hanging out. Vaguely he thought that if it was any other time in the past, he would have been ragingly hard by now. But it seemed his cock was almost as ambivalent as he was. She lowered her head and opened her wet lips. Suddenly he flashed to that night in the gardens, and the wench’s shocked, disgusted, anguished face came to mind. He felt a pain in his chest. He immediately wilted. Cersei, seeing his cock deflate in front of her eyes, let out a frustrated snarl. She slapped his face. It stung, but it was effective in lifting him out of the ice.

“How dare you!” she fumed.

“Well Cersei, it appears my cock doesn’t want you either.” He said sardonically. He smiled at her deliberately, showing all of his white, shiny teeth.

“You’re pathetic. You look pitiful, with that tiny worm for a cock. You’d better put that away, brother.” She snarled, her face red. Once he would have thought she looked even more beautiful angry. He would have forced her into his arms and kissed her until she melted and opened her legs. He remembered all that, but it was at a distance now. However, he did take his sister’s advice and tucked away his very flaccid cock back in his trousers. He took up the book that his sister had moved and put it back on his lap. There was a particular island he had wanted to look up before his sister interrupted.

“You’re a pitiful, worthless excuse for a man. I shall never forgive you, even when you come crawling back to me, on your hands and knees. You’re bloodless!” She stormed out and slammed the library door.

He chuckled to himself. There. He had found it in the book, the island. It looked surprisingly large, according to the map. His fingers slowly traced its borders. The artist had painted the waters surrounding the island a vibrant, deep blue. The blue of sapphires, he thought. The blue of her eyes.

Chapter End Notes

So very curious about your thoughts about Jaime in the final act. Tell me? How did it feel being inside Cersei’s head?

I love reading your comments.
Thanks for the kudos and please hit that button if you haven't done so and are enjoying this story.
The Engagement Party

Chapter Summary

Brienne attends the engagement party of Margaery and Renly.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is tremendously long, nearly 6k words, so pace yourselves :). It is also a bit different from previous chapters in terms of structure - I hope you enjoy attending the party, in any case.

Thanks for all your comments on the previous chapter. Jaime has made great strides. He resisted his sister, which is always a good thing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The engagement party of Margaery Tyrell and Renly Baratheon was the event of the season and was a bright spot in a dull, grey King’s Landing winter. Nearly everyone who was anyone was invited: all of the major families, the influential people of King’s Landing, and even Margaery’s ex-colleagues from the hospital. Rose House was intricately decorated with winter flowers, evergreen boughs, and green and gold silks. A small orchestra played near the dance floor, and there were tables laden with assorted fruits from the east, sweets of every variety, and meats of every delicacy. The happy couple, instead of staying in one spot and greeting every guest as they came to pay their respects, flitted about like a pair of beautiful butterflies, moving from group to group and spreading their laughter and joy. Meanwhile, Lady Olenna sat in an elegant armchair, flanked by her valets, Left, and Right, eating figs that were just perfectly ripe, and looking more than a trifle bored.

Brienne, who was standing in a group with Jon, Sam, and Gilly, was the recipient of the bright cloud of joy and perfume that was Margaery, as the bride-to-be practically jumped into Brienne’s arms, laughing and squeezing her tall form.

“You look spectacular, Margaery,” Brienne replied, smiling warmly. Brienne was wearing a new evening gown my Mistress Nysterica, a luminescent dress made of gossamer thin layers of silk in various shades of blue cut in a simple silhouette that managed to flatter her body shape. She loved the dress just because the fabrics reminded her so much of the waters around Tarth.

“You look very handsome.” Brienne called out to him. He was wearing a tuxedo that had green and gold accents. He smiled charmingly at her, reaching out to kiss her hand.
Soon the couple moved on to greeting Jon, Sam, and Gilly, then quickly flitted off to enthusiastically greet another group of well-wishers.

“How handsome they look together,” sighed Gilly.

Sam nodded. “Their physical beauty, I would say, is perfectly matched.”

“They do suit each other in many ways,” Jon observed.

“But perhaps not in the most crucial way,” Brienne said worriedly.

“Perhaps one does not need everything to create a good marriage,” Jon remarked, looking thoughtfully at her. “Maybe what they have is enough.”

Jon was her escort for this party, and he wore a classic black tuxedo, which set off his arresting profile perfectly. As a nod to her, he had a pocket square made from the same fabric as Brienne’s dress, so that a corner of luminous blue was clearly visible in his left chest pocket. It was amusing how obsessed Jon was about his hair, but she had to admit that tonight the black curls cascaded perfectly around his face. He looked like a dark prince from a Valyrian fairy tale. Half of the time, she still couldn’t believe that he was all hers, that this beautiful man actually wanted her. She felt a sudden urge to get closer to him. She leaned into his ear and whispered, “Dance with me?”

Jon smiled and led her to the floor, where he daringly held her closer than was decent. She felt a little thrill run through her. She could feel every hard plane and angle of him pressed tight against her own body. He twirled her and swayed her and she felt his warmth and felt so very drawn to him. She felt the need to be even closer still and felt herself grow warm. She looked at him with longing. His eyes were the darkest pools.

“If you continue looking at me that way, Brienne, I’m afraid I’m going to embarrass myself in front of all these people,” he said, leaning into her ear, almost kissing it.

She blushed as he firmly pressed his hip against her. He was hard. “Then I think we’ll have to continue this in the bedroom later,” she whispered back. Jon’s eyes widened.

He leaned closer and said, “All I want to do now is kiss you, Brienne.” They looked at each other with hungry gazes. Gradually, they became aware of a silence, and quickly realized that the music had stopped. She self-consciously moved away from their embrace.

“I should get some air,” Jon said. He looked a little pained. Brienne smirked and nodded, then lowered her head to whisper in his ear, “Just make sure you come home with me tonight, doctor.” Jon bit his lip and made a tiny whimpering sound and nodded, quickly, very quickly slipping away to the gardens.

“Where on earth is our dear Dr. Snow going?” said Oberyn, walking toward her with a gorgeous, dark-haired woman on his arm. The woman was wearing a slinky red and low cut gown that fully presented her assets to a prodigious degree. The doctor himself looked magnificent, in Dornish robes of a beautiful sea blue.

“Oberyn.” Brienne smiled at the couple. “Jon just needed some fresh air.”

“I can see why,” the woman said, her voice musical and low. “We have been watching you two
dance. It was a beautiful, sensuous sight,” continued the woman, affectionately squeezing Oberyn’s arm.

He smiled. “Brienne, meet my paramour, Ellaria. She’s visiting from Dorne.” He turned to Ellaria. “My love, this is Brienne Tarth, one of my residents that I told you about.”

Ellaria reached out and grabbed her hands. “You are indeed magnificent, just as Oberyn described. You look like the sea come to earth.” She smiled at her love. “Both you and Oberyn very much match tonight, don’t you think? Both beings of the sea. I would like to see you two dance together.”

Brienne blushed. “Isn’t she charming!” Ellaria declared at the sight of Brienne’s pink cheeks.

Oberyn squeezed his paramour’s waist. “I’m afraid we might be embarrassing dear Brienne right now, judging from her lovely blushes. Come, my love, we shall seek Jon Snow, my other resident. He should be well cooled off by now.” He winked at her and led Ellaria away.

Brienne was about to turn toward a refreshment table when she sensed movement behind her and she felt two hands cover her eyes.

“Relax, don’t attack me.” A male voice sounded in her ear. The voice was familiar, warm, joking…it took her a few moments to place it, but when she did, it didn’t quite make sense. “Robb?” she asked in an unsure voice.

The hands were removed from her eyes, and a male figure came into her line of vision. The trim, muscular frame, the auburn curls, those piercing light blue eyes, those cheekbones, that pout of a mouth.

“Robb!” Brienne’s face broke into a joyous smile and she leapt into his arms. Even though she was taller than him, Robb managed to lift her up and twirl her around.

“Dear Brienne!” He grinned and looked her up and down. “You look gorgeous. That gown is giving me very naughty ideas.”

She punched him lightly on the shoulder. “Gods, Robb, you’re always such a flirt.”

Robb laughed. “I only flirt when it’s warranted. And in your case, with you looking like you do tonight, it’s definitely warranted.”

Brienne rolled her eyes and smiled warmly at him. “What are you doing here?”

“My purpose here is three-fold. To represent House Stark in this engagement, since, as you know, Stark and Baratheon houses have a relatively strong history; second, to make my way to the Citadel for some research that Dr. Luwin requests I obtain; and third and most importantly, to see you and my brother.” He looked around. “Where is Jon, anyway? I saw him dance with you just a few minutes ago.”

Brienne nodded. “He stepped outside for a moment, but I’m not sure where he is right now. Oberyn Martell was also looking for him.”

Robb stared at her for a long beat, and raised his eyebrow. “So,” he said, his mouth quirking up, “You and Jon?”
“What makes you think that?” Brienne asked, blushing.

“I have eyes, don’t I? I haven’t ever seen Jon that close to a woman before, and look at anyone like he looks at you.” He tilted his head at her. “It seemed mutual? Or do I have to give you the brotherly warning not to hurt my dearest, sensitive brother?”

“We are…sort of together.” Brienne felt mortified. “But not officially. I don’t quite know what we are. But I like him a lot. Quite a lot.” She blushed.

Robb chuckled. “Now I really have to find Jon, to get the full story out of him.” Robb leaned in to give Brienne a kiss on her cheek. “Remember, Brienne, there are no secrets between brothers.” He said slyly as he started to walk away. Brienne groaned inwardly, thinking about all the things Robb was going to pry out of Jon.

As soon as Robb left she found herself arm in arm with Margaery and Gilly, who were both giving her sly smiles.

“What on earth was that?” Margaery whispered loudly, as she led them to a room off the hall, which turned out to be a small sitting room.

“And why were you kissing him? He was literally sweeping you off your feet! Brienne! What about Jon!” Gilly protested, looking scandalized.

Margaery laughed. “Gilly, don’t be such a stick in the mud. Brienne can kiss whomever she wants! She’s a free woman. And the way that man spun her around…he must be awfully strong.”

“But her and Jon….”

“They’re not engaged, Gilly. Not that it would stop me, in my special circumstance,” Margaery smirked.

“Anyway, I think Brienne and Jon are fine. Better than fine. Did you see the two of them dance? I had to fan myself!”

“That’s true,” Gilly said thoughtfully. “I thought they were going to kiss right on the dance floor!”

“I thought they were going to more than kiss on the dance floor,” said Margaery, raising her eyebrows.

Brienne rolled her eyes.

“I thank you not to talk about me as if I weren’t standing right in front of you.” Brienne sighed. “And your speculation is not helpful.” She inwardly grimaced. Were they that obvious? She felt her cheeks burn.

“So, who was that auburn-haired prince, then?” Margaery asked.

“Robb Stark, Jon’s brother, come from Winterfell. We all went to medical school together, and he’s a good friend.”

“That’s Robb Stark? I know his name but never met him. He is certainly quite a beautiful man, isn’t he?” Margaery grinned.
Gilly cocked her head. “How do you come to be surrounded by so many gorgeous men? Jon, Robb, Oberyn, Jaime.”

“Jaime! Where is he, anyway? He better have come to my engagement party.” Margaery pouted.

“Oh he’s here,” Gilly answered casually. “I saw the whole Lannister clan scattered about a while ago.”

Margaery groaned. “Even Cersei? I invited her, but I never thought she’d show up. She hates us Tyrells.”

Gilly nodded. “Cersei…and Joffrey.”

Margaery made a disgusted face. “That arrogant brat showed up? Ugh.” Brienne frowned. Joffrey was the last person she wanted to see, same with Cersei. She would have to do her utmost to avoid them tonight, she thought.

“Come, ladies, let’s go back.” She led each of them out, holding their hands.

As they were about to part, Margaery turned to her and said, “Oh Brienne, Renly was looking for you. I was supposed to find him for you but I guess I got distracted by that Robb of yours.”

Brienne nodded and smiled at the two women.

In the distance, she could see the elegant back of Renly across the room. She decided to head in his direction, but no sooner did she take a few steps, than she felt a strong hand grab her arm. She turned, and her eyes widened to see before her none other than Joffrey, handsome in a somber black tuxedo, looking taller and more muscular than she last saw him months ago.

“Dr. Tarth,” he said, bowing to her.

“Hello Joffrey,” she replied. She marveled at his resemblance to Jaime; he would be almost as handsome if not for the lack of empathy and kindness in his eyes.

“I believe we never had that dance at my nameday ball. I’m owed a debt.” He smiled at her with a row of gleaming teeth.

“I remember,” she said hesitantly.

“Then shall we?” He led her on to the floor, as the musicians started to play a waltz.

He pulled her toward him, sliding an arm around her waist and holding her hand. His hands were wet and warm.

“You look almost pretty tonight,” the young man said, looking her up and down. “My mother thinks you’re terribly ugly, but I very much disagree.” He pulled her closer. She held herself stiffly in his arms.

“But I like a strong, muscular woman.” He leered at her. “Most women are just so weak. They break so easily. Too easily.” He ran his hands up and down her back. Brienne shivered. “But you, I can feel how tough and powerful you are under my fingers. One can do many things with you.”
She wanted to tear herself away from his arms and run away. She looked around; she saw that there were many other couples all around them. She thought about Margaery and her engagement party, and how she should not make a scene. After all, the dance was nearly over. She could stand a few more seconds of this discomfort. Joffrey pulled her body even closer so that they were fully touching now. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw a furious Jaime walking quickly toward them from the other side of the room.

“Joffrey.” A voice called. She felt him let her go, and she stepped back in relief. She turned around, and saw, of all people, Cersei standing in front of them, a cold fury in her eyes. She was wearing a pale pink dress that clung to her curves.

She looked sharply at her son. “Joffrey, your grandfather wants to see you.”

His face twisted in protest, and he looked like a spoiled little boy. “But mother, I was dancing-”

“Go. Now.” She repeated. Her son looked abashed and slinked away. Brienne let out a breath.

Cersei stepped in front of her, glaring. “You leave my son alone.” She looked at her in disgust. “I don’t know what sorcery you’ve done to ensnare my whole family, but stay away from my children, you hideous, lumbering beast.”

She felt an arm around her waist. A comforting, solid arm. She looked over and was surprised to find Jon by her side. She breathed a sigh of relief.

“Cersei, please kindly fuck off.” He said, smiling menacingly at the blonde woman.

Cersei’s eyes widened in shock as she took in Jon’s words.

“How dare you-” she snarled.

“No. How dare you. You dare call Brienne ugly when you’re clearly the ugliest, foulest creature in the room. Now please, fuck off and leave us alone.” With those words, he led Brienne away from the enraged woman, down a hallway and into a room.

“Brienne. Are you all right?” Jon asked. She nodded, her eyes wide and astonished. She stared at Jon.

“Don’t listen to her, she’s just an awful human being-” He continued to look at her strangely. “Are you sure you’re all right?”

She nodded, and suddenly kissed him, hard. He let out a gasp of surprise, but quickly kissed her back.

She slowly broke off. Jon looked pleased but still looked vaguely stunned.

“No one’s ever defended me like that before.” Brienne breathed. “It was the most wonderful thing I’ve ever witnessed.” She broke into a little giggle. “Thank you, Jon.”

She hugged him, and they held each other for a long time. “Anyone would have done that, Brienne,” he murmured into her ear. “I was just so sick of her being nasty to you. You’re not ugly. You’re beautiful,” he insisted. She tightened her arms around him, and felt so glad that he was with her.

She felt safe in his arms. “Thank you,” she whispered into his ear. They kissed sweetly.
“Listen, Brienne.” He paused, stepping back to look at her. “Robb is only here for the night. I know we made certain plans….”

Brienne smiled in understanding. “Go, spend the night catching up with Robb. Try not to let him convince you to drink too much.”

“You can join us,” Jon suggested.

She shook her head. “You need time alone with your brother. Anyway, I can’t leave Margaery’s party.”

“Are you sure? Are you sure you’re okay?” Jon asked her, worried.

“Yes, Jon. I’m surrounded by friends here. I’ll be fine.” She reassured him.

“We should probably get back.” Brienne said.

Jon looked at her adoringly and kissed her softly. “Have I told you yet how stunning you look in that dress?”

Brienne smiled teasingly. “Only about a thousand times.” She opened the door and gently pushed him out. “Let’s go.”

When they returned to the main room, she found Robb waiting for them. He frowned and looked concerned. “Is everything all right? Are you okay, Brienne?”

She nodded. “Yes, Robb. I’m totally fine. Now go spend time with your brother. Try not to get him too drunk.”

She hugged Robb goodbye. He’d be leaving for Oldtown the next morning and they likely wouldn’t see each other for a while.

“Come North.” Robb said quietly into her ear as he embraced her.

Brienne smiled. Jon gave her a goodbye kiss on the cheek after making sure (again) that she was okay to be left here. Robb smirked and shook his head at the pair of them.

She walked around the ballroom, finally nibbling at some cheeses and pickled vegetables. She noticed a rotund man, dressed in a sharp grey tuxedo, with a head shaved completely bald. He was talking to Tyrion. She stood far back enough not to be entirely noticed.

“It’ll be in the Times tomorrow morning, but these bodies are finally being washed ashore. Presumably now the severed hands and feet will be matched to their owners.”

“Who are the victims?” Tyrion asked, curious.

“The police won’t say, but my sources,” the man said, catching sight of Brienne and raising an eyebrow, “Say that they are both men and women, as yet unidentified. They’ve found only three
bodies so far.”

“It’s murder then.” Tyrion said thoughtfully.

“I can’t imagine it not being murder.” The man looked at Tyrion and gestured in Brienne’s direction. Tyrion turned around and spotted her.

“Brienne! Come round.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to eavesdrop.”

“Don’t worry, my dear. Most of my job is eavesdropping, so I approve. Varys, of the Westerosi Times.” He held out his hand. His voice was smooth and melodious.

She shook it. “I’m Brienne-”

“Tarth.” He completed for her. “I know exactly who you are. There aren’t many – well any – female surgeons in King’s Landing, let alone Westeros.” He smiled at her brightly. “And I have heard many, many good things about you. You are a credit.”

Tyrion nodded in agreement. “She is the best of us, and I actually mean that sincerely.”

Brienne blushed. “Oh, I don’t know about all that.”

“And modest too,” Varys interrupted. He lowered his voice. “I saw you with that Joffrey…he was being a bit handsy with you, wasn’t he? And that confrontation with Cersei? Was that Dr. Jon Snow that came to your rescue?”

Tyrion cleared his throat. “I’m afraid Brienne is far too noble to tell lurid and troubling tales tonight.” He led her away from a still smiling Varys. “Come, Brienne, I believe my brother was on the hunt for you.”

“Jaime?”

“Yes, he was nearly running across the room to rescue you from Cersei, but of course Jon got there first. Then you disappeared.”

“I haven’t seen him all evening, strangely enough.” She cocked her head in thought.

“That is strange,” Tyrion said, brow furrowed.

“Thank you, Tyrion. I shall try to find him.” With that, she left him to walk around the room.

“Brienne,” Tywin stood in front of her, looking ever so regal in his tuxedo. He offered her his arm and she automatically took it. They proceeded to slowly stroll around the great hall. He looked at her seriously. “Has my daughter accosted you this evening?”

She felt her face flush. “Well, only a little. She was upset that I was dancing with Joffrey-”

His eyes turned hard. “Joffrey was dancing with you tonight?”

She nodded. “It was fine, the dance was nearly over when Cersei came and said the usual insulting
things about me.” Tywin’s jaw clenched.

She continued, awkwardly, “But luckily Jon came by and escorted me away.” She did not mention the delicious pleasure of experiencing Jon cursing Cersei out, however. That was something she’d like to savour privately.

“I must apologize for my daughter’s behaviour. It’s unbecoming to our family and is entirely cruel to you.” Tywin looked at her with regret in his eyes.

Brienne nodded, smiling shyly.

Tywin paused, then turned to look at her. “Have you, by any chance, talked to Jaime tonight? I know he was eager to further your friendship.”

She shook her head. “I haven’t seen him all night, save for one brief glimpse from the other side of the room.”

Tywin furrowed his brow in thought. “That’s strange. Last I saw him, he was seeking your whereabouts.”

Brienne frowned in puzzlement. “Oh, then I will try my best to find him,” she replied. Tywin got her arm go and bowed. He walked stiffly away.

“Brienne,” Oberyn said as he approached her, “How are you enjoying this gathering?”

She smiled warmly at the man, recalling his kindness when he escorted her to the Lannister Ball some time ago. “I am enjoying it, for the most part.”

He nodded. “You do seem quite a bit more at ease than at the Lannisters. Though I suppose here you are among many more friends.”

“I am. You included amongst them.” She sent him a brilliant smile.

Oberyn bowed and offered her his arm. “Then may I have this dance? Ellaria insists she see us dance together tonight.”

She laughed as he led her out onto the dance floor. He held her close, but not too tightly, and together they started to move. Like the first time they danced together, something felt right about their movements, anticipatory and synchronized, as they swayed and reacted instinctively to one another. Something inside her relaxed and she let her moves flow into his. An energy flowed between them.

“Just like before, we seem to move incredibly well together,” Oberyn said, his gaze intense on her face.

She nodded, blushing. His palm moved higher, until he was touching her bare back. His touch was sure and warm. He smiled at her. “Ellaria is very fascinated with you, as I knew she would be.”

“She is very beautiful and lovely. It must be wonderful to see her again.” She smiled.

Oberyn sighed. “I do miss my paramour. We are so often apart. She is my treasure.”
He twirled her and pulled her shockingly close to him. Brienne giggled; it was interesting to be so masterfully handled on the dance floor, she thought.

He stared at her for a moment, seemingly lost in thought. “Brienne, I know that you are nearing the end of your surgical residency here in King’s Landing, and I’m sure you have many decisions ahead of you with regards to your future.” His breath was warm against her cheek.

He continued. “But I would like you to think about going to Dorne to join me in my research. I’m stepping into a consultancy role at King’s Landing next year, and I’ll be focusing on doing work in my independent laboratory in Dorne. I would love for you to join me.”

“Vessel repair.”

“Exactly it. You already know it, and you would be an asset to me. We’ll share the credit in any discovery, in any paper. You could make a name for yourself in the new field of vascular surgery. There is also room for you to develop your own research interests, to experiment. You will have great freedom.” He paused. “I would ask Jon as well, but he has already informed me of his intentions to go back north. A bit of a waste, in my opinion.”

He looked at her with his seductive eyes. “And of course Dorne as a society is very different from the rest of Westeros. You will be celebrated as the first female surgeon, not scorned. We are very liberal with our values and affections, and free with our love,” he said, moving his hand to caress the back of her neck. She felt herself grow warm.

Brienne was both stunned and overwhelmed. Dorne. She imagined the heat, the beautiful sand, the lush gardens. The complete freedom. This opportunity was a large one, and she already knew she worked well with Oberyn. He’d already been so very kind to her, and this chance was something she’d have to seriously consider.

She stared at him thoughtfully, and nodded, smiling softly. “Thank you, Oberyn. That is a fantastic offer, and one I need to think seriously about. It will be quite the change for me.”

Oberyn looked back at her, his eyes alluringly dark and his lips tilted into a charming smile. “A change, yes, but a greater opportunity to do something unique and revolutionary.” He pressed his lips lightly on her cheek. “An opportunity to leave your mark upon the world.”

He twirled her again, and deposited her on the edge of the dance floor. The song had ended even without her noticing. She saw Ellaria walk up to them, her hips swaying sensuously. “I was right. You two look made to dance with each other.” She kissed Oberyn on the cheek and gave both of them a heated look.

“Do excuse me, Brienne.” Oberyn bowed and walked away with Ellaria on his arm.

“I was going to ask you for a dance, but I don’t think I can follow the two of you out there,” Renly said, suddenly appearing beside her. She giggled at him and gave his arm an affectionate squeeze.

“Renly. I’ve been looking all over for you.”

“As the fiancé, I had to do my duty and greet every person in this room. It was quite tedious.” He smiled.
“Will you walk with me? Let us go into the gardens.”

They strolled outside, where the Tyrells had planted beautiful winter flowers. The path was lit by lamplight, giving the garden a magical glow.

“How are you feeling about all this? You’re getting married.” Brienne looked at his lovely face, pale in the moonlight.

“To a woman, no less.” Renly remarked dryly. He looked over at her with soft eyes. “I still remember the talk we had by the waterfall. When I told you all about…the way I was. But here I am, marrying the sister of the man I love.”

“Oh, Renly.” She felt the injustice of it then, how unfair it was that Renly – kind, wonderful Renly – could not openly be with the person he loved.

He tilted his head in thought. “I think it works out. I will be with Loras, in any case. The only person I feel bad about is Margaery, but we’ve talked seriously and she doesn’t seem to mind at all about the situation. It’s quite strange.”

“I always had a thought in the back of my head that if I had to marry a woman, I would like best to marry you, Brienne, since I love you so much as a friend. But I also realized how unfair it would have been for you, to never have that romantic love. You need that kind of love, I think. We’re similar that way. Margaery is not like that at all. For her, love is practical and transactional, and she believes she’s better marrying someone in a situation that would do most good than wait for some prince to sweep her off her feet.”

Renly’s confession moved her. As a girl she had dreamed of marrying him and she remembered how in love with him she was. But she also recognized the truth in what he was saying about their natures. Brienne’s soul was the type to yearn for true love, and not the type that would settle.

She squeezed his arm. “I’m glad that you found your love, Renly. So glad. Loras is a lucky man.”

“I’m lucky to have him.”

“And I’m glad that you’ve found a situation where you’re able to be together, with Margaery’s help.” He smiled at her affectionately. They slowly walked back to the ballroom. Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed a figure standing in shadow on the veranda.

When they reentered the ballroom, they found Loras waiting for them. Loras hugged Brienne in greeting, smiling, and led Renly away.

She turned back and stepped out onto the veranda, taking a few steps forward.

“What are you doing here, skulking in the dark?”

The shadowed figure took a step forward. “Skulking, naturally.” He took another step away from the shadows and emerged into the light. Jaime’s golden hair glimmered silver in the light of the moon, and his skin seemed pale and frosted; whether he looked more angel or ghost she wasn’t sure. But he was beautiful, though there was a sad cast around his features. He was standing in front of her now, close enough to touch. But tonight there was something distant and troubled about him.
“Jaime. Where have you been all night? I haven’t seen you.”

“In the shadows.” He said, his voice light. He looked at her. “Don’t worry about me, wench.”

Brienne grabbed his hand and squeezed it. He stared down at where their hands met.

“Jaime. What’s wrong? Did something happen?”

He shook his head sadly and looked into her eyes with an expression of shame. “I’m sorry, Brienne. I couldn’t protect you.”

She looked at him sharply. “Protect me? From whom?” He turned his head.

“From Joffrey? Cersei?” He looked at her, and mutely nodded.

She grabbed his arm and led him past the flower gardens and into the fields where she had sparred with Loras those weeks back.

“Sit down,” She said to him. He looked at her in surprise. “But your dress,” he protested.

She pulled them both down so they were sitting on the soft dry grass.

She turned to face him. “Jaime. Nothing happened. Your – Joffrey didn’t hurt me. Nor did Cersei. Sure, she said cruel things, but nothing she hasn’t said before.”

“And your Jon was there to rescue you.” His voice had a tinge of bitterness to it.

“Yes, that’s right. Jon stood up for me and whisked me away to make sure I was okay.” She looked at him curiously. “But I glimpsed how furious you looked from across the room. And I was told you were on your way to intervene. So thank you for that, Jaime.”

“She truly hates you,” Jaime said miserably. “And I’m afraid she won’t stop-”

“But why?” Brienne protested. “What have I done to make her hate me so?”

Jaime shook his head and looked up at her, his gaze clear and lucid. “That’s it, Brienne. You’ve done nothing but exist and be who you are. She’s jealous of you.”

“Jealous of me? But she’s the most beautiful woman in Westeros, she’s rich-”

Jaime laughed bitterly. “I used to think she was the most beautiful woman I’d ever seen, but now I think that physical beauty holds no candle to the beauty of one’s soul. And my sister’s soul is as dark as the deepest well, and just as cold.”

He looked at her passionately. “She’s jealous of you, Brienne, because you are the most beautiful woman in Westeros. Your soul. You have a light that shines forth from inside you, that I’m in awe of, and that everyone who’s met you sees.”

Brienne stared at him, stunned at his words.

“Cersei hates you, because she sees that I…admire you, and she cannot stand anything that’s hers taken away.”

“But Jaime, no one can own you but yourself. She can’t own you. She’ll never own you.”

He shook his head. “I gave myself body and soul to her for over twenty years.”
His look of sadness was profound. “I don’t know if I’ll ever be free of her.”

“Is that what you want?”

“Oh, yes. But we’ve been estranged for nearly four months now, and she still thinks she owns me, that we share the same soul in two bodies. And she’ll never stop being hateful to you unless….”

“Unless we stop being friends?” Jaime nodded.

She took his hand and held it in her lap. “That’s not going to happen.”

He stared at her, his mouth open. Her hands touched and caressed his fingers, thumb, knuckles, palm. “I will always be friends with you, Jaime Lannister. I promise.”

His eyes were dark and shiny as he quickly blinked away tears. He took her hand now, and pulled it to his mouth for a long kiss. He held it for a while longer, nestled against his chest. She could feel rapid beating of his heart through his clothes.

She smiled at him, and slowly removed her hand from his. She got up, shaking away any grass from her dress. “Come, let’s go back,” she said to him, offering a hand to help him up. He took it and gracefully stood on his feet. She shivered.

“You must be cold,” he said, starting to take off his jacket for her. She shook her head and stopped him, pulling his jacket back on his shoulders and straightening his collar and lapels, her palms flat on his chest. Instinctively, he placed his hands around her waist and squeezed gently. She felt the heat from his fingers even through her silk dress.

“You look like the moonmaid dipped in the sapphire waters of Tarth tonight.” Jaime murmured, his face moving a little closer to hers.

She blushed and shook her head. “Oh Jaime, you’re too ridiculous,” she said, stepping away from him.

“Come,” she said, holding out her hand. “Let’s get back to the party.” Jaime smiled at himself and took her hand.

“Where is your Jon Snow tonight, wench? It’s irresponsible of him to leave you alone with such a devastatingly handsome man as myself.”

“I’m sure I was in no danger from you,” she replied sarcastically. Evidently, the melancholic Jaime who had first appeared on the veranda had now exited the stage to make room for the familiar, annoying version of him. “He left early with Robb, his brother, who is visiting for just tonight.”

“Ah, Robb Stark, heir to Winterfell. I thought I saw his pretty face earlier. He seemed to be mauling you, if I remember correctly. I’m surprised Jon didn’t mind.”

“He was doing no such thing, Jaime.”

“Don’t worry, wench. I’m not the jealous type.” He smirked.

Brienne rolled her eyes. As they reentered the ballroom, she heard a voice call out.

“Brienne! There you are,” said Margaery, who was followed closely by Renly and Loras. “With Jon gone, we wanted to know if you needed a ride back home? Renly or Loras would, but you’d have to stick around until the last guests have gone.”
“Oh no, that’s perfectly all right. I was-”

“Brienne is driving back with me,” interjected Jaime. Margaery, Renly, and Loras all looked at him with wide-eyed surprise.

“Are you sure, Jaime?” Brienne turned to him quizzically.

“What are friends for, wench?” Jaime smiled crookedly.
The Prelude

Chapter Summary

Jaime gives Brienne a ride home; Jon has a great experience; Jaime and Tyrion talk.

Chapter Notes

Let me start off with a warning for EXPLICIT sexual content in section TWO. Just skip it if it's not your cup of tea.

Also, I already had this chapter written, but I read comments about yesterday's chapter and people were saying they were looking forward to the carriage ride home. Of course no such section exists, since I did not plan to include it. So just for you, dear devoted readers, I wrote the carriage ride interlude. Jaime was very happy to oblige, by the way. [This will not happen every time, so enjoy your influence on me...THIS time, lol.]

- 

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“This way, wench.” After donning their cloaks, he led her through the halls of Rose House. She saw couples half-hidden in dark corners, and heard the faint sounds of the orchestra echoing from the walls. Outside, they waited for their carriage, and when it arrived, she was surprised that he helped her into the carriage car itself, and not up to the driver’s box. He followed in after, sitting next to her.

“Surprised? I actually have a driver today, wench. I didn’t want you to catch a chill because of me.” Jaime smiled.

“Does that mean you expected to drive me home tonight?” Brienne asked, teasing.

Jaime coloured. He was silent for a moment and then said, “I had hoped.” She gave him a strange look.

He looked down. “I assumed you’d be coming with Jon, and that he’d accompany you back.” He looked out the window. “I was willing to drive both of you home, as far as I was concerned.”

“Thank you for that, Jaime,” she said quietly. She patted the back of his hand, and he took her hand and held it, absentmindedly stroking her palm and playing with her fingers. A sudden warmth flared on her skin.

Jaime looked at her then, his eyes shining in the darkness of the carriage. “I haven’t dared asked you before, but it appears that you are together with Jon?”
Brienne blushed fiercely, thankful for the dark that hid her reaction.

“In some ways, yes.” He raised an eyebrow. She continued, “We’re best friends, the closest friends, and we are doing...physical things together.” She blushed again, and felt herself at a loss for words. She exhaled loudly. “This is embarrassing. I guess the answer is that I don’t really know what we are...in some ways, some very important ways, we are a couple, but we haven’t...declared anything to each other.” She stared at his hands still caressing her fingers, and looked up to find his eyes bright and welcoming. “Jon is planning to go back North after the residency, in about four months. We’ll be parted. We haven’t planned...and I love him, of course, but I don’t know if....”

“If you’re in love with him?” Jaime finished for her. She was afraid that he would judge her, condemn her with his cruel, witty words for being immoral or improper, but he just looked contemplative, his regard open and interested.

“I’ve never been in love. I don’t know what it’s supposed to feel like,” she said simply, giving him a clear, frank gaze.

“In my experience, you’ll know it when you feel it, wench.” His face then clouded, and he looked pained. “But my experience is certainly nothing to go on. What I had with Cersei, especially in the beginning, was all-consuming, grasping, selfish. It erased me for over twenty years.” His face was flooded with regret. “I question myself now if that was even love at all, or just misguided obsession that I clung to for far too long.” He laughed bitterly. “Perhaps I don’t know what being in love is either, wench.”

Jaime was now absentmindedly clutching her hand to his chest. He suddenly lifted her palm up to his lips and kissed it. She shivered.

“You’re too good, wench,” he said, looking at her with admiration.

She shook her head. “We’re friends, Jaime. Remember?” He stared into her eyes for a long time, his gaze slowly lowering to her lips.

The carriage had since stopped in front of her home. She gently removed her hand from in between his.

“I’m home,” she said softly. Jaime continued to look at her, beholding her in a strange way that made her heart beat faster.

“He asked quietly. She nodded shyly, and leaned in to give him a light graze on his cheek. She started to pull away, but his face turned toward her. Their lips nearly met. Her breath hitched. His head again moved and he gave her a long, tender kiss to a spot close to her mouth. The heat of his lips was scorching on her skin; she felt it even after he moved away.

He looked at her, his eyes dark and filled with what looked like desire. She was abstractly aware that her heart was beating much too quickly. She was surprised at the small fire of longing that had kindled inside her, and forced herself to dismiss it. Jaime was too handsome and being too close to him confused her. She made a move to go.

“Good night, Jaime,” she said in a soft voice.

“Good night, Brienne,” he said, his voice coming out almost a sigh. She could feel the heat of his stare even when she got out and walked toward her building.
She was in the warmest waters, undulating with the waves, the sea rising higher and higher, and she saw a brightness, then a piercing pleasure exploded from her core and jolted through her limbs. She squeaked and wailed, her back arching, her legs tense as rapture overtook her. “Oh!” she exclaimed, breathing hard and dazed. Jon, his head still between her legs, gave her cunt a soft, languid lick, sipping her wetness like delicious nectar. She shook faintly from the aftershocks created by his tongue and moaned. “Jon,” she cried. She reached down and gently pulled his head up by his hair. He growled. “Come here,” she said, breathlessly.

He moved up her body, kissing her belly button, her breasts, her collarbones and her neck as he moved up to give her a wet, open-mouthed kiss. She tasted herself on him, and she kissed him back with equal intensity. “How are you so good at this?” she asked. Jon grinned and kissed her mouth fiercely.

She felt his incredible hardness between her legs, rubbing against her cunt lips, her still sensitive nub. Jon moaned helplessly into her mouth as he rubbed himself between her legs. She was incredibly wet and slick for him. She could feel how close he was to just slipping into her, inside her wetness, and she almost wanted it at that very moment; from his movements, she knew he wanted it as well, but was still restraining himself for her sake. A huge part of her ached to feel him inside her, for him to fill her, but another part of her wanted to try something else instead.

“Jon?” she asked him in a small, hesitant voice.

He stopped himself from moving and looked at her with concern. “Brienne, is everything all right? Did I hurt you?”

She quickly kissed him to dispel his worry. She smiled. “No, no, it’s not that. It’s just…you’ve pleasured me with your mouth so many times—”

“I love it—”

“I know you do, and you are so godsdamn good at it.” She bit her lip. “But I haven’t done that for you.” She felt his cock twitch against her thigh.

“You don’t have to do that, Brienne,” he said, his eyes dark and full of desire. For her.

“But I want to. Can I try it?” she looked up at him tentatively. Jon kissed her eagerly. “You can do anything you want to me, my Brienne. Anything. Anything.”

She nodded, smiling at him shyly. She suddenly reached up and flipped him over on the bed. He made a startled noise and groaned with anticipation. His manhood was impossibly rigid, its thick length standing straight up from a nest of black curls. He was beautiful. She straddled him and gave him a long, lingering kiss that was full of promises, then she rubbed her small breasts with their hard pink nipples all over his chest. He groaned. She moved her body down so she was straddling his thighs and his stiff cock was right in front of her. She ran her hands up and down his torso and she grabbed the base of his cock, lowering her head to experimentally lick up and down its length. Jon lifted his head up to watch her, his eyes filled with lust, his mouth hanging open.

“Oh my gods, Brienne,” he cried. Pleased at his reaction, she continued licking him, and she ran her tongue around the head of his cock, licking the dripping wetness at the tip. Jon dropped his
head and writhed. She smiled, feeling a delicious power at having this much control over his pleasure. And his skin there was so soft and tender and so immanently kissable and lickable. She opened her mouth wide, and slowly pushed her mouth down on his cock, making sure to cover her teeth with her large, plump lips. Jon let out a loud moan. His cock felt large and thick in her mouth as she steadily moved up and down, gradually putting him deeper into her mouth as she relaxed her throat. Jon moaned deliriously. She grabbed the base of his cock, stroking it in time with the up and down movements of her mouth, and she began to find a rhythm, as Jon desperately clutched the blankets, and started to buck his hips up to her uncontrollably, moaning incoherently all the while, and she moved her mouth on him faster and faster, and soon enough she felt him tensing and suddenly he shouted her name, shuddering violently as streams of his spend shot into her mouth and throat. She sucked him a little more as he trembled. She eventually freed him from her mouth. She moved herself up to the bed and plopped herself next to Jon, a satisfied smile on her face.

Jon looked blissful, spent, utterly wrecked with pleasure. Brienne’s smile grew even wider.

He lazily pulled her face to her and kissed her, opening her mouth for his tongue, which leisurely explored her mouth. “Oh. My. Gods. Brienne.” Jon said, his voice full of awe.

“It was okay?” she asked, already knowing the answer, but wanting him say it all the same.

He looked at her in complete worship. “Do you even have to ask? It was the most incredible feeling. I loved everything you did. My gods.”

She giggled. “I’m glad.”

Jon hesitated. “I feel like I should apologize, maybe, for coming in your mouth. I just lost control and couldn’t warn you in time. I just, never done that before.” He blushed.

She smiled triumphantly. “You mean I was your first?”

Jon nodded, looking amused. “You were. And it was a revelation.”

She grinned; then she remembered and looked at him, puzzled. “What’s wrong with you coming in my mouth?”

He raised his eyebrows. “Nothing. I loved it. It felt so, so good. But I hear that some women don’t like that.” Jon said.

“I liked feeling you come in my mouth, Jon.” Brienne said. Jon groaned and pulled her into another kiss.

“I’m just so lucky to have you, Brienne. Thank you. Thank you.” Jon murmured into her ear, as he ran his hands all along her body. His fingers touched her cunt playfully. His breath hitched in surprise. “Brienne, you’re incredibly wet.”

She blushed. “I think sucking your cock really did things to me.” she whispered.

Jon’s eyes widened and he bit his lip. “Let me take care of that for you,” he said, as he began to slowly plunge his fingers into her, his thumb gently circling her nub.

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The next morning she woke up with Jon’s tiny, tender kisses all over her face. “Hmmm…go away,” she groaned, turning over.

“That’s exactly what I’m doing, ostrich,” he replied as he continued to plant kisses all over her neck and shoulders.

“What?” She asked, slowly stirring awake and opening her eyes. She was surprised to see Jon had already dressed.

“I have to work today, remember?”

“Oh…right.” Every month each of the residents had to work one weekend day. Since there were no scheduled surgeries on the weekend, the work was mostly to cover the hospital main floor with general patients.

She looked at her watch at her bedside. “Why are you going so early?”

“I have to shower and change, Brienne. I can’t go in smelling like….”

“Like sex?” She grinned.

“As much as I’d like to never wash your scent off, it’s not exactly hygienic.” Jon gave her a soft kiss on the lips. He really did smell like her, she thought with satisfaction.

“You’re such a stickler, Snow.” He laughed.

She paused in thought. “Jon, why don’t you bring some of your clothes and some things you might need over here? It might be easier to leave directly from here and not be bothered with the dorm.”

He stared at her, a smile forming on his face. “Okay,” he said softly. “I’ll to that. It would make things easier for me.”

“Oh and before you go, there’s a spare key hanging by the door. You can take it.” She looked at him neutrally.

“Really?” Jon asked, his eyebrows raised in surprise.

“Yes, I mean, that way you don’t have to throw rocks at my window all the time,” she said, teasing.

“You do really hate that, Brienne.”

She smiled. “I really do. You’re going to break the windows one day. I already checked with Tyrion, he’s okay with you having the extra key.”

Jon smiled, and kissed her fiercely. “Thank you, Brienne. For the key. And for last night. It has been etched in my memory forever.”

“Silly Jon,” she said, kissing him back. “I’ll see you later, okay?”

“It’s a promise.” He said, as he opened the door. He left, and Brienne smiled as she heard Jon lock her door from the outside.

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Jaime walked into the bookshop, his hair a burnished gold, resplendent in what looked like a brand new suit of a deep blue. His smile rivaled the sun in its brightness. Tyrion couldn’t help but look at him with annoyance, comparing his own stunted form to that of his big brother.

“Jaime. You look especially well today. New suit?”

His brother threw him a dazzling smile. “You noticed. I rather liked how it turned out.”

“Yes, it’s a very telling shade of blue, reminiscent of a certain female doctor’s pretty eyes.” Tyrion smirked.

“Purely coincidental, I assure you. Can I help it if blue is my best colour?” Jaime looked around. “Where is the wench? She’s usually downstairs by now.”

“Tell me brother, did you actually want Myrcella to learn swordplay or was this just an excuse to see the doctor on a weekly basis?”

Jaime threw his brother an annoyed glance. “You do me an injustice, little brother. It was all Myrcella’s idea, as a matter of fact. You’ve seen her practice, she’s getting good.”

“I suppose she takes after her father.” Tyrion looked at him evenly.

Jaime made an annoyed growl. Tyrion closed the book that he was reading and turned to look at his brother fully. “By the way – I thought you’d probably wanted to know this – but Brienne asked me if Jon could have use of the spare key.” Tyrion watched as his brother’s face turned to stone, then slowly start to crumble.

“Did she?” he asked in a hollow voice.

“Jaime, I don’t think it’s that serious. She just said it would be easier than him having to throw rocks at her window to come up. Your wench is entirely against rocks being thrown at her windows.” His brother’s shock seemed to have recovered, outwardly at least.

“It’s entirely none of my business,” he said lightly.

“Jaime.”

“It’s nothing. The wench and I are just friends, after all.”

Jaime turned away from him. The triumphant air that had accompanied his entrance had entirely disappeared. He looked a little defeated and tired. He looked around. “Where is that wench?” He started pacing.

Tyrion looked to the back and called, “Pod? Pod?”

The young man popped his head into the doorway and walked toward them, carrying a load of books, which Jaime took from his arm.

“Pod, have you seen Brienne today?” Tyrion asked.

The boy nodded. “Yes, I did, Mr. Tyrion.” He looked around. “She’s not back?”

At these words, Jaime quickly strode out the back door. They could hear him thunder up the stairs, and heard his loud, insistent knocks on Brienne’s door. He quickly came back down the stairs, an
annoyed look on his face.

Jaime turned to the Pod. “Where did Brienne go?” His voice was commanding and irritated.

Pod widened his eyes in fright. “She said – she said she was going to very briefly visit Chataya’s to pick up some papers.” The boy’s voice broke, then he looked even more nervous when he saw Jaime’s stormy expression. “She said she’d be right back later in the morning. She knew that you were coming, Mr. Jaime.”

“So she’s been gone a couple hours now.” Tyrion reiterated.

“I’m sorry, sirs, I thought she was back.” Pod said, distressed.

“Might she have stopped somewhere for lunch and gotten distracted?” Tyrion mused.

Jaime shook his head. “No. No. Brienne would be here if she said she was going to be.” Suddenly his brother got up. “Give me your pistol,” Jaime asked, his face full of determination.

Tyrion unlocked a desk drawer and pulled out an engraved pistol that he kept for emergencies and handed it to his brother. “Jaime,” Tyrion implored. “What are you going to do?”

Jaime’s face took on a frantic expression. “I have a bad feeling about this.”

At that moment, the door burst open and in ran Shae, looking rumpled in an oversized coat – Brienne’s coat - and panting.

“Shae!” Tyrion said, running to embrace her beautiful, scented form. The woman burst out crying.

“Please, you must help. Bad men.” She collapsed onto the ground, sobbing in Tyrion’s hair.

“They’re at the house.”

“Is Brienne there?” Jaime demanded fiercely.

Shae nodded. “She was about to leave, and she heard them come in, and girls screaming. She told me to get any of the girls I saw out and to get help.”

“She didn’t leave herself?” Jaime’s asked, his face contorted.

“No, she went out to meet the men.” Shae wailed.

Jaime stared, a rage taken over his expression. “Stupid, stubborn wench.”

He turned to Tyrion. “I’m going to Chataya’s. Tyrion, call Adam of the Gold Cloaks and tell him to bring men to the house.”

With those final words, he ran out the door.
Some of you might be feeling dread...so...just breathe? It's the plot. Also you can vent your concerns and frustrations in your comments, deal? I like reading all your thoughts.

Kudos if you like! Thanks for reading. Love you.

Also: next chapter...yeah.... At least you'll only have to wait til tomorrow to find out what happens?
Cuts

Chapter Summary

Brienne is at Chataya's when a gang of men arrive.
[WARNING: sexual violence and violence]

Chapter Notes

Thanks for your lovely comments. I'm glad you liked the carriage ride addition in the last chapter. It was definitely a necessary scene, so thanks for the suggestions, readers!

I know you were expecting it, but I reiterate WARNINGS about sexual violence, attempted sexual assault, and violence in this chapter. The tags have been updated as well.

- See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was supposed to have been a quick pickup of papers relating to the moon pill trial. All was quiet at the house, as a handful of women were out visiting the Sept that Sunday. Nevertheless, a few of the women approached her about minor ailments such as stomach cramps and persistent coughs, so her visit was unexpectedly prolonged. She had stayed far longer than she intended, but she still thought she had enough time to get back to the house before Jaime came around the flat. However, when she was about to put on her coat and say goodbye to Shae, she heard sudden shouts and scuffles from down the hall. She heard the sound of furniture crashing, heavy footsteps on the stairs, muffled voices. A woman’s piercing scream. More cries. She turned to the terrified Shae, and ended up handing the woman her coat. “Get out, use the back door. Take any of the girls you see and go. Get help, go, now!” The woman nodded, took the coat and went down the hall toward the back.

Brienne felt a rush of fear hit her like a rogue wave, but she prevented the feeling from overwhelming her by focusing on the women who were clearly in danger. She cursed herself for not bringing her dagger. She had to think. She opened her black medical bag and took out two scalpels, the blades in their leather sheaths, and hid one in the pocket of her skirt and another up the sleeve of her shirt. It will have to do.

She cracked open the door and peeked down the hallway, but saw nothing. Slowly, she inched the door open, and tiptoed toward the main foyer as silently as she could. No one was about, but she heard rough male voices and the higher pitched cries of women from upstairs. Near the entrance, she saw overturned chairs and the slumped form of Bronn; she ran to him. It looked like he had been knocked out and tied up with rope. She thought for a moment, and eventually dragged his body into a nearby closet, untying him and leaving him there to recover. When he woke up, she hoped that he would be in a position to seek help. Looking out the window, she noticed that a large,
fat man dressed in colourful leathers was standing guard at the door. *That’s one of them,* she thought, and wondered how many they totaled, and if she had a chance against any of them. She hoped Shae would find help soon.

Her heart was thudding nearly out of her chest, and she had to take a few breaths to calm her nerves. All seemed quiet on this floor. She slowly made her way up the stairs, following the voices. It appeared that they had all gathered in the upstairs sitting room. She pressed herself close to the walls, inching closer and closer. It was ridiculous for her to think that she could be unobtrusive with the way she looked, but she managed to hide herself behind the drawn green velvet curtains which separated the sitting room from the hallway. From this vantage point she saw the women, sitting together on the floor, but only about five of them. They looked scared and some were visibly shaking. However, it seemed that most of the women had either been absent when the group barged in or had gotten out in time, Brienne realized with relief. A group of men lounged on the plush divans, armchairs and chaises, laughing to each other. It was evident that they had let their guard down, obviously expecting no resistance from a house full of women and one guard on a Sunday morning. A couple of them, she saw, had guns, which they pointed at the women.

Her eyes scanned the men and Brienne nearly gasped when she saw the familiar form of a tall, blond man. For a moment her thoughts flashed to Jaime, but she quickly saw that it was Joffrey. So this group, she thought, must be the Brave Companions as they called themselves. Others called them the Bloody Mummers for their violent ways. There were four of them in the room, besides Joffrey. One was tall and gaunt, with a long goatee, a long, sharp blade at his hip; another was pale and cadaver-like, holding a pistol pointed at the women. The one sitting on the armchair was round, had a ruddy complexion and wide, crazed eyes; another man who sat hulking on the settee was squat and muscular, his entire body covered with black hair. She was startled when she saw that a part of the man’s nose was chopped off, revealing bone and two holes where his nose should have been. He looked more animal than man. *Six of them in total. Too many.*

“Can we have a little fun now, boss?” the tall, thin man lisped.

Joffrey stared at him with irritation. “I said in a bit, Vargo.” He looked over to the group of women. “First, I have some business I have to take care of.” The boy stood proud and arrogant. “After I’ve done you can chop as many little ladies’ fingers as you want.” Some of the women gasped with fright. Vargo Hoat smiled a thin, satisfied smile. Joffrey turned to examine the women huddled on the floor.

“Ros,” Joffrey called out, in a gentle voice. “Come here, my pet.”

The red-haired woman trembled, but didn’t move.

“I said come here, Ros.” Joffrey called out in a firmer tone. “Or else I’ll let Rorge bring you over, but he’s a vicious one, aren’t you, Rorge?” The man in question, the one covered with black hair, laughed, revealing his rotten teeth, his nose holes gaping.

“I’d like to get my hands and cock on her,” the horrible man sneered. “Ready for that, whore?”

Ros widened her eyes and stood up, and with shaking legs, walked over to Joffrey. He stood up and came close to her. “You are just as pretty as I remember, rosy Ros.” He ran a finger across her cheek. He ran his hands through the luscious red waves of her hair.

“Incredible. You’re practically all new.” He looked her up and down and suddenly grabbed her flimsy dress and yanked it down. He ripped off Ros’ small clothes until she was entirely naked. “Did you keep any souvenirs from me, lovely Ros?”
Brienne could stand it no longer. She was tense and vibrating and she knew in her bones that she needed to do something. She had no plan, except for the conviction that someone had to stop Joffrey, and the shot of anger that coursed through her like an arrow. Stepping boldly forward from the curtains, she revealed herself and addressed him.

“Don’t hurt her. If you want to hurt someone, try me,” she said in a clear, loud voice. And suddenly she felt a large hand grab the back of her neck from behind and shove her to the floor. She landed hard on her knees with a grunt.

Joffrey smiled brightly and laughed.

“There you are, Gregor! I was wondering where you had gotten to.” The boy looked down at her and licked his lips.

“I think it’s my lucky day. I get the dear Dr. Tarth and my rosy Ros, all at once.” He looked as gleeful as a boy who had gotten his favourite toys on his nameday.

“Gregor, pull the good doctor up. I want a good look at her.” Gregor roughly dragged her to standing. She looked at Clegane. Even at her height, he was a head taller than her and nearly twice as broad. She had never in her life felt small before. The man was the size of a full-grown grizzly. No wonder they called him The Mountain.

Joffrey stepped in front of her and reached a hand to caress her cheek. “My dear doctor. It’s a pleasure to see you again. Perhaps we’ll finally get a chance to finish our dance.” He leaned in to give her a kiss, but Brienne turned her face away.

Joffrey laughed. “You’ll be kissing me soon enough, dear Brienne.”

He looked over at Ros, who was standing there, her arms futilely covering her nakedness.

“Rorge and Shagwell, bring Ros with me. Gregor, let’s take the doctor and the rest of our party to somewhere more…private.” Joffrey turned to Vargo and the pale man. “Vargo, Urswyck, keep an eye on the rest of the girls. Don’t touch them yet. Wait till I return. Do you understand?”

Vargo and Urswyck nodded. “Yes, boss.”

Joffrey turned back and said, casually, “Oh, if any of these whores try anything, just shoot them.” He smiled. “Or give them a warning with your blade, Vargo.”

Gregor, Rorge and Shagwell led her and Ros into a bedroom at the end of the hall and threw them down on the floor. Joffrey followed leisurely behind, gently closing the door after him.

“Today’s the day for unfinished business, wouldn’t you say, boys?” Joffrey removed his jacket with care and started rolling up his shirt sleeves. He removed his belt.

Shagwell laughed maniacally, his eyes going in every which direction.

“Time for business to be finished,” Rorge said darkly. Gregor stood by the door, remaining silent.

Joffrey moved toward the naked Ros. “Lovely Ros, my red-haired beauty. Up on the bed, if you will.” The woman stayed on the floor, frozen with fright. The boy sighed. “Rorge, will you please help her up?” The brutish man hauled her up by the shoulder and flung her on the bed. Before he stepped aside, he squeezed one of her breasts and licked his lips.

“Not now, Rorge,” Joffrey said to the noseless man with annoyance.
He walked toward the bed. “Now Ros, you were the one that got me into trouble, weren’t you?” He ran his hands up and down her legs. “You made my father want to send me away. They were going to send me to Essos, did you know?” His hands now examined her arms.

Joffrey turned and looked at Brienne. “This is remarkable, she’s all healed. Is this your doing, doctor?” Brienne clenched her fists and glared at the boy. “I thought I left my mark.” He shrugged. “I suppose I need more practice.” He turned to Gregor “Bring me my kit.” The huge man reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a leather roll which was unfurled to reveal knives and razors, all organized in little slots.

Brienne felt a wave of revulsion and hatred. “Please, Joffrey, don’t do this.” She needed somehow to reason with him; he was still a boy, after all. There must be some goodness in there. She stood up and walked toward him. Joffrey looked at her in amusement. “Shagwell, Rorge, please hold our dear doctor so she can watch exactly what I’m going do to Ros.” She felt her elbows being held on either side of her.

“Do we get to fuck this one later? She’s a big ugly bitch,” said Rorge, sniffing her face with his non-existent nose. Brienne cringed.

“I’m going to fuck her bloody, in all her holes, until she screams,” sang Shagwell in sing-song, his eyes full of insane merriment.

“You can go after I fuck her up the arse, you big dumb clown,” Rorge argued.

“Why do you always get to go first?” Shagwell whined.

Joffrey gave them a warning glance. “Shut up you fools, and bring her closer so she can watch what I’m doing to dearest Ros. Business first.” They pushed her closer to the bed for a better view of the proceedings. The woman’s eyes were wide and terrified as she looked pleadingly at Brienne.

“Gregor, would you hold down Ros, to make sure she’s still? I wouldn’t want to miss my mark.” Joffrey looked over at Brienne and smirked. He picked up a small, ornate dagger decorated with rubies in its hilt. “This was a present from my father on my fourteenth name day, Brienne. Little did he know how much use I’ve had of it.”

“Joffrey, please. You’re better than this. Please.” The boy looked at her and laughed hysterically. Brienne continued, her voice growing desperate. “Just let her go. Don’t hurt her. Take me instead.” He glanced at her in amusement, then walked up to her, close enough that she could feel his hot breath on her face.

“You would sacrifice yourself for this whore? Do you know how many men she’s fucked?” He looked at her as if he was examining a specimen of meat. “While you’re probably still a maiden, aren’t you? We’ll find out soon enough.” She forced herself to look directly into his eyes. He leaned close, examining her face.

“I don’t know why my mother hates you so much.” Joffrey said, musing. “You have very pretty eyes. And I can easily imagine those fat lips on my cock.” He leaned over and kissed her, his mouth wet and hard. He looked at her, contemplative. “Your lips are very soft.” He kissed her again, this time forcing his tongue into her mouth. She turned her head away to break the kiss. He chuckled. Slowly, he lifted up his knife and inserted it at the opening of the shirt and slid the knife down to cut off her buttons, leaving her shirt open. Brienne shivered at the cold touch of the blade on her skin, the cool air. Joffrey parted her shirt to reveal her small breasts, licking his lips appreciatively.
“I like a woman who doesn’t wear a corset,” Joffrey said, as he ran his fingers up and down her chest, lingering on the swell of her small teats. He ran the blunted end of his dagger over the top of her breasts, then turned the blade toward her face. “I think I’ll give this as a present to my mother,” he said calmly as slowly drew the knife across her left cheek, his face bright with excitement. She felt a sharp pain and wetness drip down her face. “There,” he said, “I’ve marked you as mine.” He kissed her again and suddenly thrust his hip against her, making her feel how hard he was. His green eyes glinted. “You are quite the distraction, doctor. But I must return to business. And then,” he said, looking at Brienne up and down, “We’ll see to pleasure.”

He turned back to Ros and caressed her breasts, pinching her nipples until she squirmed in pain. He moaned and held the knife out and slashed. The woman cried out. Red bloomed in a line at her breasts. Several more slashes quickly followed. Joffrey was crazed, his eyes dark and lust-filled. He seemed to grow more and more wild with every cut. He smeared Ros’ blood around her torso, he licked the cuts, he leant down to kiss her. Brienne could see his erection straining against his pants. He kissed her again and placed a hand at her throat. His other hand dropped the knife on the bed as he took out his cock to rub himself. He squeezed at her throat as Ros began to thrash. Brienne felt a wave of boiling rage overtake her, and she felt in her blood the corresponding rush of adrenaline. She noticed that Shagwell and Rorge had since loosened their hold on her, in part because they too had begun touching themselves with the hand that wasn’t holding her. Seeing they were distracted by the display before them, she surreptitiously felt for the scalpel hidden in her one sleeve until she was able to hold it and unsheathe it with her one hand. She took a long breath.

She suddenly dropped to the floor, and in response they instinctively loosened their grip and let go of her elbows. As she swiftly turned her body to face them, she aimed and slashed twice, one for each of their right legs. She was a surgeon. A very good one. She knew exactly where the femoral artery was on a man. It was the easiest artery to mark. It took the men a second to register what happened, and suddenly they realized that they had been cut and were rapidly losing blood. Soon the floor and Brienne were drenched with the warm red liquid. At the commotion, a panicked Joffrey let Ros’ neck go, and the woman took gasping breaths and was coughing and wheezing. Brienne desperately lunged on the bed and threw herself in front of Ros, shielding her from further harm.

Joffrey backed away into a corner, away from any danger. Gregor pushed her with all of his strength, and she felt her head hit the wall, hard. She felt a pain on her face, heard the sound of bone on flesh; she had a vague thought that she was being punched. Then the door burst open, and suddenly men came through, batons and pistols pointed at Joffrey and Gregor. Her head was a fog and she felt lightning in her head. Then she saw someone who looked a lot like Jaime rush toward her, his face white and panicked. Somehow, he shoved Gregor away from her. She felt arms hold her tight.

The men quickly grabbed Joffrey, and wrestled with the huge man nearby. It took three of them to subdue Gregor, who seemed to have the strength of a bear. Shagwell and Rorge were by this point on the floor, trying to staunch the cut on their inner thighs, but she knew it was no use: they were rapidly bleeding out. Strong arms continued to hold her. She looked up. She felt light-headed, but she was mesmerized by a pair of green eyes, which reminded her of trees in sunshine. “Jaime?” she heard herself say, her voice very low. “Yes, it’s me. Brienne, Brienne,” said Jaime, his voice anguish and heartbroken. He held her even tighter. He kissed her forehead again and again; he cradled her. “Don’t die,” he repeated, over and over. She could feel the rapid pounding of his heart against her chest like little hammers. She wanted to reassure him, tell him that it’s going to be okay, but something slipped inside her brain and a dark wave rushed in and she felt herself sinking into the black waters.
Chapter End Notes

Ugh. I hope that wasn't too horrific. I don't think it was as bad as book/show stuff, in any case. I just can't stand hurting our characters, but for plot purposes, this needed to happen. Thank goodness this world isn't as violent as Medieval Westeros.

Let me know your thoughts about this chapter. I love reading your comments, I truly do.

Consider hitting that kudos button if you haven't already. Thank you for those who have done so.

Again, I'd like to thank the readers who are taking a chance with me on this story. Your support has been amazing and very encouraging. :-(
Sundays were usually slow days at the hospital, as most of the population devoted their day to the Sept and family. The factories had their one day off, sparing the hospital the usual flurry of violence and sickness that had plagued them of late. Sundays had never been particularly enjoyable for Jon, given Catelyn Stark’s rejection of him as a part of her family; in Winterfell, he was always relegated to a separate table or a place in the corner. However, his weekends in King’s Landing were different now that he spent them with Brienne. He smiled as he felt for the spare key that he carried in his pocket. He also couldn’t help but remember what happened last night, how she so sweetly asked if she could take him into her mouth, as if he’d be doing her a huge favour by saying yes. And gods, it was good. It was one of the single greatest experiences of his life, if he were honest with himself. Gods, he was even getting excited from the mere memory.

His reveries were unexpectedly interrupted by the sound of the main door being thrown open. He heard voices shouting, panicked voices. "Move!" a commanding voice called out. He saw Jaime Lannister in a blue suit that was stained with splashes of blood. Jon’s pulse quickened. The man didn’t appear hurt, but was leading the way in front of a stretcher. Other stretchers followed. Gold Cloaks also came on to the scene. Shit. Jon quickly went to reception and asked for all doctors come down to the main floor.

Jaime spotted Jon and ran toward him. “Jon, please. Please.” The man was frantic, his voice pleading. The stretcher was behind him. He ran over to assess the patient, and he nearly collapsed with shock when he saw the unconscious form of Brienne, her body drenched in blood. Her face looked broken and bloody. His heart wrenched and twisted. He felt his world swim. “Brienne?”

He looked at Jaime. “What the hell happened?” A tide of anger washed over him; he had the irrational desire to punch the handsome man in his bespoke blue suit.
Jaime, who looked pale, said to him quickly, “It’s not her blood. Don’t worry. But her head. She was slammed against a wall and punched, repeatedly. By Gregor Clegane.”

They transferred Brienne onto a hospital bed. *Fuck.* That seven foot monster hit her. She also had a cut on her cheek. A nurse drew curtains around her bed for privacy. Jon could tell all the nurses on the floor were in shock. Brienne was one of their own, one of their beloved. He asked the nurse to call Oberyn and tell him what was going on.

“Tell me how she got hurt.” Jon said, looking at Jaime, who was staring at Brienne’s face as if transfixed.

The question snapped Jaime out of his trance and he replied, all in a rush. “She was at Chataya’s – Joffrey and the Bloody Mummers came, held the place up. She was trying to save them, save Ros…” Jaime’s eyes filled with tears. “Some of the girls escaped and came to me and Tyrion for help. I went in with the Gold Cloaks, and we saw Brienne. Clegane was punching her. Ros was cut. Two nearly dead men. Fucking Joffrey completely unharmed.” Jaime rubbed his head with his hands, anguished. “I can’t imagine what Clegane would have done to her if we hadn’t arrived in time.” Amidst all the craziness in his own head, Jon felt a stirring of sympathy for the man.

“Jaime,” Jon said calmly, though his insides were twisted in alarm. “Go to the waiting room. I’ll update you when I finish with her. You did well to save her and bring her here.” Jaime opened his mouth to protest, but Jon interrupted him. “Jaime, you can’t stay here. Think of her privacy. And I need room to work.” Jaime mutely nodded, but before he left, he gave Brienne a soft kiss on her forehead. Jon stared after him for a few seconds.

He turned back to Brienne to assess her injuries. She was completely covered in blood. Her shirt lay open, the buttons having been clearly cut off, he noticed with apprehension. With the help of the nurses, he stripped off her clothes, covering her with a sheet. Ominously, he found one of Brienne’s scalps in the pocket of her skirt. Seeing it made him want to rage and cry at the same time. But thankfully, she sustained no injuries to her body. All that blood was indeed someone else’s, he thought with relief. Her face and head were another matter entirely. He examined her head: no bleeding but he felt the beginnings of a bruise on the left side of her head. If she was lucky there would be no intracranial hemorrhage or swelling of the brain, both of which could be fatal. The left side of her face was bloody and battered; a long, deep cut lay bleeding on her cheek; her nose was bruised but not broken. He asked for a portable light, and tested for reflexes in her eyes; thankfully, her pupils were equal and reactive; any alteration in response would have indicated a cranial hemorrhage. He sighed, examining the cut on her left cheek, perversely thankful it was done with a sharp blade, which made for a cleaner wound. He took out his needle and proceeded to suture her face. Although he tried to make the stitches as small as possible, he knew with a certainty that the cut would leave a long, prominent scar on her cheek. He was lucky his hands were steady enough to sew, because inside, he was shaking. This was Brienne. *His Brienne.* She shouldn’t have gone to the brothel alone; in fact, he should have been there with her. He should have been there to protect her.

He helped the nurse clean most of the blood off her with warm water and a cloth. They put a hospital gown on her. Jon’s heart was pounding, but he felt a little relieved that her injuries were not worse. She would likely live. He was very worried about the injury to her head, however, and the probable concussion she would likely have. He asked the nurse to sit at her bedside for now, while he checked on the rest of the situation.

Jon needed to assess the other patients that had come in, since he had no idea if other doctors had arrived on the floor. With relief, he spotted Dr. Hyle Hunt and Dr. Pycelle. They were standing in front of two people in stretchers. Jon went to them and looked at the patients, two ugly and mean
looking men, but pale and drained of blood. Both men were very dead.

“Dead. Each bled out from a very precise cut to the femoral artery. Would have died within ten minutes. I’m not sure why they were brought here. Bloody scum.” said Dr. Pycelle, scowling.

Hunt looked at Jon anxiously. “How’s Brienne? I heard she was the hero of all this.”

Jon updated them of her condition. He found out that there was one other victim, a very upset Ros. He went to her. Hunt, who had treated her, had sewn up the cuts all over her torso, and the woman would be physically fine. However, Jon observed dark bruises around her neck from the attempted strangulation.

He opened the curtain to her bed. She looked up. Beside her sat a Gold Cloak officer, a tall man with reddish hair, who was taking notes.

“Jon!” Ros cried, the voice hoarse from the attempted strangulation. She reached out and embraced him, her tears starting afresh.

He slowly extricated himself from her embrace and sat down on a chair next to her bed.

“How are you doing?” asked Jon.

Ros’ lips trembled. “Fine. But please tell me Brienne is going to be okay. She saved my life and risked her life for me.”

Jon’s throat constricted. “I hope she’ll be okay. She’s had a head injury, so we’re still monitoring her.”

“She was incredible,” Ros said. “These Gold Cloaks came after it was all over, did you know that?” She threw a scornful glance at the officer who looked a little sheepish. “She killed those Bloody Mummers with a slash of her knife. And then she shielded me. And then, oh god, the Mountain got her.”

Jon felt a chill run down his spine. He gave the woman as much reassurance as possible, but all he wanted to do, right now, was be at Brienne’s bedside. He excused himself.

He then remembered Jaime, who had rescued Brienne from the brothel and brought her to the hospital. He walked to the waiting room, where Jaime sat, head in his hands, with Tyrion, Pod, and Bronn. They looked up as Jon approached. They all looked stricken, Jaime seeming more so.

“Brienne has sustained head injuries – blunt trauma from the force to the wall, a deep cut on her cheek, and repeated punches to the face. Right now, we’re monitoring her for any bleeding in her brain and skull, which could be serious.”

“I want her to have the best room. Money is no object.” Jaime said emphatically. Jon nodded.

Bronn shook his head. “I think she untied me and put me in the closet for my protection after I was knocked out.”

Jon stared at Bronn. “You were knocked out? You need to get checked out, Bronn.”

“Nah, I’m all right. Awake, and all. It’s not the first time I’ve been hit in the head.”

Out of the corner of his eye, Jon saw Oberyn rush toward him. “If you could excuse me, gentlemen.”
For the first time, Jon saw Oberyn frantic and afraid. He was uncharacteristically disheveled in appearance. He filled the doctor in on the situation, and on Brienne’s condition. They both went to see Brienne, and Oberyn agreed with Jon’s assessment.

“The Lannisters are requesting the best room for her, apparently.” Jon said.

“Good. Jaime was the one who saved her?” Oberyn asked, curious.

“Yes. He and the Gold Cloaks saved her from further assault from Clegane, but it seems like Brienne saved herself and Ros, who was being strangled at the time. The Gold Cloaks arrived to arrest fucking Joffrey Baratheon and the rest of the Bloody Mummers.”

Oberyn looked at the unconscious Brienne, concern etched on his face. He stroked her hair.

Jon suddenly remembered. “I need to call her father.”

“Is he her only family?” Oberyn asked, and he nodded a reply.

“Go,” said Oberyn, “Make your call. I’ll sit with her and oversee her transfer to her room. Then you need to take the rest of the day off.”

Oberyn turned back to Brienne and held her hand. Jon walked away to find a private telephone.

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Her head felt like it was under a pile of bricks. Or under an entire ocean, and the weight in her head was pulling her down into the darkness. Her eyes were so heavy, they felt like they could never again open. She wanted to surrender to the weight and darkness, to return to sleep. But she felt a warmth pressing on her skin. A hand holding on to hers, squeezing it, drawing her back to the surface, to light and the air. She felt a breath on her neck, warm and regular. Someone calling her name. She heard herself moan; she sounded like the creak of a rusted hinge.

“Brienne. Brienne.” The male voice called softly and insistently.

With great effort, and against her instinct to give in and surrender to sleep and tiredness, Brienne opened her eyes. At first everything was a blur, she stared but didn’t register what she was seeing, but she soon focused on dark eyes, so familiar to her and so full of worry.

“Jon?” she croaked. His face was close to hers and she saw his eyes fill with tears, but he was smiling and stroking her neck. “Brienne,” he cried.

There was someone else on the other side of her bed, someone familiar, the person who had been holding her hand. She looked over and saw the emerald green eyes, and the relieved face that was smiling at her.

“Jaime.” He brought her hand to his lips and kissed them.

“My head hurts. It feels heavy.” She said in a weak voice.

“I know.” Jon said. “Do you know who you are? Where you are?”

She looked at him. “You’re trying to assess me.” Jon broke into a smile of relief.
“Yes. You were hit in the head pretty badly, Brienne.” He said softly.

Oh. She winced. She noticed that the left side of her face felt swollen and painful. Then slowly, she started remembering. *Chataya’s, the women sitting together on the floor, Joffrey. Her cheek, Ros’ choked cries of pain, the scalpel, the blood, Clegane hitting her. And Jaime’s frightened face.* She groaned.

“I remember,” she said. A sense of panic overwhelmed her. “How’s Ros? And the other women?”

Jaime, continuing to hold on to her hand, gave her a reassuring smile. “Ros is alive, thanks to you. All of the women are fine, no harm came to them.”

“Joffrey….,” she trailed off. Jaime’s face turned bitter, his eyes filled with anger. “He’s been arrested, along with the rest of the Bloody Mummers.”

She closed her eyes, wishing away the sight of the handsome, golden Joffrey torturing Ros. *Him kissing her, cutting her face. Then another flash, two slashes of her blade, and the torrent of blood.*

She opened her eyes in horror, and turned to Jon. “Jon, I – I killed.” She could feel hot tears run down her cheeks. Jon’s face was kind, full of compassion. “You saved those women.” He kissed her uninjured cheek repeatedly and stroked her hair.

“T’m in the hospital?” she asked. Jon nodded.

“How bad is it?” She wanted the truth.

“Head injury, possible concussion. No intracranial bleeding, but we’re monitoring that. You can probably feel that the left side of your face is pretty beat up. There’s a cut.” Jon said plainly, looking at her with kindness.

She looked to the other side of the bed. Her left eye was swollen shut, so she couldn’t see much out of it. Jaime was staring at her, speechless. She blushed.

“Oh gods, I must look a fright.” She tried to laugh but winced in pain. “When can I go home?”

“Depending on how you feel, you might be able to go home tomorrow. But you need to stay a night for observation. At least.”

She nodded. She felt very tired. “Okay. I’m going to close my eyes now.”

She felt her hand being squeezed. And another hand stroking her hair. She drifted.

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Words could not describe the relief and joy he felt when Brienne opened her eyes and he saw those deep blue orbs looking right at him, the light from them clear and undimmed. He felt like spring had come early and the clouds had suddenly parted, and the gods had finally listened to his prayers. Jaime felt an extra warmth invade his heart when she said his name. True, her voice was a mere croak and her face was a mess, but he had never felt so happy looking at someone’s face ever before.
He couldn’t help but stare at her, and clutch her hand like a bloody lost child. He needed to touch her somehow, and Jon was on her other side, her uninjured side, so the man could kiss her face all he wanted. And he did, to an excessive degree, Jaime thought. Still, he couldn’t feel anything but respect for the doctor, since he took care of his wench, and honestly made him feel that she was actually going to be all right. And it made him almost laugh to hear her talk now, since of course the wench wanted to go home right away.

She even shed tears for those two degenerate subhumans that she killed, those monsters that would have killed her and all the women in that house if given the chance. He had felt an intense cold hatred when he saw Joffrey cowered in the corner, his cock absurdly hanging out, his face smeared with blood. He had to fight his impulse to kill him, even though the bastard was his son. He was no son of his, he was a monster. And of course he cried for this mother as soon as Addam Marbrand arrested him, and even pleaded for help from his ‘Uncle Jaime’. The boy was lucky Jaime wasn’t alone in the same room with him.

But the joy in seeing that the wench was alive was overshadowed by the utter terror that had overcome him when he saw her on the bed, covered in fresh blood, that monster Clegane punching her face. He didn’t register the two dying men at his feet, or even the near dead Ros on the bed. All he saw was Brienne, slumped and nearly unconscious, her face bruised and bloody, and yet still holding on to a scalpel in her hand. At that moment, his life was distilled into one point, for one purpose: to go to Brienne and get her.

He took her in his arms, so afraid that the blood was hers, so afraid that she was dying; he looked at her body, from her damp, bloodied skirts to the opened shirt with its buttons cut off (he raged inside when he noticed this). He felt for her pulse on her neck and her heart and they both were beating fiercely, and he felt that her skin was warm, and he saw that she was hurt but not dying and he felt profound relief. Still, he couldn’t help but hold her tight against his body and he felt his own heart was beating like cannon fire, and he couldn’t help but kiss her forehead. And when she weakly saw him and said his name, he felt bathed in the light of her eyes, the blueness of them, and he wanted to worship those eyes until the day he died. And when she fell unconscious, her eyes closing, that’s when he started to pray, to all of the Seven gods, and he held her even tighter, trying to feel the beats of her heart through echoes of his own.

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Margaery and Renly came out of her room, looking shaken and perturbed. A group of them where in a sitting area outside her private room: Gilly, Sam, Jon, Tyrion, Pod and Oberyn.

With effort, Margaery put on a light smile. “She seems to be doing all right, considering.”

Renly nodded in agreement. “It’s disturbing to see her so injured. Half of her face is wrecked. I never imagined she would have to go through this.”

“When do you think she can leave the hospital?” Margaery turned to Oberyn and Jon, who looked at each other.

“We’ve been examining her vitals, response and level of consciousness every four hours, and it’s looking good. No internal bleeding or swelling of the brain. She can likely go home tomorrow. But she will need to be monitored for a few days at least, to make sure there aren’t any severe concussion symptoms.” Oberyn said.
Jon nodded. “Concussions are unpredictable. She might have severe headaches or nausea or a number of symptoms, and they may continue for a long time, or they may not. It’s a case by case basis.”

Margaery drew herself up straight. “I can take her to Rose House and take care of her until she recovers.”

Jon shook his head. “That’s very good of you, Margaery, but no. I believe she wants to go home. I will stay with her.”

Margaery frowned. “But I’m a nurse. In any case, you can’t be with her day and night. You would still need to work at the hospital, Jon.”

“I can give you a couple days off, but you do need to come to work, Jon.” Oberyn said apologetically.

Jamie spoke up. “I can help Jon take care of Brienne. Pod and Tyrion will also help, right?” Pod and Tyrion nodded in agreement. “I plan to stay in the apartment opposite hers, and I can sit with her when Jon is working and see to her needs.”

Jon looked at Jaime and breathed a sigh of relief. “I really think Brienne needs to be in her own home, Margaery. You know how stubborn she can be about things. She’ll probably kick us all out by the second day.”

The woman looked irritated but nodded in agreement. “What about her father?”

“He’s been informed,” Jon said. “But Brienne insisted on me telling him to not come, that she was fine, and it wasn’t a big deal.” He sighed. “I’m not one to question her about family relationships, so I’m sure she thinks that’s best.”

For what was probably the tenth time in the last twenty-four hours, Jaime was filled with relief. He would be near the wench. He hadn’t thought in advance about staying in the apartment, but when Jon and Margaery were arguing about who was going to take care of Brienne, the idea suddenly came to him. He just knew that he needed to be near her. To protect her, at least until Joffrey and the Bloody Mummers were behind bars and locked away until oblivion. He also needed to install a telephone on the second floor, at least in the hallway, so the wench could make and receive calls. Or call for help.

He then realized that with Margaery and Renly having come out of her room, the wench was alone. The group was still talking; who was talking, what they were talking about, he didn’t care. He moved quickly between Renly and Margaery, nodded to them politely as he passed. In the edge of his vision he could see that they were looking at him oddly. He didn’t care. He went into the wench’s room and sat at her bedside, on her uninjured side. She was sleeping peacefully. He wanted to take her hand and hold it, he wanted plant kisses all over her face but he dared not wake her. Instead he looked at her, breathing in and out. Her nose was swollen, the left half of her face beginning to turn dark red. The cut was a red smile on her cheek. The other half of her face was pale and pristine, her freckles having faded to a light golden caramel in the winter. Her lips were still whole and perfect. Pillowy, large, soft. With them, he thought, a man could find rest. Her eyebrows and eyelashes were so pale that they were non-existent, but they were long and lush.

He heard the door open. Tyrion walked slowly in.

“She’s sleeping.” Jaime said in a quiet voice, searching for signs that the wench was disturbed by voices. She remained asleep.
“I need to tell you that father has summoned us for a meeting.” Tyrion said, his eyes examining him. “As you can imagine, with the events – the arrests – Cersei is very upset, she asks for your presence.”

Jaime gave his brother a sharp look. “I tried to explain your…situation, but our sister is begging for you to come.”

“Go away, Tyrion.” Jaime said plainly.

“There are things that we need to discuss-”

“I don’t care. I don’t care. You can tell father that. You can tell Cersei that I don’t give a damn about her. Now leave me be. I don’t intend to leave her side.” He looked at the wench to see if the rise of his voice had bothered her. But no, the wench remained sleeping, much to his relief.

He barely registered his brother leaving. After a while and looking at the wench asleep, he took a risk and reached for her hand, which was large and warm. Her fingers were graceful and long. A surgeon’s fingers. Precious jewels. He felt immediately better now that he was holding her hand. He felt for her pulse, he rejoiced in their steady drumming, slow and regular, and felt his own heartbeat match in response.

Chapter End Notes

Our girl is going to be okay! Let me know your thoughts in the comments!

Kudos if you haven't already, and thank you to those that have already done so.
Brienne frustrates those who try to help her, and she goes home.

Chapter Notes

I loved all the comments you wrote yesterday. I'm so glad that people are seeing the real Jaime now. He is kind of being the best right now.

In this chapter, Brienne returns home. Jon and Jaime have teamed up to help her recover. I wonder how that will go?

We'll be with Brienne a bit more in the next couple of chapters as she recovers. Then we'll find out about the mess out there.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Brienne was a very bad patient. She wanted to leave the hospital first thing in the morning, after insisting on taking her usual moon pill, so as to not disrupt the study. (She also reminded Jon to remind poor Ros of the same, though she was rather apologetic about the request.) She also insisted on walking to the bathroom on her own, even though she nearly passed out from the effort and Oberyn had to rush forward to steady her and keep her from falling. She refused to wear the hospital gown when she woke up, insisting on dressing herself in the comfortable breeches and men’s shirt that Jon had brought from home.

“They say doctors make the worst patients,” sighed Gilly, after Brienne repeatedly refused her assistance in putting on socks and shoes, even though it was evident that Brienne could not bend down that far without feeling dizzy.

Brienne looked at her peevishly. “Funny. I heard the exact same thing about nurses.”

Jon sighed and walked to Brienne, sitting beside her on the bed, as Gilly moved aside. He pulled Brienne up to sitting, despite her protests, and attempted to put on her socks and shoes for her.

“Jon, I can do this,” she whined, and made a half-hearted attempt to take her shoes away from him.

“Gods, Brienne. Just cooperate, will you?” Jon said, exasperated, as he pulled the shoes from her clutches.

“Oberyn, I don’t remember Brienne being this much of a pain. Do you think her head injury has turned her mean and nasty?” Jon said, half smirking, finally succeeding in the shoe ordeal. Brienne rolled her eyes and playfully punched him on the arm.
She heard a tentative knock on the door. There stood Ros, dressed in ill-fitting clothes obviously not her own, looking shy and self-conscious. “Dr. Tarth?” She fidgeted nervously. Brienne got up, a little unsteady, to the surprise of Jon, who had tasked himself with annoyingly shadowing her every movement, and walked toward the woman.

“Ros!” Brienne cried, hugging her tightly. She let go and looked her up and down, noticing the bruising around her neck. “Are you okay?” Brienne asked, looking concerned.

The pretty woman nodded. “I have some cuts that will heal, and my throat’s sore,” Ros said hoarsely. She looked at Brienne, eyes wide with alarm. “But you….”

Brienne waved her hand dismissively. “It looks worse than it already is. Just a few bruises on my face, a cut, a hit in the head, that’s all.”

The woman looked down, then up into Brienne’s eyes, her gaze filled with gratitude. “I want to thank you…you saved my life. You shouldn’t have tried to sacrifice yourself for me….” She burst into tears, and Brienne held her sobbing form.

“I’m sorry that happened to you, that you had to go through that again. It should never have happened.” Brienne frowned in anger, her face hard.

“He’s a monster. I’m glad they caught him, now, red-handed. I’m going to see that sadist rot in jail if it’s the last thing I do,” said the woman angrily.

Brienne held her, and agreed. “He is a truly vile creature,” she said. She shivered at the remembrance of his face, his voice. His monstrosity.

She stepped back and looked at the woman, who had faint shadows under her eyes. “I’m glad you’re safe. Just…please take care of yourself.” She took Ros’ hand and held it. “If you need anything – anything at all – you come find me, okay?”

The woman nodded. They tearfully said goodbye.

When Ros left, she felt her knees go weak, but she felt hands around her waist, holding her. Jon.

She talked to the detective of the Gold Cloaks, Addam Marbrand, a rangy, copper-haired man, who possessed an ease and charm that made her immediately comfortable. With him, she went over every detail that she could remember, which was relatively easy, as the day was stamped violently into her memory. Her only hesitation was when she told him of how she killed Rorge and Shagwell, as images of their blood spouting forcefully from their thighs invaded her mind. As she told the story, she saw Detective Marband’s young partner, a young man with dark hair who was standing by the door, blanche and look sick.

In the end, the visit was brief, as it seemed like he was already aware of the basic facts of the story and had already spoken to other witnesses.
As he took his leave, he offered her his hand to shake. “Thank you, Dr. Tarth, for allowing me to interview you so soon after the events. Your information will be invaluable to the case.”

She shook his hand and nodded. “Thank you for being so kind. Ros mentioned that you were gentle with her. I thank you for that.”

He nodded, and looked at her with interest. He paused. “And on a personal note, I must say that I commend you for your actions in stopping the Brave Companions. Although I’m sure you feel guilt about taking the lives of those two individuals, know for certain that if you hadn’t done that, they and their gang would have doubtless killed or maimed many in that house.”

She stared at him as tears sprang up in her eyes. She swallowed them down.

He cleared his throat and clasped his hands in front of him. “We have a large file that we’ve been accumulating on the gang, and allow me to tell you that they are creatures of the worst kind, if that will ease your mind.”

Detective Marbrand paused again and cocked his head. “It was lucky that Jaime Lannister told Tyrion to ask for me specifically. I don’t want to malign my brothers in the Gold Cloaks, but some of them would not have come to your aid. Others would have eventually arrived, but would have been very slow in coming.”

Brienne gave him a small smile. “Thank you for coming to the rescue. If you hadn’t arrived just in time, I don’t know if I would be standing here talking to you.”

Detective Marbrand nodded. “I wish we could have been there sooner.”

He stood up, put his hat back on, and adjusted his coat.

“If you have any questions or need any help, please contact me.” He handed him her card. “I have also written my personal address and telephone number on the card, in case you have need of me.”

He bowed to her and strode confidently out of the hospital room.

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“Jaime, I think you’ve gone a little overboard,” Tyrion said, as he surveyed Brienne’s rooms for the first time upon his return. His brother had filled the room with blue flowers, which he imagined was a rarity in the middle of winter. The room was spotless, and Tyrion imagined that he paid for extra cleaning service in preparation for Brienne’s coming back home. There was a thick, blue and white quilt on the bed.

Soup was on the stove. Fruits and fancy little desserts were on the dining room table.

“It looks like you’re preparing for a party, not to welcome back an invalid.” Tyrion mildly observed.

Jaime gave him a nervous look. “Is it…is it…too festive? Should I take away some of the flowers? The desserts? I didn’t bring out the wine, but do you think she might want any?”

He stared at his brother, who did seem remarkably on edge. “I might want some, and I think you need some to settle your nerves, but no, I don’t think Brienne would want any.”
“I did get her some new books. And I installed a telephone up here, though it’s in the hallway because I didn’t want her to be interrupted by phone calls.”

“And I see you got her a Victrola player, with records.” Tyrion raised his eyebrows. These machines were expensive and a rare luxury in this day and age.

“Well, the wench loves music. She’s a very good dancer, I don’t know if you’ve noticed. She dances the same way she wields a sword.” Jaime blabbered on.

“Oh, I noticed.” Tyrion said mildly. He looked shrewdly at his big brother, with his flitting, nervous energy. “What’s going on, Jaime?”

“I don’t know what you mean?” Jaime said, laughing oddly.

Tyrion pulled out a chair and gestured to his brother to sit. Jaime reluctantly took a seat next to him.

“Jaime, what is happening right now?” Tyrion said slowly.

His brother let out a long sigh. “I don’t know. I just wanted to get the room ready for her, and I started thinking about all the things she might want or need, or the things that might please her or bring a smile to her face.”

Tyrion gave him an appraising glance. “You sound like you’re in love with her.”

Jaime’s face grew still. He shook his head, avoiding Tyrion’s eyes, “We’re friends. I hope good friends in the future.”

“Jon…”

“Yes, I know she’s with Jon. I’m happy for the wench. It’s a good match for her. I mean, they’re both so good, aren’t they? I mean, he seems a little boring and humourless, but I’m sure the wench enjoys his dull stories about the grey north.” Jaime’s mouth quirked into a smile that did not reach his eyes.

“Oh, Jaime,” Tyrion said sympathetically.

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Her rooms were lovely, as she caught glimpses of the changes that Jaime had made just overnight. Bright blue flowers everywhere, so much food on the table. She couldn’t help but coo and gasp each time she noticed every little thing. Jon had a steady hand on her waist, just in case she should fall. She was loath to admit it, but going up the flight of stairs to her apartment was an ordeal. Why was she so tired? But Jon was good to lean on, and even though she was heavier and taller than he was, he was very strong.

He helped her to the bed, which had a lovely blue and white quilt with a geometric star design on it.

“This is beautiful,” Brienne marveled, touching the fabric between her fingers.

Jaime, who was hovering nervously like a brilliant golden hummingbird, smiled widely, and looked at Tyrion pointedly. When she was comfortable on the bed, she began to notice even more
changes, including something that resembled a wooden cabinet which she gradually realized was a record player. “Is that a Victrola?” Brienne asked, amazed. She had seen it most recently at Chataya’s and of course had heard it at a few people’s homes, but she had never had one in her own place before. Jon looked up, curious, and gave Jaime a strange look.

Jaime nodded, triumphantly opening the cabinet up, taking out a record, and putting it on. The twinkling of the piano pierced the silence and gently filled the room. Brienne closed her eyes and let herself drift. When she opened them she saw Jaime sitting on the chair next to her bed, looking at her face eagerly.

She smiled at him. “It’s beautiful Jaime, so wonderful. But you shouldn’t have – it’s too much!”

He shook his head and smiled at her, his face pleased. “Nonsense. I didn’t want you to be bored here. Plus, if I can’t get a gift for a dear friend, of what use is Lannister money?”

Jon made a scoffing noise from the kitchen.

“I can vouch for that statement,” said Tyrion, smirking.

“Thank you Jaime, for the music, and the flowers, and all this.” Brienne said, and squeezed his hand. He put his other hand on top and held her hand there, stroking it gingerly.

“It’s entirely my pleasure, Brienne,” he replied warmly.

“It’s very pretty music,” said Jon, placing a glass of water rather emphatically on her bedside table, while giving Jaime an unfriendly look. He sat down on the bed beside her and looked at her injury, and examined the pupils of her eyes, her pulse on her neck.

“Do you feel hungry, Brienne? Tired?” Jon ran his fingers through her hair soothingly. It must have been because of the carriage ride, short as it was, but she was rather exhausted.

“I am a bit tired,” she admitted.

“Then rest,” said Jon, as he gestured for Jaime and Tyrion to exit the room. Brienne saw that Jaime was walking to the record player.

“Please,” she called out, “Leave it on? I think it might help me sleep.” Jaime nodded and smiled, leaving the room with Tyrion, who managed to give her a wink before he left.

She lay herself down and tucked herself in the blankets. It felt good to be in her own bed. “Jon, you know you don’t have to stay here all the time. I’m really okay.”

He came to sit on the chair beside her. “Well, I want to be near you, all right?”

She flung the blankets open. “Then come lie down beside me.”

Jon widened his eyes. “Are you sure you’d be comfortable?” Poor Jon, she could imagine the scenarios that were in his head. But she hoped he wouldn’t treat her like a breakable, fragile doll.

She patted the bed next to her. “Please.”

Jon slid into bed gingerly, careful not to jostle her. His hands lay awkwardly at his side. She turned her head and saw he was full of concern, worry that he might hurt her.

“Would you…hold me?” She said softly. He widened his eyes and his face relaxed.
“Oh Brienne,” he said, putting his head on her shoulder and wrapping his arm around her waist.

He kissed her shoulder, her neck, and nuzzled into her. “I’m so glad you’re okay. I was so worried,” he murmured.

“I’m so sorry I wasn’t there to protect you. I should have been there with you,” he said quietly into her neck.

“No, no, Jon. Never think that.” She reached up to caress his face. He sighed and tightened his hold around her. His body so close to her, his head next to hers, the arm around her torso – all made her feel secure and safe. She felt warm. She closed her eyes, letting the sound of the piano nudge her into a peaceful sleep.

Jaime was restless, annoyed that he’d been kicked out of the wench’s rooms, though he supposed ‘kicked out’ wasn’t exactly the correct term. Of course she needed rest; all one had to do is take one look at her bruised face and the way she carefully moved to know that she was tired and in pain. But he wanted to be in the room with her, instead of that Jon Snow.

Tyrion had tried to persuade him to join him at the bookshop for a drink or two, saying he needed to update him on the Joffrey situation, but he declined. The last thing he wanted was to hear all about Cersei and Joffrey and how awful their predicament was. He paced in the apartment that he’d be staying in until the wench got well. Secretly, he wanted to make this apartment his permanent home, but he supposed Tywin would frown upon that. He and Jon Snow, of course. There were also the children, and he needed to be where they were. In any case, he was determined to stay here for a few days, at least until she got better.

The apartment was also clean, Jaime having paid the cleaners to do these rooms after they did the wench’s. He had removed the old red velvet bedspread and replaced it with a blue and white quilt, one identical to the one he got Brienne. The blue was a welcome change after the oppressive red and gold of the Lannisters. He wondered why each person in his family was so obsessed with wearing the colours, decorating with them, surrounding oneself with them. It was all terribly suffocating. But the splash of blue in the room was nice and relaxing. A visual oasis.

He poured himself a whisky and sat down. He tried to read but couldn’t concentrate. He’d left his door open, and he’d also left the wench’s door slightly open, in case she needed him. He heard the faint strains of the piano music. He smiled, remembering the pleased and enchanted expression on the wench’s face when the needle hit the record. And here Tyrion thought it was too much for a friendly gift, and never mind Jon’s suspicious expression. Soon though, the music stopped. There was silence, and the silence loomed large. He wondered how the wench was doing. He wondered if Jon had left her alone.

At that anxious thought, he resolved to look in on the wench, just for a minute or two, to make sure she was still alive. He walked out his door and slowly approached the apartment opposite. He heard nothing.

He took a deep breath, stood in the doorway and peeked in. The wench was sleeping on her back, breathing, alive, but next to her was Jon, who was sleeping on his side with his back to the door, and he had his arm around Brienne. He had nuzzled his face into her neck, his lips touching the pulse point. They were the perfect picture of togetherness, of a pair.
Jaime felt a sharp shot of pain in his heart. It physically hurt to see the two of them, so close, touching. The intimacy, the comfort. He had never had that, not even with Cersei. He wanted to be in Jon’s place on the bed, his body wrapped around her, giving her reassurance, and she giving him back trust. He wanted to feel the wench’s pulse on his lips, he wanted to hear her breaths, feel her chest rise and fall under the protective embrace of his arm. He knew that was what he wanted, but he also knew it was something he had no right to. He was in the middle of an emptiness; whether that was an emptiness of his heart or soul he had no conception of. He just felt adrift and so goddamn lonely. He wondered if there was something wrong with him to never have experienced that closeness with another. His chest ached. He knew he shouldn’t be here, looking in on the couple. He slowly backed away, leaving them to their rest. He walked quickly back to his rooms and closed the door. He didn’t know what to do. He fell into bed, curled himself into the blue quilt, and shut his eyes tight.

Chapter End Notes

How do you think the situation between Jon, Brienne, and Jaime will shake out? Let me know your thoughts about this chapter in the comments!

Thank you for reading and staying with this story. I know it’s been quite the journey!

Kudos if you like, and thanks to those who have already hit that button.
Her Own Personal Shadow

Chapter Summary

Jaime tries to take care of Brienne for the day.

Chapter Notes

Thanks for the absolutely *delightful* comments on the last chapter. I especially enjoyed the speculation about Addam. And yes, Jaime is an adorable man who needs affection.

In this chapter and a couple others following this one, we're sticking with Brienne's recovery at the apartment with Jaime and Jon. Hopefully they all get along, lol.

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There was a knock on his door. Finally, he thought, as he went to open it. It was early, not even seven in the morning, but Jaime had been up for at least an hour or two. He had washed, dressed and eaten. And he had waited. Impatiently. Jaime opened the door to Jon, who was standing there already dressed and ready to go to work. Jaime stepped aside to let him in.

“About time,” Jaime muttered.

Jon looked at him evenly, saying, “It’s still quite early.”

“How did she sleep?” Jaime demanded peevishly, not wanting to engage the pup.

Jon, ever brooding, let out a tiny hint of a smile. “Very well. It didn’t seem like she woke up during the night…”

“Didn’t seem?” Jaime was haunted by the vision of the two of them cuddling together the night before. He wished he had never walked over and taken a peek. What he saw burned into his memory.


Jon continued, “Sometimes she’d have these nightmares, and wake up, and she’d need someone to hold her. But she seemed to have had a peaceful night, thank goodness.” Jaime wondered jealously about the pup’s first-hand knowledge of the wench’s sleeping and dreaming patterns.

“I didn’t know you were on such intimate terms with Brienne’s sleeping habits,” Jaime drawled. Jon’s gaze traveled over to Jaime’s own bed, with its bedspread that matched those of the wench’s.
Jon narrowed his eyes.

“Look, Jaime.” Jon said forcefully. “I’m grateful that you’ve offered to help Brienne. God knows she’ll need it in the next few days. But whatever problem you have with me, you need to set that aside.”

“You’re the one with the problem with me, Jon. You’ve been giving me suspicious looks since the hospital.” Jaime sneered, glowering at the doe-eyed man.

“Well, I’m sorry if I question your motives, since it was your nephew that tortured my Brienne. And you had the opportunity to send him away all this time but didn’t!” Jon snarled, his brows knitted and eyes lit up in rage.

His words at first ignited an incendiary anger within Jaime; he curled his fist and impulsively took a step toward the dark haired man. But soon, the meaning of Jon’s words sunk in, and stung him right in the godsdamn heart. Jaime knew he was right. It was his fault, he knew that. Joffrey was his son, his monster who he needed to deal with but just ignored. His anger quickly deflated, and he lowered his head in shame and collapsed into a chair. Jon frowned, confused, and sat down on a settee near Jaime. He stared at Jaime for a long time, black hair falling into his eyes. He exhaled loudly.

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that. It was unfair…and untrue. Even I know that. I was angry.” Jon looked at him with a softened expression. Jaime looked at the floor, and slowly shook his head.

“You saved her life.” Jon said, simply.

Jaime waved his hands to dismiss the statement.

“You did. I can’t imagine what would have happened if you hadn’t been there in time….” Jon said softly, cringing at the thought.

Jaime shook his head again, looking up with haunted eyes at Jon. “Now, it’s no use thinking about that. And she was taking pretty good care of the situation all by herself. I was just there at the right time.”

“Still, thank you…” Jon paused. “She means a lot to me.” He said, fidgeting with his hands.

“As she does to me,” replied Jaime, looking at Jon frankly.

“I know.” Jon said somberly. They looked at each other for some moments. Jon cleared his throat.

“Look, about today. She’s stubborn. You know that. She’ll probably insist she’s fine. She might want to send you away, but by no means leave her. She needs to be supervised for the next day or two at least. She’ll need help walking, and doing anything that might involve her getting light-headed and fainting.” Jon looked at Jaime. “I know you’re not a doctor or nurse, but just try to be around her as much as possible. She may be prone to dizzy spells, and knowing Brienne she won’t tell you until it’s too late.”

Jaime nodded. What Jon was saying made sense, and staying close to the wench was definitely something he could do. “I understand. I will try my utmost. In fact, I do know what a stubborn person she can be.”

Jon nodded, looking relieved. He was about to turn away to leave but instead he said, “Thank you for looking after her while I’m working.” His expression was kind.
“Of course. It’s not a problem.” Jaime nodded.

Jon then looked at him directly in the eye, with a gaze that was full of understanding. “And really - thank you for saving her life.”

Jaime smiled imperceptibly.

Jon hesitated. “I know you…care for her.” Jaime raised his eyebrows.

“I care for her too,” Jon continued.

Jon bit his lip. “I should go.”

He left the room, leaving Jaime a little unsettled and confused.

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The wench seemed better, although she didn’t look it because the bruises on her face had turned to a dark blue. She was also less sleepy and had more energy. More energy to battle with him, anyway. She wanted to get up and walk around the apartment and get her own breakfast, thank you very much. He let her do what she wanted, but as a compromise he followed her like a very close shadow, always vigilant and always staying within an arm’s length distance from him.

“Stop following me, Jaime!” she cried, frustrated.

“Jon’s orders are not to leave you alone. You could fall and crack your head open, wench.”

She glared at him. “I’m a doctor as much as Jon is, and I say I’m fine. I’m especially fine enough not to have you follow me like a little puppy.”


“Oh gods. Can you just sit in the corner please, and stop talking for the rest of the day?” Jaime laughed even harder.

After breakfast she sat in bed and tried to read the newspaper, but she winced with pain every time she tried to make out the text. She let out a frustrated huff and threw the paper on the bed. Jaime, sitting on a chair at the foot of the bed, raised one eyebrow.

“Bad news, wench?”

“Why do they make the print on these things so small? It’s ridiculous.” She paused and looked at him. “I begin to get a headache every time I try to read.”

“No need to do violence to the Westerosi Times, wench. I can read to you.” He got up and she moved over to make room for him to sit beside her on the bed. He picked up the paper. To his horror, he found on the front page a sensational account of the incident at Chataya’s. None of the victims’ names were released, thank the gods, so Brienne was kept out of it, but there was a detailed report on the arrest, charges, and a reckoning of all the crimes of The Bloody Mummers led by Joffrey Baratheon. He groaned. No wonder the whole family was going crazy. No wonder
Tyrion had wanted to speak with him so urgently.

“What is it?” asked Brienne, trying to peek at the newspaper.

“No peeking, wench,” said Jaime. “Remember your headaches, ok?”

She slumped dejectedly, scowling at him in resentment. Seeing her like this made him want to laugh. She was so childish and stubborn and adorable. Jaime deliberately skipped the news around the incident, and instead read to her about the continued protests and talk of strikes at the fabric factories (the Baratheon Factories, of course), about the wonders of the upcoming World’s Fair in Kings Landing that was happening in a few months, the slow stirrings of uprisings in Essos, and by the time he got to reading about the prices of wine in Dorne, he felt Brienne slump against his shoulder in sleep. Her long, pale eyelashes made shadows on her cheek and her mouth was slightly open; in sleep, her whole face was relaxed, making her look like just a mere girl.

He felt his heart warm. Jaime dropped the newspaper on the bed and adjusted himself in a more comfortable position. After some hesitation, he put an arm around her and leaned them back on the headboard. Much better. She stirred, but didn’t wake; instead she nudged even closer, reaching her arms to hug his chest. Although he realized she probably thought he was Jon Snow, Jaime still felt a contentment that he hadn’t felt in a long time, if ever. His whole body relaxed and soon enough, he too fell into a slumber.

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Brienne woke up slowly, realizing she had fallen asleep sitting up on the bed. She felt a large, warm body next to hers, and she suddenly remembered Jaime had been reading the newspaper to her. He was sleeping now too, she noticed from the regularity of his breaths. Her arms were hugging him, and his arm was around her shoulder, his head leaning against hers, her cheek against his. She could feel the smoothness of his skin and the beginnings of stubble; she smelled his scent of leather and soap, the hard muscles under her hands, his blond locks tickling her forehead. She stirred, and in response he stirred too. She had never been this close to him, save for that one night months ago when he kissed her. Being in his arms was not unpleasant, she thought vaguely. She moved slowly, trying to extricate herself from his arms. He stirred again and opened his eyes. He stared at her unseeing for a few seconds, then she saw his eyes suddenly fill with affection and brightness. He smiled lazily at her.

“We must have fallen asleep.” Brienne said shyly.

“Hmmm.” He murmured. “It’s nice.” His arms drew her closer. She responded by hugging him back, and allowed herself to stay in the comfort of his arms a little while longer, but she eventually moved away from him. He immediately let her go. She blushed. She suddenly felt conscious of her body, how straw-like and gritty her hair was, and how sweaty she was and how she must smell.

“I think I would like to have a bath.” She gave him an embarrassed look, remembering that she hadn’t had the chance to bathe since the incident. They had cleaned her the best they could with a warm water and a washcloth, but she had the strong urge to have a proper bath to wash off any bits of Shagwell and Rorge left on her skin. She remembered all that blood. “I haven’t had a bath since….” She shivered.

Jaime nodded eagerly. “I’ll run the tub for you. Don’t move,” he said, and in an instant he was
gone, and an instant later he came back; she could hear water running. She got up, with him still hovering, and gathered her robe and towel. She walked slowly to the bathroom, with him closely following her. She stopped at the threshold of the bathroom. She turned around.

“Okay. This is where you stop.” She said, entering the bathroom. He followed her in.

She turned around. He was looking at her with a most innocent look on his face.

“Jaime.”

“Brienne. Per Jon’s instructions, I’m not to leave you alone.” He shrugged, looking helpless.

“But Jaime, I’m going to have a bath. You can’t be in here.” She glared at him.

“You can have a bath alone, that’s fine. But I need to be around when you get in and out of the tub.” He raised his eyebrows. “Look, I’ll close my eyes, ok? I promise. Your honor is safe with me, wench.”

“Jaime.”

“Brienne, please, I don’t know what I would do if you fell. Please.” His expression was pleading, his voice ending in a whine.

She realized he was really trying to help her, and that he was genuinely worried for her. She relented. “Fine. But you have to close your eyes, ok?”

“Ok, wench. But promise to yell if you’re going to faint.”

He stood close to her with his eyes shut, within an arms distance, as she stripped off her clothes, her eyes on him the whole time to see if he was peeking. He wasn’t. After a bit, she began to relax and think herself ridiculous. He would never want to see her ugly naked body anyway.

“Ok Jaime, I’m going to step into the tub now.” She moved to the edge of the tub and climbed in. “Ok, now I’ve climbed in and am safe from falling. You can turn around and go.”

“Ok, wench.” He turned around and moved toward the door. “I’m going to leave the door ajar, so I can hear you when you call for me. You need to yell at me when you’re done, all right?”

“All right Jaime. I promise.”

“Good.”

The water was nice and hot. She took a long time washing her hair and scrubbing her body with soap. She was alarmed at the slightly pink tinge of the water by the end, but she felt entirely new and clean. She started to drain the water.

“Wench!” Jaime yelled from the door. Gods, he was irritating.

“Jaime, I’m just draining the tub. I’m just standing right now. I haven’t gotten out yet.”

“I’m coming in. Are you decent?”

She quickly grabbed the hanging towel and wrapped her body.

“Fine, you can come in.”
He barged in with a worried face, and walked toward her. He stared at her for a long moment, his eyes darkening, then consciously shifted his eyes away. She blushed. “Ok, I’m getting out now.” But as she climbed over the tub, something shifted in her head and she suddenly felt herself wobbling; all of a sudden the room was spinning and Jaime’s panicked face was wavering in front of her and she felt her legs buckling and then she was falling.

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A wave of panic hit him as he saw her step falter and her body start to wobble. Her towel dropped to the floor. Her eyes flew closed, and she started to swoon. Instinctively, he reached out and caught her, one hand across her waist and another around her back. She was wet and warm and completely naked. Gods, she was magnificent. He tried his best not to look as he took her into his arms, carrying her with surprising ease back to her room, and depositing her on the bed.

He reached for a dry towel to cover her up, but at that moment he couldn’t help but look, just a little, now that she wasn’t in imminent danger, and gods, she really was magnificent. Her thick muscular shoulders, those pert little teats with the pinkest nipples, her lean torso, the thick blond bush of her cunt. Those endless legs of hers. He felt his mouth water. He was also acutely aware that he was uncomfortably tight in his pants. The mere sight of her was doing unimaginable things to his cock. He covered her with the towel. And then the quilt, up to her neck, for good measure. He took a few deep, calming breaths. He then tried to wake her. At least he thought that this was what he was supposed to be doing. He tried to ignore his rather insistent cock, and touched the wench’s cheek. She moaned, the sound of which sent a jolt to his groin, much to his dismay. He shook her bare shoulders, and tried to keep the impulse to lick her freckles at bay. She stirred. Finally. She opened her eyes, which suddenly went wide as she remembered what happened.

“I fainted…”

“In the tub, yes.”

She looked down at her body, then looked under the quilt and her eyes widened. He saw a deep red blush move down her body.

“Yes, before you ask, you were naked. I carried you to your bed, and covered you up.”

She winced. “You've seen me naked.” He nodded. He unconsciously flicked his tongue over his lips.

“And you carried me?” She asked disbelievingly.

“I’m strong enough,” he said smugly.

“Oh gods,” she groaned and shut her eyes tight.

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Jon came to relieve Jaime when he came back from the hospital that evening, bringing food from
the restaurant next door. Jon leaned in to kiss Brienne on the forehead. Jaime averted his eyes.

“You look better, refreshed.” Jon observed, squeezing her shoulder.

“I felt filthy and had a bath since, you know, I hadn’t bathed since that day at Chataya’s.” Brienne said mildly.

“How was it?” Jon asked, looking at her as he started to take out plates for the three of them.

“The bath was lovely, though the bathwater was pretty disgusting. I guess blood gets everywhere.” She said. She shot Jaime a warning look.

Ignoring her, Jaime opened his mouth to speak.

“Jaime,” she said firmly.

Jon looked at the two of them with a puzzled expression.

“Well, the wench – I mean Brienne – doesn’t want me to tell you this, but she had a bit of a fainting spell after the took her bath.”

Jon looked sharply at her. “What?”

“Don’t worry, I was there to catch her.” Jaime said casually. Jon raised his eyebrows, and looked over at Brienne.

She blushed. “I think the water was too hot and I just got a little lightheaded. All very minor. I recovered almost immediately, Jon.”

Jon looked at her suspiciously, then at Jaime. “All right.” He started spooning out ladles of stew for each of them. Jaime opened a bottle of wine for him and Jon. Brienne gave him a resentful look. He shrugged.

Jon told them about his day at the hospital: a gallbladder removal, and more fights at the factories. He said he must have stitched four bleeding foreheads that day. The next day, he was going to assist Oberyn on a bowel resection. Brienne listened to these stories with longing. She’d only been away from the hospital for only a day really, but she already missed it. Gods, how she wished she was already going back.

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“Jaime was good to you today?” Jon asked, as they were tucked in bed, with Jon cuddling her from behind.

“I suppose so. He was more annoying than anything. Constantly following me around, Jon. He said you told him to do that.”

“That I did.” He raised his head to look at her. “It’s only for a couple more days, Brienne, or until you stop feeling like you’re going to fall.” He kissed her cheek.

“I know. It’s just so frustrating. I just want to get better, quicker.” She groaned. “Oh gods, doctors do make the worst patients, don’t they?”
Jon laughed.

“Let’s sleep. You need your rest.” He kissed her on her neck. She drew his arms tighter around her.

Chapter End Notes

Well? What did you all think? You know I had to add a bath scene in there. Please send me your thoughts, big or little, long or short. I love your comments.

Kudos if you like this story. Thanks for those who have already given theirs. Love.

Thanks for reading the story. I hope you're having fun!
Jaime had always been a man of action, always active, always outside, doing something, so it surprised him that his restlessness had been kept at bay for the three days since he started looking after Brienne. He knew he could have asked Pod or Tyrion to come relieve him if he needed a break or if he wanted to step outside to see the few hours of sunlight in this dull winter, but he had no desire to go out. Pod would have liked to have taken his place, at least for an hour or two, since the boy felt a healthy dose of guilt for not noticing the wench had not returned on that ill-fated day. But Jaime instead tasked the boy to bring them lunch every day which he hoped would alleviate any of the boy’s self-imposed guilt.

No, Jaime was decidedly not bored or restless or impatient at being stuck indoors for three days and nights straight. He was, surprisingly, quite happy. The wench and he had developed a routine of sorts: breakfast, then Jaime would read her the newspaper (carefully avoiding the very big and juicy stories around the Bloody Mummers), and he would put on a record for them to listen to. Sometimes they would play cyvasse, and here the wench would often beat him, as he had never been patient enough to practice, unlike Tyrion, who was a master at the game. In the afternoons the wench would nap, like she was doing now, and Jaime would write some letters around military business, or read.

He had been away from a military campaign for many months now, and it was the longest stretch that he’d been home since he joined the military. In the past, he would usually come home from abroad, then stay one or two months with Cersei, then she would tire of him and they’d fight fiercely and he’d want to go away again. The cycle occurred over and over in the last twenty years. Coming back to his sister was always bliss, since they missed each other so much and were equally hungry for each other’s bodies, but a few weeks would subsequently pass and it all would go to the seven hells. He had never spent more than twenty-fours – nay, more than four hours straight with his sister, ever. Never this...sustained acquaintance as he was doing with Brienne now.

This, he thought, was comforting. Seeing all of Brienne, when she was happy or irritable or angry
or just plain kind, was a revelation for him. Strangely enough, all of her varied moods amused him; it made him want to unearth more of the depths she had within her. And she had such depth.

Physically, she was getting better, and he realized that he would likely be sent away tomorrow or the day after. Since the bath incident (which he admitted was stored into his memory and put away for later use), she had no more bouts of lightheadedness, and her gait got more steady, and he didn’t feel compelled to be as close, though he still insisted on being within reach. She slept less during the day, and seemed to have more energy. She talked a lot about wanting to go out, but Jon insisted on waiting one more day at least, to make sure her unsteadiness did not return.

He observed them together, Brienne and Jon. They were close, very close, and obviously cared for each other. They touched casually a great deal whenever they were around one another, seemingly sometimes without realizing it. This annoyed him. Perhaps it was his own delusion, but he did not sense any heat between them, nor did he get the sense they were madly in love. But the wench said they did ‘physical things’ which proved something, he supposed. Then it occurred to him that they were probably not all over each other because she was recovering from an injury and the terrible ordeal, and secondly, because he was around, acting like a 6 foot obstacle between them. For he could not help but admit that sometimes he wished Jon wouldn’t show up at night, so he could sleep with the wench in his place, if she’d let him. He wished he could easily grab her by the waist or kiss her cheek or ask for an embrace. He sighed. As usual, he wanted something – someone – he couldn’t have. He wondered if he replaced one dependence with another.

The wench stirred in her sleep, then went still. Then she moaned again, sounding like she was in pain, and she began thrashing, shaking her head in distress. Jaime went closer to her. His heart ached when he saw tears fall from her shut eyes, and she was moaning louder, murmuring “No, no, no.” Her hands were clenched white, nails digging into her palms. “Take me instead,” she cried, and she was sobbing and shaking and his heart felt like it was literally going to break watching and hearing her, and he started to stroke her hair, her shoulders, and made soothing noises into her ear, and that didn’t do much because she was still saying “I have to…” and squirming and her face was contorted with her crying and he thought, what the hells, and climbed into bed and he put his arms around her so his face was right next to hers, and he was holding her tight and rubbing her shoulders and torso and squeezing her every once in a while, murmuring all sorts of nonsense in her ear. And soon enough she went quiet and still, and she blinked awake, and he continued to hold her just because it felt nice.

She opened her eyes in alarm and started when she saw him. Her expression then relaxed, after recognizing him. “Jaime?” She squeaked in a small voice.

“Brienne, you’re awake, thank gods.” He wiped the tears from her face with his hands.

She turned on her side so she was facing him. He noticed that her bruises were turning green, and the skin seemed to be healing.

Her eyes shone with tears, making them even bluer and bigger. She was flushed from crying. “I was dreaming, Jaime.”

“I know, wench. It was terrible to hear. You were crying and saying things. And I just had to hold you. I’m sorry.” Jaime withdrew his arm around her torso.

“No, stay.” She said. “Your arms feel nice. I’m still a little upset from the dream.” She looked at him, her eyes still faraway.

“I was back in Chataya’s again, with Ros and Joffrey, and I had to kill those men again. And I was watching Joffrey torture Ros, and the room was suddenly filled with blood and I was drowning in the warm blood – oh Jaime, it was horrible!” Teardrops escaped from her eyes again, and he drew
her to him, their bodies gently pressing against each other, as her shoulders shook with quiet sobs.

He felt her melt into him, her head heavy against his neck and shoulder. And he was comforting her but he was the one that was being comforted too, and he’d never done this with anyone, not even with Cersei, and it felt completely new but also completely natural, like it was right and good to hold this woman in his arms. And soon he realized that she had fallen back asleep, still in his arms, and what else could he do but close his eyes, just for a second, and somehow he too ended up falling asleep holding the wench.

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“Jaime,” she said, looking and troubled. “I killed two men.” Her pale face was horrified when she said those words and remembered the brutal things she had done. The dream had brought those few seconds all back. They were sitting in the living room, having had some tea that Jaime had made.

“Oh, Brienne,” he said, taking her hand into his and stroking it.

“It happened so fast. Joffrey was choking Ros while he was – pleasuring himself – and he was squeezing her throat so tight that she was turning blue, and the men were holding me back, and I had to do something or else Ros would be strangled to death.” Jaime tensed and felt a flash of anger when he heard Joffrey’s name – his son – he thought bitterly. This was the first time she had told him what had happened, and his insides twisted at her words.

“I just slashed them with the scalpel I’d hidden in my sleeve. Two cuts in the femoral artery.” She gave him a look of despair. “It was all so easy and fast.”

She looked down at her lap. “I didn’t think killing someone would be so easy.”

“Oh wench,” he said, and he gently pulled her into his arms because it felt right, and she wrapped her arms around him, and they hugged, feeling each other’s breaths move in and out, to remind them that they were alive.

“You did the right thing, Brienne.” He said as they drew back from their embrace. “Ros, and who knows how many other women would have died. The men you killed were evil.”

“I know. That’s what Detective Marbrand told me. Logically I know I did the right thing, but I can’t get over the fact that I ended two men’s lives. They died because of me.”

Jaime looked at her gently. “Brienne. Do you know how many men I’ve killed in combat? I don’t even know how many. I never counted.” His face took on a bitter edge. “You know why I don’t count? Because if I counted, it would drive me crazy. I would go out of my mind with grief and pain.”

“Jaime,” Brienne said, her voice pained and her face filled with guilt. “I’m sorry – I didn’t think – I should have thought about your situation. I’m sorry.”

“There’s nothing to be sorry about. Listen, Brienne, there are some things so horrible that you have to let them go. Talk about it, yes, cry about it, but eventually you need to set them free, so you won’t be trapped by your sins. Else you’ll grow mad, or become a bitter, hateful human being.”
And he took her into his arms again, just because he wanted to.

“How was she today?” Jon asked, slipping into his room and closing the door.

Jaime looked at Jon, offering him a glass of whisky. After hesitating for a few seconds, Jon took it. They sat on the settee.

“She seems better.” Jaime said, “No bouts of dizziness or light-headedness. She was steady on her feet. Still gets headaches when attempting to read fine print, though that seems to be getting a lot better.”

Jon nodded, pleased at the news. “She does seem quite a bit more confident in her movements. Almost back to normal, I’d say.” He sipped the whisky, and looked at it in surprise. “This is good.”


He looked at Jon with curiosity; he seemed less hostile lately, Jaime thought. “She said she wants to go out, get some fresh air. Do you think that’s possible?”

Jon nodded, looking thoughtful. “I think short walks will be okay, or a carriage ride. Make sure she doesn’t get too tired though.”

“Good, I’m sure she’ll be pleased to hear that.” Jaime grinned. “I’m quite tired of saying no to her.” Jon smiled at that comment.

“You’ve done well,” Jon said, “I must say, I’m surprised.” The man smirked.

Jaime laughed. “You discount my good looks and the Lannister charm, Jon.” Jon chortled, shaking his head in amusement.

“I believe Brienne would be the last person to be persuaded by anyone’s looks or charm.” Jon said, “Though I suppose you have your positive qualities underneath it all…somewhere.”

Jaime guffawed. The doctor was a little amusing, he supposed.

Jaime paused, face turning serious. “She did have a nightmare today.” Jon gave him a sharp glance. “She was dreaming about what happened at the brothel. It frankly sounded terrible.”

“You were able to comfort her?” He asked, curious.

Jaime nodded, taking a sip of whisky and looking at Jon carefully.

“I’m glad,” Jon said, with a strained smile, his eyebrows furrowed.

He looked intently at Jaime. “Why are you doing this?” Jaime looked up at him. “You’ve been with her day after day, and you don’t even go out at night. Pod says you won’t even let him relieve her. Why are you helping her so much?”

Jaime gave Jon and even glance. “I guess I feel responsible. My…nephew was the one who hurt
her."

“It’s more than that though, isn’t it?” Jon gave him a penetrating look.

Jaime shrugged. “I owe her a debt,” he said lightly. “And a Lannister always pays his debts.”

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When Jon returned to the room, he saw Brienne had changed to her nightgown and was sitting up in bed, holding a hand-held mirror up to her face. She turned to him as he came in, and he saw that she looked pale and troubled.

“Brienne.”

She continued to look into the mirror, closely examining the left side of her cheek.

“The mirror has never been my friend,” she said, tilting her head to look at different angles of her face. She sighed. “But I never thought I could get uglier.”

Jon rushed to her side, sitting next to her on the bed. “Brienne. You will heal. You know these are just bruises.”

She nodded. She drew the mirror closer to her cheek. “You did a good job on the sutures, Jon. I’ve never seen your stitches turn out so well. So precise and tiny. You’ve always been better at sutures than me.”

Jon wanted to take her into his arms and hug her worries all away. “Nonsense.”

“But I know how deep the cut was. I’ll have a scar.” She sighed again, and put the mirror down on the bedside table. Her face twisted. “I know it’s silly to worry about my face. But now I’ll never, ever be pretty.”

His heart was hurting for her. He took her into his arms, and held her tight, and he felt her shoulders shake and she started to cry into his neck. He held her even tighter as she shook.

“Oh, Brienne,” he murmured into her hair, “You’re not ugly, and you’ll never be ugly. You’re the most beautiful woman in the world to me.”

“Jon,” she said, clutching him tighter. They held each other for a while.

She finally drew back, and looked at him, a hint of a smile on her lips. “I think you’re blind,” she said, chuckling a little, her tears having dried up.

“On the contrary,” he said lightly, “I have never seen more clearly, Brienne.” He leaned in and kissed her forehead.

“You should sleep,” Jon said, stroking her uninjured cheek. She moved over to make room for him and pulled down the blankets.

“I’ll just go change into pajamas,” Jon said, moving to the wardrobe to fetch his clothes.

Brienne gave him a curious look. “Why did you start wearing pajamas?”
“I don’t normally, but I thought, you didn’t want….”

“I like feeling your skin next to me.” Brienne said simply.

“Are you sure?”

She nodded. Jon stripped down to his smallclothes, and joined her in bed. He turned off the light. She turned to her side and slid her arms around his bare chest, stroking it lightly, causing little shivers on his skin. She embraced him, pulling his body against her, making soft, murmuring sounds to his neck. He felt a vague stirring below, but tried to think of other things to distract himself. “It feels nice to hold you,” she murmured into his hair.

“Hmmm,” he said, feeling warm. “You can hold me for as long as you want, Brienne. If you want, you can hold on to me forever.” Her arms wrapped even tighter around him, as her long body pressed closely against his back. All was well. He closed his eyes.

Chapter End Notes

I'd love to hear your thoughts on the chapter. Please send comments!

Kudos if you like this story, and as always, a huge thank you to those that have already sent them.

For reading this story and sticking with it, you have my thanks and gratefulness. Love.

:-)
Looking-Glass Walls

Chapter Summary

Jaime leads Brienne to an unexpected place.

Chapter Notes

Thanks for your comments, I loved reading them so, so much.

In this chapter, we discover another facet of turn of the century Westeros. I hope you enjoy it.

Programming Note: likely no chapter tomorrow (unless I really get my act together), since I need some time to plan the next section of the story.

Brienne looked nervously into her looking-glass. She had on a cream-coloured dress that buttoned up to the neck; it was both comfortable and cut close enough to her body to reveal her shape. After days of wearing simple shirts and breeches around the house, she felt a little strange going back to dresses. She rarely wore hats, but today she had on a simple cream-coloured hat with a medium brim and a white veil attached to it. She stepped closer to the mirror and examined her face. It had been five days since the attack and her face looked remarkably better. The swelling had all but diminished, she could see well with both eyes, and her bruising was turning a yellowish-green and healing. The prominent cut on her cheek was dry and red, but was large and unsightly, starting from the top of her cheekbone and ending an inch from the left side of her lip. When she drew down the veil, she noticed that her injuries disappeared and she almost looked pretty, with the translucent fabric softening her coarse features. She sighed, drew up the veil and thought what Septa Roelle would say to her now if she saw her disfigured face. There surely was no hope for her now.

There was a brief knock on the door and Jaime came in, looking dashing in a light gray wool suit, topped with a darker grey winter coat. He widened his eyes when he took a look at her.

“You look…wonderful. That dress becomes you,” he said, fidgeting with his hands.

She smiled at him. “Yes, my dressmaker, Mistress Nysterica knows all the tricks to make someone like me look even tolerable.” Jaime looked at her with mild confusion.

“Shall we go?” She asked Jaime, as she pull on her blue winter cloak. She lowered her veil.

Jaime looked at her with concern. “The veil…is that necessary? Can you see properly with it,
Brienne? I don’t want you bumping into trees and poles.”

Brienne blushed, thankful for the veil that hid it. “I think so. I’m still hideous and I want to spare children of any nightmares.” She gave a half-hearted laugh.

Jaime sputtered, and shook his head. “Wench, that’s absurd.” She rolled her eyes. She knew what she looked like.

She gave him a reproachful look. “Let’s go, Jaime.”

She felt a mixture of nerves and anticipation as she stepped outside. At last, she could breathe fresh air, and feel the wind flap at her cloak. It was a chilly day. She felt, somehow, vulnerable and unsure. Jaime, ever confident, led her to the carriage and opened the door for her and stepped in afterwards, settling himself next to her.

Jaime gave her a long look as they started moving.

“What is it?” Asked Brienne. She noticed that he had something on his mind.

“It’s just – it’s just – could you pull up your veil? I’d like to see your face…your eyes.”

Brienne blushed. He continued, “I mean, I understand that you don’t want the public to see you like this, when you’re still healing, but maybe when we’re alone, it could be pulled up?” Jaime bit his lip. “I mean, so I won’t feel like I’m talking to a statue or something.”

She nodded, and pulled the material up. Jaime smiled. “Thank you, wench. Now I can see you.” He gave her a worried glance.

She looked out the window at the passing streets; the surroundings were unfamiliar to her.

“Where are we going, Jaime?” It felt absurd when she realized she never thought to ask him before.

Jaime grinned smugly. “You’ll see, wench. It’s a surprise.”

“I don’t know, Jaime…surprises are really not my thing.” She wasn’t sure she wanted to see what someone like him would plan for a surprise.

“Where’s your sense of adventure?” He grabbed her hand and squeezed it. “I think you’ll like where we’re going,” he whispered in her ear, his warm breath tickling her.

They stopped at a large, grey brick building, and he led her to a side door. She quickly lowered her veil before the door was opened to reveal a short man with a large moustache who was wearing spectacles. He ushered them in.

“Captain Lannister,” the man said, “Right on time.” The man turned to Brienne. “Rodrik Harlaw, at your service.”

“Brienne Tarth.” She replied, shaking the man’s hands. The man graciously took their coat and cloak from them.

“I think you know the way, Captain Lannister. Just let me know when you leave.”

Jaime nodded and smiled kindly at the man. “Thank you for this favour. I appreciate it.”

“But of course,” Mr. Harlow bowed. “The Lannisters have been most generous in their patronage.”
With that, the man left them and returned to his office nearby.

Jaime turned to face Brienne, and pulled her veil up, much to her surprise.

“Jaime!” Brienne admonished.

“Relax wench. We’re the only ones here. Well, aside from Mr. Harlaw who is very much minding his own business in his stuffy office over there.” Jaime smiled charmingly. “Besides, you’ll want to see this without anything between it and your eyes.”

She was curious now, she admitted to herself. Jaime offered her his arm and she took it, as he led her down the dark hallways, all lined with shelves which were filled with books and little objects housed under glass bell jars. “Is this a museum of some sort?” asked Brienne, looking around. Jaime didn’t answer, but his smile grew wider.

He opened a set of heavy doors which led to a large, dark room. She could feel the cool air coming from it. When they finally entered, Brienne could not help but gasp. They were surrounded by large glass walls beyond which was blue water and hundreds of colourful fish and other sea life. The only light came from the illuminated tanks, which gave the room an otherworldly, moonlit glow.

“An aquarium? I’ve never seen one before.” Brienne breathed, astounded.

Jaime studied her expression carefully, his face an image of self-satisfied delight.

“This is the first of its kind in King’s Landing, a large-scale aquarium with electric lights, filtration system, air pumps, and heating. Mr. Harlaw is in charge of it, and it’s going to be open during the World’s Fair in a few months.”

“You mean this isn’t even open to the public yet?” She looked around her in awe. “And you brought me here?” She turned to face him, her eyes looking even more blue with the reflection of the waters. He stared at her.

“I thought you’d enjoy it,” Jaime said lightly.

“I do, Jaime, I do.” She smiled at him brightly.

She looked around her. The tanks were so large and tall that she felt like she was under water, as if she were a sea creature herself. She saw all sorts of fish: bright red ones, mottled blue ones, sleek silver ones that swam swiftly away, and large lumbering ones that creeped along the bottom of the sandy floor.

“I feel like a mermaid,” she said, astonishment in her voice.

Jaime grinned. “Perhaps they are a distant relation.”

She looked with wide eyes – she took in the floating sea plants, the glassy eyes of fish, their flashing scales, the bright red coral and the purple and pink starfish that clung in groups. These creatures she had only ever seen in books before. She felt like an explorer, seeing new world for the first time.

“This is so beautiful, so incredible!” she gushed, as she looked at Jaime in wonder.

He looked back at her, a warm smile on his face. “I’m glad you like it, wench.”
They walked arm in arm, examining each tank. She pointed out strange creatures such as one little creature that had the head of a horse, and Jaime pointed out an unusual little fish that would puff up into a ball. Brienne felt herself smiling uncontrollably and hoped that Jon’s stitches on her cheek would hold up under the constant strain.

“I’ve always lived close to the ocean, growing up in Tarth, but I never imagined I could one day see what’s it’s actually like under water.” She looked at him, her face filled with joy. He looked back at her, his face having a tender expression that she’d never seen on his face before.

“Thank you, Jaime, for this beautiful experience.” She said in a low voice. She was overwhelmed with happiness and wonder. Suddenly, she threw her arms around his neck and hugged him, the unexpected movement knocking her hat to the floor. His arms wound their way around her back, squeezing her tightly.

“You’re welcome, Brienne,” he murmured into her ear, the vibrations of his voice making her shiver. He didn’t let go, and neither did she. They stayed in the hug for a long time, and she felt the warm solidity of him, how his chest rose and fell with steady breaths, and after a time, how her breaths too, fell in sync with his, and they stood there, in each other’s embrace, breathing together.

“Jaime,” she said softly. They drew apart, and his hands rested on her waist.

“Yes, Brienne?” Their faces were close; she could feel the heat radiating from his cheek.

“Thank you for saving my life that day.” She looked at his noble chin, his expressive brow and the lovely green eyes that were crinkled with affection. “I don’t think I’ve said it until now.”

“Brienne,” he said, his countenance tremendously kind and caring. He leaned over to kiss her right cheek, his lips warm on her skin, then he moved his head and very lightly kissed her cut on her other cheek. She hitched her breath. She reached up to touch her cut, where his lips had kissed her. She saw no disgust or disapproval on his face; on the contrary, his expression was incredibly fond.

“Thank you,” she whispered, her eyes shiny with emotion and unshed tears. She felt a surge of gratitude and affection for this strange, wonderful man who always defied her expectations and continually surprised her. He had saved her, without even thinking about it, and given her his time and made her feel so special with experiences such as this one. For someone who had called her ugly when they first met, he now made her feel valued, even attractive.

His thumbs were absentmindedly drawing circles around her waist as his hands encircled her. He pulled her closer to him. She felt a surge of warmth on her skin under the fabric of her bodice. Jaime was gazing at her with an intensity that made her stomach flip. She bit her lip and felt a strange nervousness and apprehension, along with a fluttering in her chest. Looking down, she spotted her hat on the floor. Smiling nervously, she stepped back and picked up her hat, and placed it back on her head.

Jaime blinked and shook his head, as if to clear it. A joviality had returned to his expression.

“Come on, wench,” he said, holding out his hand, “I haven’t shown you the sharks.”

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“He took you to an aquarium? One that hasn’t even opened yet?” Jon asked, his voice incredulous.
Jon’s chest was bare and Brienne was in her nightgown. They were sitting in bed, ready for sleep.

Brienne nodded. “Apparently the Lannisters are generous donors. But Jon, it was incredible, all the fish, the feeling like we were under the sea. And we were the only ones there.”

“He really is pulling out the stops, isn’t he?” Jon muttered.

“What’s that?” Brienne asked, confused.

“Nothing, Brienne.” Jon bit his lip. “You felt all right the whole day?”

She nodded. “Yes, no unsteadiness or dizziness or headaches. I can even read on my own now without my eyes or head hurting.” She looked eagerly at him. “I think I’m ready to be on my own. Truly. It’s been five days.”

Jon nodded. “I think it’s safe as well. I’ll let Jaime know tomorrow that he is free of his duties.” He smiled at the thought.

“I’m glad that he can now return to his own life, instead of having it be hijacked by me. I’m sure he’ll be relieved.” Brienne said. “You too Jon. You don’t have to spend the night here, worrying about me anymore.”

“I rather like sleeping here with you, dear Ostrich.” Jon rubbed her arm up and down.

“You do?” said Brienne, drawing his arm around her.

“It’s my second favourite thing,” he said, pulling her closer to him. She could feel the smoothness of his chest and his warmth through her nightgown.

“And the first?” she asked, exploring his chest with her hands.

“Kissing you,” he murmured, and he kissed her lips softly, then kissed both of her cheeks. She drew back and touched her cut with a hand.

“Did I hurt you?” His eyes were concerned.

She shook her head. “You don’t mind? My face being like this….” Jon lowered her hand down from her cheek, and kissed her on her left cheek again.

“No, I don’t mind. It reminds me of how brave and strong and amazing you are. You’re a hero, Brienne. You should wear your scar as a mark of courage, for that is certainly what it is.”

She gave him a strange look. “I never thought of that before.”

“Besides,” Jon said, “The scarring will be barely noticeable because I did such a fine job suturing it up.” He grinned mischievously.

“Gods, you’re so full of yourself.” She pinched his arm playfully.

“Ow! Brienne, isn’t that why you like me, because of my skills?” Jon wagged his eyebrows suggestively.

“And the fact that I’m an expert…tickler?” He tackled her with this wiggling fingers then, prodding up and down her sides and making her laugh hysterically. He kissed her then, softly and then harder when he felt her respond. She opened his mouth with her tongue and kissed him deeper. They both moaned and kissed some more and broke off, both of them breathing hard. Jon
looked deeply into her eyes, his face full of affection and feeling. He kissed her lightly on both cheeks.

He stroked her hair gently. “We should sleep. Good night, Brienne.” He said, with a brief kiss on the lips.

“Good night, Jon.” She returned. He reached over to turn off the lamp, and settled himself close against her back, his arms holding her from behind. She nestled her body back into his and he hissed. She could feel his manhood hard against her buttocks. A warmth spread in her core.

“Jon, do you want….” She said to him softly.

“I always want you, Brienne. But only when you’re ready.” He kissed the exposed skin on the nape of her neck. She squeezed his arm around her.

“Thank you, Jon.” She whispered.

“Sweet dreams, dear Brienne,” he replied.

Chapter End Notes

Please send me your thoughts about this chapter in the comments. I love your comments.

Kudos if you like.

Thanks for reading. I appreciate you.
The Prodigal

Chapter Summary

Checking in with the Lannisters and their plans. Brienne receives an unexpected visitor.

Chapter Notes

Thanks for your lovely comments, and though I’m unable to respond to each one, I love reading them. Who knew fish could be so sexy?

I'm a bit distracted from the AMAZING news that SigilBroken has posted a new fic! Seriously, I'm over the moon. It is SO good.

Anyway, this chapter we'll check out what has been happening outside our lovely recovery bubble of the last three chapters.

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The next morning was a typical grey winter’s day, with shafts of sunlight threatening to break through the bleak clouds. Jaime burst into her apartment like a golden storm, followed by a smug looking Jon. Brienne had barely finished changing into a simple grey dress when she was interrupted by the opening of the door.

“What’s this, wench? You don’t need me anymore?” Jaime demanded, his forehead furrowed in displeasure.

Brienne nodded, pouring them cups of coffee and gesturing for them to sit. “Jon and I think I’ve recovered sufficiently to be on my own. It’s been almost a week and I haven’t had any fainting spells or headaches for days.” She sat down at the table.

“Anyway,” she continued, “I’ve taken up so much of your time. Both of your time,” she said, looking at Jaime and Jon, who had sat down.

“I don’t know how I’ll ever make it up to you both, but thank you for taking such good care of me.” She looked down at her hands, embarrassed. “I know I haven’t been the most cooperative of patients.” She smiled at them. Jaime looked at her in silence, frowning slightly. “But now you can go back to your lives without having me to worry about,” said Brienne, taking a sip from her cup.

“Well, if you’re sure, wench.” Jaime smiled airily. “I suppose I should check in on the children and face the Lannisters.” He winced at the thought. “Although it’s the last thing I want to do.”

“I’m sure the Tommen and Myrcella miss you,” Brienne said gently. Jaime nodded, his eyes
“Well, you’ll have the day to yourself, Brienne.” Jon said. He hesitated. “But you’ll allow me to come back tonight, I hope?” asked Jon, eagerly. Jaime gave him a dubious sidelong glance.

Brienne smiled and shook her head. “I think you also need a break from me, Jon.” She drained her cup. She stood up. “Gentlemen, I want to spend at least the next twenty-four hours on my own, without my shadows.” She looked at them evenly.


Jaime looked at Brienne, eyes teasing. “You know, I rather liked living here. It’s a shame that the apartment sits empty most of the time. I might stay here more often. Who knows, maybe I’ll learn the book-selling business from Tyrion.”

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Ser Pounce was living up to his name, pouncing on the ends of Jaime’s bootlaces ferociously like the miniature lion that he was. Boots was cuddled in Jaime’s lap, a fluffy black and white ball of purrs and sleep. Lady Whiskers was balancing on Tommen’s little legs, while the boy teased it with a ribbon, giggling all the while.

“Then Lady Whiskers bounced on Ser Pounce while he was sleeping, Uncle, and Ser Pounce did the gentlemanly thing and walked away,” Tommen happily narrated. “Don’t you think he did the right thing, Uncle Jaime? Septa says one must turn the other cheek.”

Jaime considered the matter thoughtfully, while petting Boots. “In my opinion, Tommen, it depends utterly on the character of the offending party. Say, if Lady Whiskers were evil and mean, then I should think Ser Pounce would have reason to fight back.”

The was a sound at the doorway.

“The prodigal son returns,” said Tyrion, walking into the room with Tywin and Cersei following closely behind. He flopped onto an armchair and took a sip from his glass of wine. His sister gave him a cold glance, and he could tell from the tightness of her mouth that she was furious.

Tywin, always upright, stared at him. “I’m surprised to find you here, Jaime. Especially since I requested your presence urgently nearly a week ago.” His father remarked dryly.

“Oh? Did Tyrion not offer you my apologies? I’m afraid was otherwise occupied, Father.” Jaime said breezily.

“What else could be more important than your family, Jaime? I desperately needed you.” Cersei said angrily, setting herself gracefully down on the settee. She looked at Tommen and his cats. “Tommen, take those cats and go join your sister. The adults need to talk.” Tommen looked at his mother with silent reproach, but ushered his kittens away from the room and left.

“Tyrion did mention that you were busy helping Dr. Tarth with her injuries. Was that true?” Tywin said neutrally, sitting down in his usual leather armchair. Cersei barely glanced at their father and instead stared at Jaime, her hands clutching the armrests.
She narrowed her eyes at him, her voice like glass shards. “Jaime, I can’t believe you would choose that ugly beast rather than your family. How could you?” His sister glowered. Jaime noticed that Cersei looked a little unwell and tired. The hollows of cheeks made her skin seem sallow, but her eyes shone brighter than ever. She poured herself a glass of wine from the side table next to where she was sitting.

Tywin returned his full attention to Jaime. “And how is Brienne? I had wished to visit her, but things,” he looked pointedly at Cersei, whom he had thus far completely ignored, and continued, “Have been untenable. The situation with Joffrey has been most displeasing and disruptive.”

“Displeasing? Disruptive? Your grandson is suffering and locked up in a jail cell, all alone, and you’re treating the situation as if it were a just a mere inconvenience to your busy schedule. Father!” Cersei cried, glaring at Tywin. He ignored her outburst and continued to focus on Jaime.

Jaime glanced dismissively at his sister, but replied to Tywin. “Well, father. Brienne is getting better, thank the gods. Her wounds have mostly healed, although she will have a scar on her cheek for the rest of her life.”

Cersei laughed gleefully. “That motley cow is even uglier. Joffrey said he gave her something to remember him by as a gift to me.”

Jaime felt ice enter his veins as he heard her words – the fact that Joffrey had marked her deliberately to please Cersei was appalling to him. He noted that the wench did not mention that crucial tidbit to him, likely to spare his feelings. Noble wench. But hearing those words made his sister seem even more heartless and cruel, and he was struck newly with an acute fury toward his nephew.

“Cersei, cease your words,” Tywin said in a forbidding tone, finally addressing his daughter.

Cersei smiled sweetly. “Imagine – every time that hideous beast looks in the mirror she will see Joffrey’s gift.”

Jaime took a deep breath, trying to control his anger, but failing. “Her name is Dr. Brienne Tarth, and you will address her as such. And don’t you dare disrespect her in my presence again.” Jaime fumed.

Cersei smiled, pleased to finally be the subject of Jaime’s attention. “Or what, sweet brother? You’re full of empty threats. I can call that hideous, grotesque freak any name I want. She is nothing to me. She is nothing to us.” She drained her cup of wine.

“Sister, do you know why I stayed away for nearly a week? No? So I could prevent myself from killing your idiot son with my bare hands. Or yourself, I might add. As far as I’m concerned, I hope they execute him. Or maybe let him perish slowly in jail. That would be sweet.” Those words were a purifying fire as soon as he said them.

“How dare you! Your own-” She protested angrily, the black silk of her gown balled up in her fists. “Careful, Cersei,” Jaime chimed, “You don’t want any secrets spilled in this room, do you?”

“You dare to threaten me and my son? You do you think you are? You’re just pathetic and weak – a sad excuse for a man. I don’t know why I ever thought we were similar, why I ever thought we were the same person.” Tyrion raised his eyebrows. Jaime rolled his eyes.

Jaime grinned at her pointedly. “Sister dearest, allow me to tell you that I’ll be the first one in line to watch them hang Joffrey.” He paused, cocking his head in thought. “And to think, you could
have prevented all this by agreeing to have your son join the military in Essos. Look what you have
sown, sister.”

At his words, Cersei sputtered and stormed out of the room, her black dress swishing angrily
behind her. The men watched her leave the room.

“That was an unseemly display,” remarked Tywin, his eyes hard and staring at Jaime.

“And yet every word of it true,” he retorted lightly, his eyes sparkling. Jaime felt a sense of
freedom that he’d never experienced before. He could breathe freely.

“He does have a point, father.” Tyrion said. “Joffrey is a complete monster. Irredeemable. He
belongs not on this earth, I fear.”

“Regardless of what you think of Joffrey, he is family. Lannisters ought to stick together.” Tywin
said firmly.

“I will not defend a sadistic murderer who tortures women and children for sport,” said Jaime
vehemently. “Besides, the boy’s name is Baratheon,” he added as an afterthought.

Tyrion spoke. “In any case, Father, I believe there is little we can do at this point. The train has left
the station, so to speak, and it’s filled with murder victims, maiming victims, and rape victims. Not
to mention the fact that he was caught red-handed by our dear Jaime here and the Gold Cloaks.
Destination gallows.” Tyrion smirked.

Tywin glared at his stunted son. “You will not make light of what is a dire situation for our family.
Whatever Joffrey’s crimes, we must minimize the damage to the family name.”

“Oh, I’m afraid the damage has already been done.” Tyrion raised an eyebrow. “Varys and his
even more sensational competitors are scrambling as we speak to write out the extensive crimes of
Joffrey and his Bloody Mummers gang. Though in this particular case, the truth of it is outrageous
enough. One doesn’t even have to embellish the plain facts when it comes to Joffrey. Who can
make up hands and feet found in Blackwater Bay?”

Tywin stared and thought, looking coolly at both of them. He clenched his jaw.

“The attention is already too much. We must get rid of this situation. The quicker this resolves, the
faster we can gain back our reputation. I have already told Cersei that a trial is not in the family’s
best interest.” Tywin said logically.

Jaime glanced at his father with fascination. “The quicker the situation resolves? Does that mean
you are not going to fight this? You’ll encourage Joffrey to plead guilty so he’ll end up in jail?” He
was a little disbelieving. His father had always been devoted to the idea of family and family
honour.

“The boy was poorly made; something in this soul, if he has one, was twisted when he was born.”

Tywin’s eyes grew colder. Jaime felt a twinge of guilt. “However, things may not go as we plan. I
believe Cersei is using the new and considerable Baratheon earnings to mount a temporary insanity
defense. She plans to hire the best lawyers money can buy. She means to go to trial with this.”

Tywin said coldly. “I said I wouldn’t financially support her in his defense, but she is determined to
do this on her own, along with the help of her right hand, Qyburn.”

“Father – I saw what he did to Brienne and Ros. And Brienne told me what he did in the events
leading up to us discovering him. Joffrey is a pure monster. Sick beyond saving. If it hadn’t been
for Brienne, many innocent women would have died.” Jaime said passionately.
“Dear gods,” Tywin muttered; he looked strangely shaken. Even Jaime was surprised to see his father so perturbed. “Is it true that she dispatched with two of those Bloody Mummers on her own?”

Jaime nodded. “She did, with two clean cuts of her scalpel. Though Brienne is much disturbed and guilt-ridden about it, despite the scum she abolished from the earth.”

Tywin nodded. “I imagine she might be, as a doctor. And she is, after all, a unique and sensitive soul.”

Both Tyrion and Jaime looked at their father oddly. Was their father displaying compassion?

“And how is Selwyn Tarth, having heard about his daughter? I imagine he would have come, though he has avoided the mainland for many years.” Tywin asked.

“She insisted he stay on Tarth, and reassured him most vehemently.” Jaime said, smiling. “She is a singular, stubborn, willful woman.”

“Still, as a father, he must want to see her very badly.” Tywin looked at Jaime in a way that perturbed him. “I will write to him. And call on Brienne myself.” Jaime looked blankly at his father. He turned to his brother, who shrugged at him.

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Brienne opened her door and was astonished to find Tywin standing there, looking prim in his freshly pressed dark grey suit.

“Doctor Lannister!” Brienne exclaimed in surprise. She stepped aside to let him in.

Tywin nodded and entered the flat. He handed her a bouquet of dark purple roses.

“Midnight roses?” Brienne smelled the buds that were just beginning to open. The smell was exquisite. “In the middle of winter?”

Tywin smiled. “You remembered. I happen to have a greenhouse in which I grow the roses, so they bloom year round. Rarely do I get a chance to give them to someone worthy, however.” He looked around. “Although it appears that you have a number of flowers in here already,” he noted, looking at the clusters of blue flowers in her rooms.

Brienne blushed. “Oh, Jaime brought them when I came back from the hospital,” She placed the dark roses in a vase. “But these are very beautiful, and I adore them because they have so much meaning to you. Thank you, Dr. Lannister.” She gestured for him to sit, and put on the kettle. He took a seat, rather stiffly at the dining table.

She fiddled in the kitchen and came back with a pot of tea.

“I have been remiss in visiting you, Brienne. I apologize. I was alarmed and worried for you when I heard about the attack, but the situation being what it is, I was occupied with the aftermath of my grandson’s overwhelming crimes.”

Brienne shook her head, as if to dismiss his concerns. “I completely understand, Dr. Lannister. No
need to apologize. You already do me great honour in visiting today. I’m just sorry that all this happened.”

Tywin nodded, and paused in thought. “Indeed. You are sufficiently recovered?”

“Yes, I hope to be back at the hospital on Monday. After nearly a week of bedrest and under the strict guard of Jon and your son, I am well and ready enough to return to the world…even with my souvenir,” she said, self-consciously touching her scar.

He pursed his lips. “I have heard how my grandson terrorized you. Words cannot express how sorry I am. There were hints of his nature when he was growing up, but I did not anticipate that he would become an amoral monster of such magnitude, keeping company with common criminals.”

“Thank you, Dr. Lannister. Though I must admit that my feelings and wishes for your son are not the most charitable.” She lowered her eyes.

Tywin paused, giving her a cool glance. “Our family is rather divided with regards to Joffrey. I’m sorry to inform you that my daughter plans to fight the charges and take this to court, using the money she has from Baratheon Industries. My and my sons’ preference is to deal with my grandson swiftly. He is a lost cause, as far as I’m concerned.”

“Thanks for informing me, Dr. Lannister. Detective Marbrand has already mentioned that I might need to testify, should a trial occur. My objective is solely to keep the likes of your grandson off the streets, I’m sorry to say.”

“Understood. I quite agree with you.” Tywin hesitated and looked at Brienne. “You mentioned earlier that Jaime has been taking care of you. I was wondering where he was when he failed to show up at a family meeting.”

She nodded eagerly. “Jaime has been singularly helpful and devoted to taking care of me when I was recuperating. I don’t know how he could stand it, but he was by my side all day when Jon was at work.” She bit her lip. “Not to mention the fact that he saved my life. I owe him a debt. I don’t know how I will ever repay him.”

“I’m positive he does not see it that way. I think Jaime enjoys your company a great deal. More than you realize.” Tywin said in a neutral tone. “He finds you valuable company, I believe.”

Brienne smiled shyly. “He has been nothing but kind and considerate. A true friend. I regard him very highly.” Tywin raised his eyebrows.

“I hear our doctor Jon Snow plans to establish himself up North?”

Brienne nodded. “He misses the North, I believe, and his siblings. There is apparently great need for surgeons up there.”

“And what are your plans, Brienne?” Tywin asked, his tone light.

“I’m not sure. Oberyn has offered me a position in Dorne, and the freedom to do my own research.” Brienne smiled at the prospect.

“You are not considering the North then?” He glanced at her with a keen eye, as though he was studying her face.

Brienne shook her head. “I think not. I would like to visit one day, but I don’t see myself settling there.”
Tywin nodded with satisfaction. “If you are interested in research, you might want to join me at Casterly Rock. We have our own hospital to keep you practicing as a surgeon but I also have a research laboratory in which you can pursue your medical interests. I haven’t had a chance to speak much to you about it, but my research focuses on lowering mother and infant mortality rates at birth. It’s a personal project for me, as I’m sure you understand, because of Joanna.”

Brienne was pleased and overcome with Dr. Lannister’s offer. His interests aligned with hers and of course, as a woman it would be a natural fit. However, she was hesitant to place herself within the vicinity of more Lannisters – well, Cersei in particular.

“Thank you, Dr. Lannister. I have much to think about and I must say that your research interests sound both rewarding and fascinating.”

“Do give it serious consideration. You have a great future ahead of you no matter where you decide to go.” Tywin stood up to leave. He turned toward her.

“Oh, one more thing. I have written and spoken to your father.”

Brienne raised her eyebrows. He continued “He is concerned about you, as any father would be, having heard about your attack.

“I realize that. But I didn’t want to worry him, since I was essentially fine.” She found it odd that he should bring up her father, of all things.

“If you have a chance, you might want to consider visiting him, speaking as a father myself.” He opened the door to go. “I can even arrange travel and an escort for you, if that makes things easier.”

Brienne was at a loss for words, but she nodded mutely.

“Good day, Brienne. I’m glad to find you looking so well.”

And with that, Tywin shut the door and walked down the stairs.

Chapter End Notes

I love your comments, so please let me know your thoughts in the comments. Are things brewing?

Please hit that kudos if you haven’t already. And thank you so much for those who have already done so.

Thanks for reading this story. My plan is to finish by the end of the year. The story is so long already! Gotta finish.
Joffrey was housed in the city jail, but in a private cell in the high tower, far away from the other inmates on the lower levels. It was a struggle to organize such special accommodation, but there was little one couldn’t do with enough money. Cersei had arranged for her son to have all the comforts of home: a brass bed with fine silk sheets, a desk and dresser, and the finest toiletries that he was accustomed to. She even installed a bookshelf filled with books should the boy ever take up reading in his confinement. Her poor Joffrey was in very low spirits; Cersei didn’t even have the heart to rebuke him for the absurd attack on the brothel. He was, of course, innocent of the other charges; those were the responsibility of Vargo Hoat and the rest of the Bloody Mummers. It did not bode well that the Gold Cloaks caught him in the act, not to mention him attacking that Tarth whore. She had thought that even her son would be aware of the risks in attacking a highborn lady; the assault and killing of common whores can be ignored, since, after all, they weren’t good for much except spreading their legs for filthy men. But a hightborn maid – Cersei was sure the beast was still a maiden, for what man would ever bed such an ugly creature – was trouble indeed. Men are such base creatures, ruled by violence, absurd impulses, and their own lust. So easily controlled by women such as herself, but so unable to control their vices on their own. Still, she couldn’t help the frisson of satisfaction when she thought of her son slicing the face of the Tarth whore, as a gift for her, he’d said. The thought made her vibrate with pleasure. Now the beast would have that reminder of her undeniable ugliness plainly writ on her face for the rest of her days. No one could fall in love with her now.

She was still appalled and angry at her family for not supporting Joffrey. Imagine, all three of them wanted him to confess and go to jail. After all the years of talk about family loyalty and duty, her father seemingly ignored his own principles and refused to help. She had to spend her own
company’s money – the money she was going to use to pay father for the Baratheon debts – to finance Joffrey’s defense. This rankled her, for with those debts still outstanding, her father still had a hold over Myrcella and Tommen’s living arrangements. She had regular visits, sure, but her heart broke at the idea of her two youngest being apart from their own mother. She missed their adoration of her. How they clung to her skirts and looked at her admiringly. She could already sense them becoming more distant. The girl was suddenly busy and interested in things like books and sword fighting of all things. And Tommen was constantly playing and babbling away at his cats; if she didn’t step in, he would grow up as spineless as his fool of a father. Every time she visited the children, they seemed to barely have time for her, giving her an indifferent embrace and kiss, then returning to play with their uncles or their toys. Cersei narrowed her eyes. Turning her children’s affections from her would be the last thing anyone would do, she thought vengefully.

“Mrs. Baratheon-” Qyburn said, looking apologetic for interrupting her thoughts.

“Lannister – how many times do I have to correct you, Qyburn?” She gave him a sharp look.

“Apologies, my lady. It’s just that I must caution you about using company funds for your own personal use. I believe that’s what your late husband did-” The pale man was impossible, she thought with annoyance.

“Well, these are my companies, are they not?” She asked, demanding in her tone.

“Well, they are technically your son’s, but the effect is the same.” He said, his eyes lowered in thought.

“Exactly. If the profits can’t be used to liberate the company’s owner, then what good is it?”

“It’s just that, well, much of the funds ought to be used to maintain the factory, pay the workers, and fund needed repairs, Mrs. Lannister.”

“If money is a problem, then you must find a way to make more, Qyburn.” She wondered why everyone around her was so simpleminded.

“I’m afraid we have pushed the workers as far as we can, in terms of profits. We have already raised the prices of our fabrics. Much more and the goods won’t sell at all. Not to mention the damage in reputation that your son’s…er…legal troubles have caused the company.” The grey man said timidly.

Cersei paced back and forth. They needed more profits. “Then we must do the most effective thing to generate more money. Cut the wages. Shorten their breaks.”

“With all due respect, Mrs. Lannister – these moves will only hasten strike action and violence.” He stuck out his tongue to moisten his lips like a snake.

“Then let them strike. The workers are fools – but do you think they’d let their children starve? The strike will fail and destroy any talk of unionizing.” She stopped to think. It was a shame that they no longer had use of the Brave Companions. They could do with some intimidation and enforcement. She turned to face the thin man. “We don’t have the Brave Companions any more, but is there another party we could hire as enforcement? Of course, not with the same idiotic murderous effect as the Brave Companions.”

Qyburn hesitated. “There is a group called The Golden Company, a group of disciplined mercenaries. They are expensive, however.”

“Hire them.” Cersei said dismissively. “We have need of them.”
Qyburn nodded and bowed, leaving the room in that slimy way of his.

She yearned for Jaime then – he was always much better company than that simpering Qyburn; at least her brother made her laugh with his barbs and jests, and he also gave her pleasure in the bedroom. He was certainly better to look at. She frowned. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that she missed the Jaime from before, not this present version who was as dull and moral as a septon; Jaime, who never judged her before, seemed to be constantly judging her. He was even worse than Stannis, with his moralizing. He seemed even immune to her physical charms now, recalling with anger how his half-hard cock wilted as she was about to take him into her mouth. Yet she couldn’t dismiss the conviction that his current distaste for her was temporary; he would come back to himself soon enough, and he would come back to her bed soon enough. Still, she missed the devoted fool who would have done anything for her.

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The pericardium, the outer layers of the heart, usually was flexible and pliable enough to accommodate the movement of the beating muscle, but in the case of this particular patient whose chest was currently open on their operating table, his pericardial tissue had stiffened and become rigid, thereby impeding the progress and movement of the pumping of the heart. It was counterintuitive, to cut away the heart’s natural protective barrier, but to save the man’s life, it was what they had to do. It was a tricky operation, and Oberyn was one of the few surgeons who had successfully done it. Both she and Jon were intensely focused, watching the lead surgeon’s every movement and anticipating his needs. Not for the first time, Brienne thanked the Gods for chloroform, which eased the patient into unconsciousness; twenty years ago, this pericardial sac repair could not have been attempted. Another recent change was their use of gloves; due to the irritation from the carbolic acid which was used for sterilization, the hands of both surgeons and nurses needed to be protected. Brienne found that performing surgery with gloves was at first awkward, but she soon got used to the sensation. It surely must be best practice for infection control as well.

Later that evening, Oberyn invited his resident surgeons to celebrate the operation’s success at his apartment. It was the first time either of them had been in Oberyn’s home, and Brienne found the two-bedroom flat both modest and elegant. Everything was clean and precise, but was decorated with carvings and art from Dorne – statues and paintings of tigers and wild cats, and images of exotic and beautiful women and men in flowing silk robes. He led them through to the dining room filled with a spread of spiced, roasted meats, candied fruit, rice, and lemon roasted vegetables.

“This smells wonderful, Oberyn,” Brienne called out in wonder.

Oberyn smiled indolently. “Yes, bringing my cook from Dorne is one of the few indulgences I partook in when I came to King’s Landing. Please sit,” he said, gesturing to the chairs.

“One of my other vices is Dornish wine. Lots of it.” He poured them a large serving of Dornish white in their goblets.

Jon took a sip and looked up in surprise. “This is delicious. Possibly the best wine I’ve had.”

Brienne followed suit and had to stifle a sigh that nearly escaped her lips. The wine was, indeed, delicious: fruity, slightly sweet, and filled with summer fruit and sunshine.
Oberyn grinned, watching the two of them imbibe. “Luckily, we have a day off tomorrow. So drink all you want.”

The food was also delicious, beautifully spiced, although it might have been too spicy for Jon, judging from his red face. *Northerners,* she thought, amused.

“Only three months left in your residencies.” Oberyn stated, sipping his wine.

“I can’t believe it,” said Jon, shaking his head. “It passed by so quickly.”

Brienne nodded in agreement.

“I must say, it has been a real pleasure working with you both. You’ve been the best residents I’ve had by far.” Oberyn said, raising a glass to toast them.

“You have been the most inspiring, generous, kind teacher, Oberyn. How can we ever thank you?” Brienne exclaimed, feeling her throat constrict with emotion. She raised a toast to him.

Jon joined in, “To Oberyn. The best teacher and surgeon.” They drank deeply.

Oberyn popped a candied fig in his mouth and chewed. “We work tremendously well together, the three of us. I was reminded of that again in the operating room today. We read each other so well, like an intimate and well-worn text.” He tilted his head. “It will be a shame that we’ll likely never have that again, now that you are going your separate ways.”

“Brienne said you were going to Dorne next year for some research?” Jon asked.

“Indeed. I’m taking on a consulting role at King’s Landing Hospital and will return to my laboratory to do further research on my pet project, aortic vessel repair.” He looked at both of them. “You know, the invitation for both of you to come to Dorne is on the table. I would be lucky to have either one of you, or both of you.” He turned to Brienne. “I hope you are still considering it, Brienne.”

She nodded. “I am indeed. It is certainly at tempting offer and I could see myself in Dorne to be sure.” Oberyn smiled, pleased. “And Jon,” He turned his dark gaze to the man, “There is no convincing you?”

Jon lowered his head and shook it. “I’m afraid not. I’ve wanted to help my people in the North since I entered medical school. Not just the North, but the remote areas beyond the wall. The people are in great need of surgeons up there. People are dying needlessly because there is no one and no facility to operate.”

“How very noble. I admire your selflessness, Jon. Up North you will save innumerable lives, but you will never find fame or fortune.” Oberyn looked at him steadily.

“I understand that. But I never wanted fame or fortune, so that’s fine by me.”

“Won’t it be difficult to part with Brienne?” Oberyn gazed at him with a single raised eyebrow.

Jon started and he and Brienne looked at each other.

“Well,” Jon began hesitantly, looking at her. “If Brienne wants to come North, I would be the happiest man in the world. We could help a great number of people. And I think she would enjoy the North.”
Oberyn gave them a sharp look. “Forgive me, I seem to have misunderstood. I was under the impression that you two were…together?”

Both Brienne and Jon blushed. “We are, in a sense….” said Brienne, “But we had always known that we would part at the end of this residency….”

Oberyn nodded, smiling, “Ah, so you guarded your hearts, both of you – and though you may love each other, both of you have prevented yourselves from *falling* in love with each other.” He refilled their cups. Brienne could feel the warmth from the wine spread through her heart and head and through to the very tips of her fingers.

“I don’t know if that’s fair,” Jon protested.

Oberyn shrugged his shoulders. “The heart is a mysterious thing. But what is interesting is that you both think you can control the movements and desires of your hearts. Perhaps that is why you are not in love.” Oberyn took a large sip of wine. “But thankfully you have not denied each other physical pleasure.”

At his words, Brienne blushed fiercely. Oberyn gave her a knowing look.

He turned to Jon, who was also pink. “Dear doctor Snow, what’s this I hear about this pill you are developing with a chemist?”

Jon smiled, relaxing at the change of topic. “The moon tea pill. I guess word has gotten around. We’ve finished initial tests, and it looks promising.”

“If this is what I’m thinking – a medication to regulate the dose of moon tea for women – then it will change the world. Women will have unprecedented freedom.”

Brienne nodded eagerly. He turned to her. “You are involved in this too, Brienne?”

“Slightly. I helped with the testing phase.”

“Good.” Oberyn looked at them thoughtfully. “I have many contacts in the pharmaceutical and medical worlds. I assume you are currently looking for a buyer or distributor of your formula?”

Jon and Brienne nodded.

“There are unscrupulous sharks out there. Might I humbly suggest that you utilize the contacts I have to get you the best deal? You might also want to negotiate things like access to the drug, and perhaps keeping costs low so all women can afford the pill.”

Brienne nodded eagerly.

“Good. I will give you the contact information of a lawyer I trust. He will help you, Brienne, and your chemist friend negotiate the fine print of such a deal.”

“Thank you, Oberyn. That would be helpful.” Jon smiled, pleased.

Oberyn looked at Jon admiringly. “Perhaps I was wrong about what I said about you earlier.” He gave Jon a frank look. “Perhaps you will be rich and famous after all.”

By the end of the night, they had emptied multiple flagons of the best Dornish wine and all three of them were quite drunk, although Jon was arguably the most drunk of all.

“Sleep in the spare bedroom,” Oberyn suggested, looking at them with dark seductive eyes. “I have
no qualms about propriety or lack thereof. You’re talking to a Dornishman, remember,” he said, winking and lightly stroking Brienne’s arm. Between them, they managed to help Jon into the bed.

Oberyn reached into the closet and pulled out blue and yellow robes. “Here, sleep in this.” He looked over at the passed out Jon. “Sadly, it doesn’t look like pleasure is in the cards tonight.” His gaze fell on her face and lightly roamed down her body. “Unless you join me in my chambers, that is. You are always welcome there,” he said, holding Brienne’s hands and kissing them.

Brienne blushed. “I think I see sleeping in my future,” she said, though she must admit she was a little fascinated by Oberyn’s offer. He nodded, and gave her a Dornish kiss before leaving and closed the door. She sighed, looking over at Jon. He always drank too much. She undressed and slipped on the blue robe, which felt sinfully soft on her skin. She went over to Jon and undressed him as much as possible, leaving him in his smallclothes and putting a blanket over body. She soon slipped into bed beside him and closed her eyes. Jon nuzzled into her and wound his arm around her. The wine made her warm and happy. She felt she was swimming in a river of bliss, free from care. Sleep called to her, and she quickly let it come.

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Winter suddenly receded as February arrived, as the frigid air began to get milder, and the sun stayed for longer in the day. Brienne and Jon were busier than ever, learning new skills, and performing more surgeries on their own. Oberyn still involved them in his research and they were asked to do more when they went into major surgeries with him, but Oberyn, as with all of them, was looking forward to the next stage of their lives. In the general floor, the violence at the factories continued, along with the deteriorating conditions of its workers. Brienne wondered sometimes if this was indeed the price of progress: broken bodies, corrupted lungs, and a slow death from malnutrition and respiratory disease. Now that Joffrey was behind bars awaiting his trial, Brienne had thought the factory troubles would decrease, but they only escalated. She wondered if it was Cersei and not Joffrey who was behind the worsening conditions in the Baratheon factories.

Brienne was hard at work, trying to catch up on what she missed when she was recuperating; she was thankful that she had fully healed, but of course she still had the reminder of the scar, now a clean white line across her cheek, of her ordeal. Jon said it gave her face a certain look of a warrior, and Brienne agrees. While it made her uglier without a doubt, it gave her face a certain toughness that wasn’t there before. People stared, but they always did with her; but now, they stared at her scar instead of being appalled by her homely and manly face. She also knew she was supposed to go to Tarth to visit her father, and Tywin’s offer nagged at her in the back of her mind. She placated her father with phone calls, and described the constant activity of her life in such great detail that she was able to beg off her visit until she neared the end of her residency.

Oberyn was true to his word in recommending a lawyer for Sam and Jon; with legal counsel and savvy business advice, they were able to secure an extremely lucrative deal, as the top pharmaceutical companies saw the potential in such a drug and engaged in a bidding war for the rights. In their final negotiations, the men also ensured that the drug would be sold at a fair and accessible price. When the deal came through, both Sam and Jon would be comfortably rich; Brienne, with her share, would also have a tidy sum for her savings.

When she came home late that night, she put on her favourite record of piano etudes and sonatas, changed into a nightgown, and headed to the bathroom to get ready for bed. She was hungry, but
had no energy to cook or scrounge for food; the restaurant next door had long since closed. She shrugged; it wouldn’t be the first time she went to bed with an empty stomach. When she emerged from the bathroom, she was startled to discover the tall, blond form of Jaime Lannister standing in the hallway, leaning casually against a wall. He wore a golden robe of rich brocade which echoed the gold light in his hair and enhanced the twinkling green of his eyes.

“Jaime! You’re here.” Brienne said, surprised but breaking into a smile as soon as she saw his grin.

“Wench. You’re back late.” He raised his eyebrows.

“I’m always back late these days,” she said sheepishly.

“Jon didn’t come home with you?” Jaime asked, his voice light.

She gave him a peevish look. “No, why would he? We’re not joined at the hip, you know.”

He quirked an eyebrow. “Oh. Good to know.” He gestured toward his open door, “Won’t you come in for a second?”

She hesitated, but nodded and went into his rooms. She noticed that his flat had lost some of the heaviness that she noticed when she first visited months ago. Gone were most of the heavy red and gold fabrics. Instead, the colours were lighter, veering toward whites and blues. Her eyes landed on the bed.

“That bedspread….” Brienne said, noticing the similarity to the one that was currently on her bed.

“Is the same as yours, yes.” Jaime said, “I liked it, so I bought one for myself.” He walked to the kitchen.

“Have you eaten, Brienne?” He asked, taking out some bread, cheese, and fruit.

She looked embarrassed. “Ah, no, I just haven’t had time.” She looked at him moving about, then added, “But you don’t have to. I’m fine, really.”

“Nonsense, wench. You have to eat. I just have simple things here, bread and cheese.” He put the food down in front of her, and poured her a cup of milk from a pot on the stove. “Here.”

“Milk?” she remarked, surprised.

“Don’t knock it, wench. I even warmed it up for you.” He paused, his eyes distant. “My mother used to bring a glass of warm milk to me just before bed when I was a child. I often have it when I’m in need of…comforting.”

She smiled softly at him, imagining him as a boy; she thought he might have looked a lot like Tommen when he was a child. She began to eat, and as soon as she put food in her mouth, she realized how ravenous she was, and ate with gusto, paying scant attention to proper table manners. Jaime looked on with amused eyes, a pleased smirk on his face. His eyes then traveled down her neck and skimmed her collarbones and shoulders, to her bare, freckled arms, and he stared at the top of her exposed chest. She looked down, and all of a sudden realized that she was in her thin white nightgown, which was sleeveless and left much of her chest and shoulders exposed. She blushed.

“I’m so sorry, I should have covered up, I-”

“Why are you sorry, wench? You forget that I’ve seen much more of you.” He smiled like a lion
eyeing its prey.

She blushed even deeper. She had indeed forgotten that he’d seen the whole of her, the *naked* whole of her, and even carried her to bed. She felt a flush of annoyance and anger.

“It’s not very gentlemanly of you to bring that up.”

“Ah, wench, would I were a gentleman.” He stared at her.

“You’re really impossible, you know that?” He was deliberately trying her patience. Yet again.

“I believe you’ve reminded me of that, many times.” His eyes were lit with merriment. She felt a familiar irritation. He was really impossible sometimes. She got up to leave.

He rushed toward her in a second, his expression turned pleading. “Look, don’t go yet. I’m sorry. Please.”

He grabbed her hand and held it to his lips. “Come, sit down,” he said, reaching to guide her by the waist. His hand on her hip was steady and warm. They sat down on the settee.

“I’ve been wanting to see you for days, Brienne.” Jaime said, his expression sincere. “I wanted to ask if you would come this Sunday to the house – Tommen and Myrcella miss you. We could even spar, and I might even let you win.”

“Let me win? As if.” Brienne scoffed. She looked at Jaime, who looked at her expectantly.

“You could even bring that Jon Snow if he’s free,” Jaime offered with a slight scowl.

Brienne laughed. “What is going on with you two? You don’t like Jon, do you?”

Jaime frowned. “It’s not that I don’t *like* him, wench. He’s fine, he’s a good sort, and I see how well he treats you.” He paused, thinking. “Well, it’s like two big fish who want to live in the same pond, but each one doesn’t like the other to live in the same pond with them. You know?” He furrowed his brow.

Brienne gave him a puzzled look. “Not really. Why can’t the two fish live in the same pond. Isn’t it big enough? Don’t ponds generally have more than one fish in them?”

“Well, no. Only one fish can live in the pond. It would be too weird to have them live in the same pond, wench.”

“But why is that? All the ponds I know have more than one fish in it. Wait. Is the pond King’s Landing? You and Jon are the fish? This is a metaphor? I’m confused.”

“Forget about what I said about the pond, wench. As I said, bring your Jon Snow if you want on Sunday. Or even better yet, come on your own. I would love to have you all to myself.”

“And the children,” she reminded him.

“Yes, yes, wench.” He rolled his eyes. “You do like correcting me, don’t you?”

She laughed. He grinned back. “Wait here.” Jaime left and rummaged through a drawer, bringing out a rectangular box the size of a book; it was wrapped with blue paper and had gold ribbon around it.

He handed it to her.
She looked at him in surprise. “What is this, Jaime? Is this for me?”

He nodded. “Open it.”

She took her time, gingerly undoing the ribbon and unfolding the paper. She lifted the box and inside she saw a dark red leather roll. “Jaime. You shouldn’t have!”

She knew what it was, but she was astonished at the quality of the leather, which was soft, strong and supple. She unrolled it and found a beautifully made set of surgical scalpels, each one gleaming and finely crafted. She let out a gasp, noticing the rippled shine of the blades. “Is this Valyrian steel? It’s too much! I can’t accept this.”

Jaime nodded. “I wanted to replace the blades that you lost that terrible day, since it was partially my fault. It took them longer than expected to make. But I hope you put them to good use, wench.”

“Jaime, that’s nonsense about that day being in any way your fault.” She looked at him with bright blue eyes. “But this is beautiful.” She looked up at him through lowered eyes. “Thank you.”

She flung her arms around his neck and hugged him. His arms drew her close and held her tight, and she felt his body relax. She impulsively planted a kiss on his cheek and drew away. Then he leaned forward to kiss her on her left cheek, her scarred cheek. She felt heat flood her face. He held her cheek and caressed the fine scar, his fingers soothing and warm. He trailed his other hand up and down her bare arm, making her shiver.

“Jaime,” she said, her voice low. “Thank you.” She reached and held both of his hands for a moment, and let them go. She slowly stood up to leave.

“You’re welcome, Brienne.” Jaime said, his voice soft. “What are friends for?” He gave her a long, lingering kiss on the cheek, making her insides flutter. She felt the same strangeness of feeling – a pleasant, but profoundly unsettling sensation – settle in her chest, whenever Jaime touched her. She was beginning to realize how much his physical presence affected her, how his touch seemed to ignite parts of her she didn’t even know were there. But this thing that seemed to emerge between them confused her and scared her a little.

“Good night,” she said, as she slowly left, closing his door.

Chapter End Notes

Well, what do you think about this chapter? Let me know in the comments. I love all comments, little or long.

Kudos if you like! Thanks to those that have already left them.
A Contest

Chapter Summary

Just a lazy Sunday afternoon with Brienne, Jaime, and Jon....

Chapter Notes

Loved your comments, and my goodness, Jaime has totally won you readers over.

I hope you like this chapter! However, it contains a couple of paragraphs in the second part that some of you might want to skim, ok? You'll know when you reach it.

Next chapter: a change of pace.

“That’s good,” Jon said, his shirtsleeves rolled up and dark curls flopping over his eyes. “Arms close to the body.” He stood next to Myrcella, demonstrating a parry, completely oblivious to the young girl’s wide eyes and overeager smile that shone upon his dark brow.

“Like this, Jon?” She said, looking at him with a lovelorn expression. He nodded, then adjusted her arm a tad higher. The girl blushed.

“Myrcella certainly is besotted by Jon,” Brienne said, giggling at the sight of the girl’s slack-jawed awe of the handsome man, who seemed to take on his temporary role of instructor quite seriously, as he demonstrated attacks and dodges with a brooding charm. She was sitting on a blanket on the grass with Jaime and Tommen, who was characteristically playing with his kittens. It was a mild late February day, warm enough to sit outside with a coat on. You could almost smell spring in the air.

“Hmmm,” replied Jaime, narrowing his eyes at the man. “He is a rather pretty face.”

Brienne rolled her eyes and gave him a playful thwack on the arm. “Jaime! Don’t be ridiculous. Jon is much more than a pretty face.”

“If you say so, wench.” Jaime laid out on the blanket, arms under his head, looking every bit like the epitome of a lazy nobleman.

She could tell Jaime had been surprised when she showed up with Jon in tow, but was nevertheless a gracious host; for some reason, Jon insisted on coming, saying that he’d wanted to see the children and possibly talk to Tywin. However, Tywin and Tyrion were unfortunately out, paying a dreaded visit to Joffrey along with Cersei at the city jail.
Meanwhile, the kittens Ser Pounce and Boots were fighting, wrestling on the grass and mock biting each other. Tommen looked at both of them. “Ser Pounce and Boots like to spar. Sometimes it’s when one annoys the other, but sometimes it’s for no reason at all.”

Brienne laughed, observing the kittens rolling around on the grass. “They don’t really mean it though, Tommen. They seem to be just playing.”

“Oh I know they’re not serious.” Tommen leaned in confidentially and whispered, “But I think it’s really because they both like Lady Whiskers and want to court her and marry her.”

Jaime smiled. “I think they are much too young to think about marriage, Tommen.”

“That’s true, I guess.” He screwed up his face. “People shouldn’t get married any way.”

Brienne looked at him curiously. “Why is that, Tommen?” Jaime leaned toward him with interest.

“Mother was married and she wasn’t happy. Married people always yell at each other, don’t they?” Tommen looked up at her with large green eyes.

“I don’t think it has to be that way, Tommen. I think it depends on the people.”

“Do you think I’ll ever get married?” The boy asked, smiling shyly. Brienne’s heart felt a pang; he was such a sweet boy.

“Well, only if find someone you really love and only if you really want to. If you do, you’ll probably be really happy because you’re such a wonderful person.” Tommen gave her a tender, needy expression, and launched himself into her arms.

“Maybe I’ll marry you because you’re such a wonderful person too, Brienne.” He murmured into her shoulder. She quickly glanced at Jaime, who was watching them with a warm but inscrutable expression on his face.

“Well, thank you, Tommen. But I’m probably a little too old for you.” She smiled down at him. “I’m sure you’ll meet a person as lovely as you and then you’ll want to get married.”

Tommen extricated himself from her arms and went to his uncle. “Uncle Jaime, aren’t you ever going to get married? Aren’t you already pretty old?”

Brienne laughed uproariously, looking at him slyly.

Jaime turned pink, much to Brienne’s amusement. “Uh, well, Tommen. I suppose it’s about time that I get married. Perhaps?” Jaime eked out, looking slightly panicked.

“Tommen, look, you’ve made Uncle Jaime all pink. Let’s change the subject and stop embarrassing him.” Brienne declared, laughter in her voice.

“What embarrassed Jaime?” Jon idly asked, plopping himself down next to Brienne. Myrcella gracefultly sank into an elegant seat next to her uncle.

“Nothing.” Jaime said quickly. Little Tommen looked at Jaime mischievously, then at his sister.

“I know Myrcella wants to marry Jon Snow,” announced Tommen loudly.
“Tommen!” Myrcella squealed at her brother, turning beet red, hiding her face in Jaime’s shoulder.

“I might be a little too old for your sister,” Jon said kindly, smiling at the girl. “But I’m sure whomever your sister chooses will be a worthy gentleman.” The girl gave him a grateful, shy smile.

Tommen looked at Jon to Brienne. “Aren’t you two the same age? Maybe you two should get married!”

“All right, Tommen,” Jaime quickly interjected, “Enough of your matchmaking for today.”

Tommen shrugged and resumed playing with the kittens. Jaime looked over at Jon. “I was watching you helping Myrcella. Your form is decent.”

Jon smiled crookedly. “I don’t practice very often, so I’ll take that as a compliment.”

Myrcella looked from Jon to Jaime. “Who’s better, Uncle Jaime: you or Jon?”

Tommen paused thoughtfully. “I think Uncle Jaime would win. He’s a soldier after all, and has more experience.”

“That’s true,” said Myrcella. “But Jon is tons younger than Uncle Jaime. Uncle Jaime might be too old.”

Brienne could not help laughing. Both Jon and Jaime looked miffed, which made her laugh even harder. Soon the children joined in on the laughter.

“Why don’t the two of you spar?” Tommen suggested eagerly. “We can see who’s right, me or Myrcella.”

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea,” said Brienne.

“I’m game, if Jon is willing,” said Jaime. “But I have significantly more experience and skill so I’ll likely beat him.”

“But I think Myrcella has a point.” Jon countered, “What are you, ten, fifteen years older than me?”

Jaime narrowed his eyes. “Let’s choose our weapons, then.”

“Let’s go.” Jon said, getting up quickly.

“Gentlemen,” Brienne said, “This is really not a good idea.”

“Nonsense, wench.” Smiled Jaime, “What’s a little sparring between friends?”

“Don’t worry Brienne,” said Jon, winking at her, “I’ll go easy on the old man.”

They chose their blunted swords, and eyed each other up and down. Jaime quickly attacked, not holding back from the very first, and Jon, surprised and set back on his heels, blocked the swift blows with difficulty. They circled each other, and Jon thrust his sword, narrowly missing Jaime’s arm. They went back and forth, attacking and defending, each blow harder than the former, each
one not holding back. She had never seen Jon so ferocious. Both were breathing hard and sweating. With a shout Jon attacked and Jaime swerved, avoiding the hard blow and hitting Jon’s sword with such force that it clattered on the ground. Jon, shocked, lunged at Jaime and tackled him onto the grass, disarming him. Brienne cried out in alarm along with the children. The men were rolling on the ground now, wrestling, with each one trying to get the upper hand. Soon enough they were throwing punches at each other and the whole thing resembled less a spar than a street brawl. Exasperated, Brienne ran toward them and threw herself between the pair, nearly getting punched herself.

“For God’s sake, stop!” She yelled, pushing both of them away from each other. Jon and Jaime collapsed on the ground, thankfully away from each other, completely breathless.

“Of all the stupidest, idiotic things I’ve ever seen…” Brienne shouted at both of them.

“I really do agree,” said Tyrion, who suddenly showed up, followed by Tywin, whose eyebrows were raised at the sight. “Really the most idiotic things I’ve witnessed, personally.”

Tywin looked at them, then at the giggling children, then at Brienne. He frowned disapprovingly. Tyrion cleared his throat. “While I hate to break up this…uh…melee, I must warn you that Cersei is on her way to see the children and will be arriving within five minutes.”

“We had to take the shortcut and go very fast,” Tywin helpfully added. “It was all rather unpleasant.”

Brienne sat up and so did Jon, who looked like he would sport some bruises. Jaime looked pretty beat up as well.

“You must go.” Declared Jaime, his voice urgent, scrambling to his feet. They both quickly gathered their things.

“Take my carriage,” called Tyrion after them.

And so they did, Jon taking Brienne’s hand as they scrambled into Tyrion’s carriage, running away like thieves.

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“You’re a doctor, Jon.” Brienne said, putting an iced compress to Jon’s eye. “You should refrain from such juvenile behavior.” She shook her head, examining his cut lip and black eye. Jon pouted, his split lip red and swollen.

“You’re lucky you didn’t break your nose – or your hand.” She put some balm on his cut and bruised knuckles.

Jon gave her a brooding look. “I must admit, things got a little out of hand.”

“A little? You were brawling like drunkards in front of the children.” Brienne exclaimed.

Jon scowled. “It was as much his fault as much as mine.”

She fumed, looking at him menacingly. “I don’t care whose fault it was, it was a bloody stupid
thing to do.” She shook her head. “I don’t get you two.”

“Well, I’m tired of him flirting with you right in front of me. It’s disrespectful.” Jon said, glowering and touching his lip, wincing in pain as he did so.

Brienne laughed. “You must be crazy that you think Jaime is flirting with me.”

He gave her an incredulous look. “Brienne, you must be the most clueless person when it comes to the opposite sex that I’ve ever met.”

She shook her head, glaring at him in protest. “Just because I don’t think every man I meet finds me attractive doesn’t mean I lack the faculties to determine if someone is interested in me in that way.”

Jon sighed in frustration, and leaned forward, cupping her cheek in his hand. “Brienne, when will you realize how wonderful and lovely and gorgeous you are?”

Her face softened as she looked in his clear grey eyes. She smiled at him, annoyance at him replaced by affection and tenderness. “Hmmm. You are just too sweet.” She paused. “I’m lucky that you see me that way.”

She looked at him reproachfully. “But you must make up with Jaime, and try to be friends with him. He’s been so kind and good to me. Please?”

Jon let out a loud exhale but nodded. “I will apologize.” He smiled faintly. “I suppose it was a little idiotic to fight him over a maiden like in the storybooks.”

Brienne chuckled. “I believe that fight had less to do with me than your egos and masculinity, and also about who has the better hair.”

Jon smiled, chagrined. “I have the better hair, right?” He turned to her, serious. “I’m sorry.” He gave her a gentle kiss, then winced at the pain.

“I guess that’s my punishment. I can’t kiss you.” Jon said in a disappointed tone.

“Ah, but I can kiss you,” said Brienne, and she proceeded to do so, planting kisses all over Jon’s uninjured face, neck, shoulders, chest and beyond, as she carefully undressed him. He writhed and moaned under her ministrations. She took him in her mouth again, with Jon letting out a surprised gasp, and soon brought him to near shouting with pleasure, as he shuddered and released inside her throat.

After he recovered, Jon stroked her naked body from top to toe and used his surgeon’s hands, with their long, sensitive fingers, to probe and rub and enter the hot core of her, until she too, was mindlessly moaning his name in her pleasure. They fell into each other’s embrace, sweating and warm. Jon kissed her, and winced, forgetting his split lip. But he kissed her again, regardless of the pain.

“Jon,” she said, looking into his eyes.

“I know,” he said.

“It’s been a long time. Not since….” Brienne was ashamed to realize that they hadn’t been intimate like this since her attack, well over a month ago. They had kissed, and touched, and slept in the same bed, but she had never felt right to go beyond that until now.
“I’m sorry it’s been so long…I just didn’t feel right.” She said softly.

“Brienne,” Jon said gently, as he lightly stroked her hair and face. “Don’t ever apologize. There is nothing, nothing to be sorry for. You went through something awful, and of course you might not feel comfortable sexual situations.” He pulled her close and hugged her tight. She relaxed into his embrace, feeling the warmth of his understanding and compassion.

“I’m here for you, whether you want to kiss me or not, or be intimate or not, or if you just want to be just friends. I’m here for you even if you fall in love with someone else and decide to run away with him.” Jon said with fervor and a touch of sadness. Their separation loomed above them like a cloud. This, whatever they had that was so lovely and comforting and fun, would soon be at an end. “I just love all of you, every bit of you, my dear Ostrich.”

“And I love every little bit of you. Dear Jon!” She exclaimed, tightening her arms around him, at that moment, unwilling to believe that he’d be gone from her life sooner than later.

Chapter End Notes

So yeah, Jon and Brienne are still fooling around. But they are ending, so it's still kinda nice, even though Jaime is coming on strong? Also, I think it's good that Brienne has Jon to work out any issues she has from the trauma she endured. Let Brienne have her fun while it lasts...(But confession: I did make it not very smutty on purpose. Just a bit smutty, lol.)

So send me your thought in the comments section! What did you think about the sparring? Also who has the better hair, Jon or Jaime?

Kudos if you like, and thank you to those who have already hit that button!

Thanks for reading!
"Jaime," Cersei said, her golden curls loose down her shoulders and framing her angelic-looking face. “You can’t be serious about testifying in court.” She arranged the skirts of her white dress and walked toward him, her hips swaying alluringly. His sister had continued to wear her black mourning clothes while out in public, but in private had abandoned those conventions; it wasn’t as if she would fool them, he thought cynically.

“I intend to do my duty, Cersei.” He sighed, putting the book he was looking at away on the table. Again, she had found him hiding in the library. He must find a new hiding place next time, he thought to himself.

“Your duty? What about your duty to your family? To your lover? To your son?” Cersei pleaded, her voice catching in her throat. “You’re supposed to protect us.” Her eyes glistened with tears. She tugged her bodice down a little, so the tops of her breasts were displayed. He was surprised at his own indifference to the sight of his sister. Oh, she was beautiful, and would likely remain so for the rest of her days, but those eyes and teats were not the ones he dreamed about of late, he thought wryly.

“Look, Cersei, I understand that you love Joffrey and want to save him. But what he has done is beyond saving. He and his thugs have killed and hurt innocents. I’m sorry, but he needs to be away from society.” Jaime said resignedly, bracing himself for a fight. Years ago, a fight with her would have heated his blood, as they always invariably ended up wildly fucking. But now, he anticipated it with weariness. Why hadn’t he ever realized how exhausting being around his sister really was?

“That’s all lies! Our enemies want to break our family apart. They’re jealous. Joffrey is innocent.” She allowed a tear to fall dramatically from her eye, her hands clasped in front of her. Dressed in
white, she resembled a maiden in the knightly stories they used to read when they were children.

Jaime shook his head, disbelieving. “Sister, you forget that I was there, and saw Joffrey in action. There was no boy there; I saw a monster. Believe me, Cersei, this is the only thing to do.” He paled at the memory of the red cuts all over Ros’ chest; the deep gash on the wench’s cheek. A gift, the boy had said to the wench. *From Cersei.*

She snarled at him then. “Is this about your precious *wench*? Has she got such a magic cunt that you would sacrifice your own son? Or has she gotten her fingers around your withered heart? How can you even *like* her now that she’s gotten even uglier?” Cersei’s voice was cutting, her expression sharp and fiery. His sister never liked anyone taking her things, even the things she discarded, threw away, and had no more use of.

“Once again, sister, her name is Brienne.” He sighed, having heard enough. Jaime got up and started to walk away. “And I’m not going to stay here and listen to another word from a deluded madwoman.”

He closed the door and shortly heard the hard thud of a book being thrown. Jaime shook his head and started walking.

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Addam leaned toward her and looked at her in the eye, his gaze assessing. “I must warn you, the defense will likely be hard on you. Any secrets, any skeletons in your closet will be exposed for all the world to see.” They were in his office, all wood and leather, the sound of telephones ringing in the background.

Brienne nodded, nervous but determined. “I understand. Though I’m not sure if my past warrants such intense scrutiny. My life was really quite uneventful until all this.”

The detective nodded, then gave her a penetrating look. “I also must warn you that they will probe any current personal connections you have – any relationships, any hint of scandal.”

“I understand.” She paused. “I know my friendships with men can be perceived as unusual. In this society, it’s not deemed proper for a young lady to be in the company alone with men, as I have. But I have nothing to be ashamed of. They can ask me questions, but they will not break me.” She raised her chin resolutely, her blue eyes intent and focused.

Addam smiled, leaning back into his chair. “Good, good. Lawyers can be evil bastards, so I just thought I’d give you fair warning.”

Brienne smiled. “I appreciate that.”

Addam’s gaze softened, and he leaned forward. “And are you well, Dr. Tarth? I hope you are sufficiently recovered from the events?” He paused, giving her a frank glance. “You really do look well, I must add.”

Brienne blushed a little. “I am healthy, both in body and mind. And thankfully, I’m back at my surgical residency, and it is as if nothing happened.”

She gathered her things to go. “Thank you for asking. And thank you for your reassurances,
Detective Marbrand.”

He stood up as she did. “You must call me Addam, Dr. Tarth. I must say that it has been a pleasure to have met you, and to have worked with you. One does not run into individuals of your caliber every day, doctor.”

“Thank you Addam. You must call me Brienne as well. In any case, your praise is far too generous; I’m not half as exceptional as you make me out to be.” She shook his hand. He held it, and brought her hand to his lips in a brief kiss.

She left his office, feeling determined yet a little nervous for the trial.

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Dispatches from the trial of Mr. Joffrey Baratheon

By Varys

Day 14

Crowds lined up since early morning for a pivotal day in the March trial of eighteen-year-old Joffrey Baratheon of Baratheon Industries. Alas, only a select number of the public was allowed inside to witness today’s proceedings, which featured the star witness testimony by the heroine of the whole disturbing, sordid affair. As the public is well aware, the young and handsome Mr. Baratheon is accused of multiple counts of murder, rape, assault, and attempted murder, and since the trial began two weeks ago, the public has seen witness after witness describe in lurid detail the shocking actions of Baratheon and his gang, known as The Brave Companions (known colloquially as ‘The Bloody Mummers’). However, today’s testimony was crucial in connecting the young magnate to his crimes. This intrepid reporter had a front row seat to all of the events that happened.

Dr. Brienne Tarth, the first woman surgeon in Westeros and daughter of the Evenstar of Tarth, came onto the stand dressed in a somber dark grey suit dress. She elicited gasps as she walked into the courtroom, both for her incredible height of over six feet tall, and her pale and unique elegance. The moment she stepped into the courtroom, she had the audience in thrall. She withstood the defense’s bruising questioning with calm and ease, and described in horrifying detail how young Mr. Baratheon took a knife and cut a poor prostitute who worked at the brothel, and how he then choked the woman while trying to achieve his pleasure (this particular salacious detail had women in the stands fainting with shock). The doctor then described how she bravely killed the two villains who were confining her and saved the poor woman who was nearly strangled to death by Mr. Baratheon. The long white scar on her face told of the tale of her own maiming at the hands of the accused. Unable to see a hole in her story, the defense took a dastardly track. What follows is a transcript of a little of what transpired during questioning.

Defense counsel: Miss Tarth, what were you doing at a brothel on this particular day?
Doctor Tarth: It’s Doctor Tarth.

Defense counsel: My apologies. Doctor Tarth, could you tell the court why you were at a brothel?

Doctor Tarth: I was picking up information for a study I’m involved in. I was also tending to the health concerns of a few of the women there.

Defense counsel: And do you associate with prostitutes on a regular basis?

Doctor Tarth: Counselor, they are women, not prostitutes. I’m proud to say that a few of them are friends, yes.

Defense counsel: And you see nothing wrong with a highborn lady such as yourself being friends with prostitutes, in general?

Doctor Tarth: I do not.

Defense counsel: Dr. Tarth, would you say you have frequent interactions with men?

Doctor Tarth: I don’t know what you mean.

Defense counsel: My apologies for being unclear. Is it true you’ve spent a great deal of time alone with men, unchaperoned?

Doctor Tarth: I would say so. I am a doctor, and being a doctor necessitates spending time alone with men. As male doctors spend time alone with women.

Defense counsel: But beyond that, doctor, do you socialize frequently with men alone?

Doctor Tarth: I have male friends that I spend time with, yes.

Defense counsel: And do some of those friends stay overnight at your rooms?

Doctor Tarth: Why is this relevant?

Defense counsel: It’s just that a certain young gentleman has been seen entering your rooms at night and leaving in the morning. Is that inaccurate?

Doctor Tarth: I don’t know who has seen what, counselor.

Defense counsel: And could you please tell the court about the study with which you are involved?

Doctor Tarth: Certainly. It’s a test of moon tea pills. If taken daily, it provides regular doses of a medication to prevent unwanted pregnancy in women. Much like the moon tea, but in a more reliable dosage and form.

Defense counsel: Allowing women to have relations with men without the consequence of pregnancy?

Doctor Tarth: That is the idea, yes.

Defense counsel: And tell me, doctor, you are on these pills yourself?
**Doctor Tarth:** I am.

**Defense counsel:** And the reason you are on these pills is to presumably test their effectiveness in preventing pregnancy?

**Doctor Tarth:** No, to test its safety and side effects. It seemed only fair that I test the pills myself when I’m asking other women to do it as well.

**Defense counsel:** You are not using the pills for pregnancy prevention.

**Doctor Tarth:** No, not currently.

**Defense counsel:** Are you a maiden, doctor?

**Doctor Tarth:** That hardly seems pertinent.

[There is a sidebar with the judge.]

**Defense counsel:** Surely it’s important if we are to believe your testimony. The other witnesses in to this particular event are prostitutes. Surely you cannot begrudge the court from evaluating your moral virtue.

**Doctor Tarth:** I wasn’t aware that one’s profession is tied to how frequently one lies.

**Defense counsel:** I repeat. Are you a maiden, doctor?

**Doctor Tarth:** Let it be on record that I object to this reasoning. But if it is important to my testimony, I will answer. I am still a maiden, counselor. Now I hope you ask the same thing of all the men here testifying, if it as important to moral virtue as you say.

With those words, the proud doctor concluded her testimony. Throughout, the enchanting doctor was steadfast, calm and displayed an intelligence that puzzled and confounded the defense. Even more than that, the court was buzzing with the news of the existence of a new moon tea pill, especially among the women in the courtroom. And excited twittering floated over the courtroom. Rumor has it that this medication will be widely available to the public later this year.

This reporter, along with many others in the courtroom, had to refrain from breaking into applause as the heroine witness left the stand, leaving the audience in awe of the statuesque maiden with the most beautiful eyes in all of Westeros.

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**Dispatches from the trial of Mr. Joffrey Baratheon**

*By Varys*

**Day 15**
Day 15 in the shocking trial of young Joffrey Baratheon saw the accused’s uncle, Captain Jaime Lannister, come to the stand in outrageous and compelling testimony. The Captain, the twin to Cersei Baratheon, the mother of the accused, came into the courtroom in uniform amid murmurs of appreciation for his appearance. He is said to be the most handsome man in Westeros and it seems that few people in the courtroom would disagree with that assertion. While the captain has had his own set of troubles in the death of Aerys Targaryen twenty years ago, earning the scandalous moniker of The Kingslayer, he has since led military campaigns throughout Westeros and achieved the reputation as a fair and respected military commander. Nevertheless, constant rumors swirl about his bachelor status; some say he is married to the military; other say that he is involved in a decades-long secret affair with a married woman.

The Captain’s testimony concerned the attack and takeover of the brothel by the accused and his gang, the Brave Companions. His words were frank and disturbing, as he related how he learned of the attack, and told the court what he saw when he came to the rescue when he entered with the Gold Cloaks. His testimony confirmed the narratives of the other prosecution witnesses, and the way he described discovering Dr. Tarth being attacked brought a tear to this reporter’s eyes.

When it came to the cross-examination by the Defense, their strategy soon became clear. This reporter is again astonished at the questions that were allowed in the questioning of the witness. Below is a partial transcript of the cross-examination.

Defense Counsel: Captain Lannister, did you see young Joffrey attack anyone?

Captain Lannister: No I did not, as he was cowering in fear in the corner with his member out.

[Shocked gasps from the gallery. The judge calls for order in the court.]

Defense Counsel: But you just saw Mr. Gregor Clegane attack Dr. Tarth when you came into the room, correct? And not my client?

Captain Lannister: Correct.

Defense Counsel: Tell me, where were you in the immediate aftermath of the brothel incident? Were you with your family?

Captain Lannister: No, I was not. I was at the hospital.

Defense Counsel: Why were you at the hospital, Captain?

Captain Lannister: I wanted to make sure everyone was all right.

Defense Counsel: Everyone meaning Dr. Tarth?

Captain Lannister: Including her, yes.

Defense Counsel: And were you with your family in the week after the incident?

Captain Lannister: I was not.

Defense Counsel: Where were you, Captain Lannister?

Captain Lannister: I was helping to take care of Dr. Tarth.
Defense Counsel: In her rooms, alone?

Captain Lannister: Well, sometimes, yes.

Defense Counsel: And what is the exact nature of your relationship with Dr. Tarth, to compel you to ignore your family at a time of crisis for nearly a week?

Captain Lannister: We’re friends.

Defense Counsel: Are you courting? Betrothed? Are you lovers?

Captain Lannister: No, we are not.

Defense Counsel: Are you saying you want the court to believe that you stayed by a single woman’s side for nearly a week just because you are friends?

Captain Lannister: Believe it or not, it’s the truth.

Defense Counsel: This Dr. Tarth must be a remarkable woman to inspire such devotion in one such as yourself.

Captain Lannister: Indeed, she is. Undeniably.

Defense Counsel: Have you had intimate relations with Dr. Tarth, Captain? We have witnesses that have seen you riding together in carriages.

Captain Lannister: I believe I’ve already answered your question, but again, no, I have not had intimate relations with Dr. Tarth. And as for riding together in carriages, we are friends, as I said.

Defense Counsel: Are you in love with Dr. Tarth?

Captain Lannister: What does this have to do with anything, Counselor?

Defense Counsel: I’m merely establishing that there is a conflict of interest, that you might want to misconstrue facts in support of the woman you love.

Captain Lannister: What I’ve said today is the truth. There is no conflict of interest here.

Defense Counsel: And are you in love with Dr. Tarth? Remember, Captain, you are under oath.

Captain Lannister: [Addresses judge] Do I have to answer that? [Judge nods]

Defense Counsel: Now, Captain Lannister, for the final time, are you in love with Dr. Brienne Tarth?

Captain Lannister: [Long pause] Yes. Yes, I am.

Now at this admission, this intrepid reporter must admit to swooning in his seat, along with all of the women sitting in the courtroom and gallery. A collective feminine sigh was said to have filled the cavernous room. However, despite the mass melting of hearts at the love confession, this reporter did notice that the defendant’s mother, Cersei Baratheon, looked positively furious, and glared daggers at the witness as he left the stand, his stature as proud as a lion. However, the rest
of the family, Tywin and Tyrion Lannister looked quite amused at the turn of events. Indeed, the shift to romance seemed to have temporarily overtaken the criminal trial, as all of Westeros is asking, “Does she love him back?”

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Dispatches from the trial of Mr. Joffrey Baratheon

By Varys

Day 21

After only a day’s deliberation, the jury sent news that they had reached a verdict. This morning, the accused, handsome and golden in a somber black suit, looked nervous, fidgeting in his seat. Behind him sat the family: Cersei Baratheon, the mother; Tywin Lannister, the grandfather; Tyrion and Jaime Lannister, uncles to the accused. The courtroom was packed with members of the public, investigators, and individuals associated with the case.

Throughout the trial, the public heard from key witnesses, including Dr. Brienne Tarth, Ros Snow, Captain Jaime Lannister, along with members of the former Brave Companions, Urswyck and Zollo, both of whom plead guilty and made a deal with the prosecution in exchange for their testimony of events. Vargo Hoat and Gregor Clegane, Baratheon’s close associates, were found guilty by the court a month prior. In this reporter’s eyes, the accused stood guilty of his crimes. However, the question of his sanity was rarely a subject brought up by the witnesses. The defense called to the stand a doctor, Dr. Pycelle of King’s Landing hospital, who testified that the accused may have had out of body experiences where he did not know right from wrong. His mother too, attributed Mr. Baratheon’s violent impulses as a boy as bouts of temporary insanity. Both sides being presented, the task was up for the group of men on the jury to decide the young man’s fate.

The jury filed in, one by one, each man looking haggard and tired from the strain of the trial, each one feeling the heaviness of his duty, having a young man’s life in their capable hands. Soon, the judge entered and asked the jury for their verdict. The jury foreman, a stooped, tall gentleman of about sixty years of age, announced the decision in a loud and clear voice: guilty on all counts. Shocked gasps and applause rang throughout the courtroom as people rose to their seats; Cersei Lannister collapsed in her father’s arms, as her brothers looked down sadly. The accused widened his eyes in shock and turned to look at his mother, saying words to her.

The judge called the court to order, as people settled and sat back down. Judge Tycho Nestoris announced the mandatory sentence for cases of capital murder: the accused is sentenced to death by hanging. Cersei Lannister let out a cry, as the rest of the family sat stone faced. The crown rumbled and there were a few isolated claps. However, the atmosphere was serious, as it is never pleasant to hear that a person is going to die. The guilty party turned to his mother, tears streaming down his face, and embraced her. Before the guards led him away, Joffrey Baratheon turned to his Uncles, Captain Jaime Lannister and Tyrion Lannister and sneered, addressing them quietly in an angry tone.

So ends the trial of the year, a shocking conclusion to months of King’s Landing being terrorized and afraid, where fishermen were nervous about pulling up their catch in case it included a
severed foot or hand, and where women were targeted and tortured and people killed. It was a winter of terror and violence. It is the hope of the Westerosi Times that with the capture and sentencing of criminals such as Joffrey Baratheon, spring will bring peace and a return of happier times in our embattled city.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think of the chapter in the comments! I didn't want to go into lengthy trial proceedings, since I'm not too familiar with the criminal proceedings back in the 1900's despite my very shallow research.

Kudos if you like, and thanks for those who have already done so. Love!

Thanks for reading.
“Well, brother. You performed a miracle and made a murder trial into a story about your love life.” Tyrion chuckled. “Really, how do you do it?” He sipped a glass of wine as he sprawled in a comfortable armchair.

Jaime scowled. “What was I supposed to do, lie? Commit perjury?” He chewed his lip. “Why the defense went there I don’t quite know.” He was perturbed, and more than a little riled up at his admission in front of the court. It had been a week since it happened, and he’d been deliberately avoiding the wench. He idly wondered if she noticed he wasn’t around.

“To prove your honour is compromised, of course, you being the Kingslayer and all. Our sister obviously thought you two were more than friends, to take that strategy. But she learned that not only were you not sleeping with Brienne, but also that you’re in love with her. You should have seen her face. I would not have traded that blessed vision for all the gold in Casterly Rock.” Tyrion laughed, throwing his head back.

Jaime looked at the Westerosi Times open in his hands. “I can’t believe it. Everything I said was published here.” Tyrion stared at him with an amused expression.

He looked up from the paper and toward his brother and ran his fingers through his hair nervously. “Oh gods, she’ll know.”

Tyrion guffawed. “Brother, the whole of Westeros knows.” He raised his eyebrows. “But they are all cheering for you, you know.”

Jaime frowned, rubbing his forehead back and forth with his palm. “How can I ever face her? What do I say to her? She thinks we’re just friends.”
“Just relax. If I know Brienne, she won’t believe that you’re in love with her.” Tyrion nodded his head reassuringly.

“What?” He looked at his brother, confused. “I testified under oath.”

Tyrion looked at his brother. “For such an intelligent, sensitive human being, Brienne is rather blind when it comes to believing that men like her. Trust me. She’ll have an excuse to explain it away.”

Brienne was one issue; he had no idea how to face her. His sister was quite another problem altogether. Although the verdict was not unexpected – from the testimonies and the evidence presented, it was clear as day that Joffrey was guilty and in his right mind when committing the crimes. He may have been sick in his own way, but he was fully sane when hurting those people. Cersei however, was understandably distraught and angry, refusing to leave her rooms at the Red Keep. Asking for Jaime. A part of him wanted to go to her; after all, she was his twin, but he did not want to be dragged into her clutches yet again. She would plead and cry and try to resume their sexual relationship, he knew. He wouldn’t be surprised if she greeted him naked as her nameday. But he refused to spend time alone with her. Part of him felt guilty for abandoning his sister when she needed him most, but a greater part of him felt a profound relief and freedom in it. Surely twenty years is enough devotion for one lifetime?

Tywin appeared in the sitting room. He went directly to the bar and poured himself a drink.

“How fares our sister?” Tyrion asked, eyebrows raised.

The vein on his father’s temple throbbed, but outwardly, he showed no sign of emotion. “As well as can be expected. Dr. Pycelle is with her, and he is keeping her moderately sedated for now.”

“The Merryweather woman is also with her,” He added, referring to one of her new acolytes who had become inseparable to his sister for months. He sent a pointed glance at Jaime. “She still asks for you.”

“Well, father,” said Jaime. “I’m afraid I’ll be of no help to her, as I think Joffrey should have been executed today instead of two months from now.”

“Hear, hear,” Tyrion cried out, raising his glass.

Tywin’s jaw tightened. “Your sense of compassion astounds,” said Tywin coldly. “He is family.”

Jaime narrowed his eyes. “Not mine. He ceased to be family the moment he attacked Brienne.”

Tywin raised an eyebrow.

“Speaking of Dr. Tarth, I’ve been speaking with Oberyn Martell, and he reports that she has been surrounded by reporters and the gawking public ever since her testimony.” He looked at Jaime wryly. “Of course, your…confession of love did not make things easier. On the contrary.”

Jaime looked at his father with interest, noting the twinkle in his father’s eye.

His father continued. “Martell is of the opinion that she ought to get away from King’s Landing for a few days.” Tyrion smirked, and Jaime sat up straight.

“I have…some business and personal matters pertaining to the position of the Evenstar, and was hoping to get some things to him on Tarth.” Jaime looked at him with growing realization. Tyrion tried to hide a smile.
“Perhaps,” his father said mildly, “You can do me the great favour of delivering my letters and several precious mementos to Evenstar Tarth personally.”

“And perhaps Jaime, you can deliver to Selwyn Tarth the greatest gift of all, a visit from his only child.” Tyrion concluded for his father.

Tywin nodded in agreement. “If you were going to visit Tarth anyway, might as well offer to escort Dr. Tarth to her island. This way, dual purposes are achieved, with very little effort,” said Tywin, logically. “Anyway, in light of your recent…notoriety, it might do you good to get away from the city for a few days as well.”

“And perhaps more than two purposes will be achieved,” muttered Tyrion to himself, smiling.

Jaime mused, not willing to give in to his father that easily. “Will it be proper for a single highborn lady to travel unaccompanied with a gentleman?”

Tywin dismissed his son’s concern with a wave of his hand. “Brienne is a doctor, a professional, and is entitled by her vocation to travel alone or accompanied anyone she wants. Being a doctor—and surgeon no less—entitles her to more freedom than normally given her sex. I believe she is fully aware of that.”

“You also forget, brother,” Tyrion smirked, “That you have declared your love to all the world. You are practically betrothed at this point. No harm can fall upon her honor now with you in tow.”

“In any case, I spoke to her about a visit to her father a few weeks ago, and she has agreed on principle. I will let her know. It is merely convenient that both of you go together.” Tywin nodded decisively.

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The outcome of the trial plastered front pages of all the newspapers of Westeros. “Guilty!” and “Baratheon Sentenced to Die!” were yelled out on the streets of King’s Landing, as newspaper boys waved their newsprint like large flags. Everywhere you went, whether it was the butcher’s or the dry grocer, or the post office, all anyone could talk about was Joffrey Baratheon, the trial, and the emerging love story between the dashing Captain Lannister and the ‘lovely’ Dr. Brienne Tarth.

Even the trial invaded her working life, as reporters rushed into the hospital, hoping for an interview with Brienne. Even the public stopped by, and soon the general floor was inundated with healthy individuals, wanting just a glimpse or word from the heroine of Kings Landing, the vanquisher of the Bloody Mummers. It got so bad that Oberyn first suggested that she avoid the main floor, focusing instead on surgical cases and research. He further heavily hinted that she go away for a few days, even up to a week, to avoid the mad crush, as more people descended to the hospital.

“This is ridiculous,” growled Brienne, throwing the Westerosi Times ineffectually on the floor, trying to quench the burning desire to tear the thing into pieces.

“I don’t know what you’re so upset about, Brienne.” Jon said, looking at her carefully.

She picked up the paper again, and opened it to a drawing of an elegant, beautiful blonde woman with a tiny scar on her face, that was supposed to be of her. “Look that this, Jon. How is this
supposed to be me? The way they drew me, and describe me…it’s appalling…they made me seem like I’m attractive.” Embarrassingly, she felt tears sting her eyes. “When people see me after reading this…oh my gods I can’t imagine…I’ll feel mocked over and over. I’ll be humiliated over and over….” She crumpled onto the settee. Jon went to her and pulled her into his arms, stroking her head and shoulders and holding her tight until she could breathe again.

“Brienne,” he said, “No one is going to be disappointed when they meet you. Just the opposite; they’ll be awed to have met such a lovely, unique soul. Trust me.” She looked into his eyes which were dark and full of sincerity and affection.

“Jon…I don’t know how you can see me like you do,” she said softly.

“This is how everyone who knows you sees you, Brienne. And those strangers who immediately dismiss you for your looks, well, fuck them. They’re not worthy of you.” Jon kissed her on the cheek.

“Anyway, everyone knows these rags are sensationalized drivel. That it’s a lot of exaggeration.” Jon said.

He continued. “In any case, people out there are more interested in Jaime Lannister’s testimony, and the love story that emerged.” Jon had an inscrutable expression on his face.

She shook her head. “That’s another ridiculous thing, that they wrote a love story into the trial. Isn’t that the craziest thing you’ve ever heard?” She had read that dispatch the day after Jaime’s testimony, and could hardly believe what she read. It was laughable and absurd.

“Well, Jaime Lannister, under oath, confessed to being in love with you,” said Jon, his voice deliberately devoid of emotion.

Brienne laughed nervously and shook her head. “I’m sure they got that all wrong.”

Jon looked at her sharply. “Did they get the transcript of your testimony wrong?”

Brienne gave him a blank look. “Well, no…”

Jon furrowed his forehead and frowned. “I can’t believe I’m doing this,” he muttered to himself. He looked up at her and held both her hands in his. ‘But Brienne, I’ve seen Jaime around you. When you’re around it’s like an electric light comes on inside him. Why do you think I’ve been such an ass around him? He very obviously cares for you.”

She stared at Jon in confusion. “But Jon, we’re just friends. He’s just been very kind and caring.”

Jon shook his head. “Listen to me. A man like Jaime Lannister is not naturally kind and caring. I think you’ve lit some spark in him, Brienne. He loves you.”

Despite Jon’s words, Brienne was disbelieving. What he was saying was incredulous to her. Utterly. The idea that the handsomest man in Westeros, the man who repeatedly described her as an ugly beast, cared for her in a romantic way, nay, even loved her was preposterous. Jon studied her face for some moments, and eventually shook his head.

He squeezed her hands. “You know,” Jon said, his voice tender, “If Jaime wasn’t around, I would ask you to come North with me. I would say that now I that have money from the moon tea pill, I could ask you to marry me. I would say that we could have a happy life together.”

“Jon,” Brienne whispered, her eyes wide. “If things were different….”
Jon lowered his eyes. “I know. I love you. You love me.” He looked up at her, and she nodded in agreement. “But we’re not madly in love with each other, which is probably something we both want, at the heart of it.”

“You’re not wrong.” She knew she had a yearning inside of her that even Jon, with all his goodness, kindness and sweetness, could not fill.

“But you know? I think I could fall in love with you, if we had more time.”

“I think I could fall in love with you too, Jon.” He nodded. She kissed him softly on the lips, and he kissed her back, harder.

“At least we had this,” he said, kissing her some more.

Brienne smiled and couldn’t help but nod and kissed him back. “This was fun. Very fun.” Jon took her hand and nuzzled it, holding it to his heart.

“You can still come North and join me any time, Brienne.” Jon said. “If we’re both still free, maybe we can try to love each other for real.”

“I think you’ll find a girl who will love you with all her heart and whom you will love with all your heart in no time, Jon Snow. You’re really very irresistible.” She smiled at him, cupping his cheek with her hand. “But it’s a deal. if we’re both free, I’ll find you in the North, and we can try at really falling in love.”

She kissed him again then, a long, lingering kiss that tasted of goodbye. They embraced fiercely, and held each other tightly. She regretted it then, not giving herself to him wholly, physically. She wanted that, wanted to give him her maidenhead, wanted to feel him inside her. He was the only one she trusted to be with her in that way. They kissed again, their lips tasting each other, and his mouth opened under the bold movements of her tongue. He ran his hands up and down her back, feeling their muscles, and settled to cup her ass with his hands, pushing her hips into him, letting her feel his growing erection. She kissed his neck, tugged his shirt open to kiss the exposed skin. Her own skin felt warm, too warm, and she wanted him closer, as she leaned against the strong solidity of his chest, the smooth expanse of his skin.

“Brienne,” Jon moaned into her ear, as he gently moved away from her. She felt slightly lost as his body retreated. She wanted him.

“Jon,” Brienne said, her face nervous. “Could we…would you…” She looked down. “Relieve me of my maidenhead?” She felt a blush spread over the whole of her body. Jon’s eyes darkened even further and his lips parted in surprise.

“What? Are you sure?” Jon said, caressing her scarred cheek.

“Yes. Since the trial, I’ve been thinking about it more and more. I hate that they asked me about it. My virginity. I don’t want that to define me.” She gave him a soft kiss. “Knowing we are about to part…. And there is no one I trust more than you.” She gazed at him with dark eyes. “I want you.”

He gave her a soft, questioning look. She kissed him hard, and he moaned into her mouth and melted into her. They undressed each other with deliberate slowness, as if memorizing every plane, angle, every curve. His lips kissed her everywhere: her neck, her collarbones, her small breasts. He tasted every inch of her; he swirled his tongue around her nipples and sucked, and she arched into him, making helpless, incoherent noises. He kissed lower and lower and he put his mouth on her already wet cunt, kissing her bud, teasing her with his fingers and gradually making her come
strongly with his mouth and tongue. She quaked under him as he lapped up her arousal. She was
sated, but still felt the heat between her legs, the ache to have him inside her; she was wet and
swollen for him. She urged him up, and ran her hands up and down his body, gently stroking his
straining erection; she gripped him now, feeling the heaviness and length of his hard cock in her
hand. He panted against her throat.

He groaned. “Brienne,” he gasped, “Are you sure?” She looked into his eyes, and parted her thighs
for him, and he pushed his fingers into her, readying her. He kissed her, tenderly, and looked into
her eyes as he nudged her open with the tip of his member, her cunt wet and slick for his entrance.
He moaned as he pushed into her slowly, watching her face for any hesitation or pain. She nodded,
feeling him start to fill her, and he pushed into her more and more until he was fully inside her. She
felt a discomfort at first, and the strange feeling of being stretched and filled. Jon’s face was
contorted, as if in pain, his eyes closed in concentration. He looked down at her then, his eyes dark
and full of affection. “Are you okay?” he managed to gasp, weakly. She nodded, biting her lip.

He started to slowly move then, at first hesitatingly, watching her face all the while, but then she
saw something take over him – a transported pleasure – and he started moving at a quicker, more
regular pace. Out of instinct, she started moving her hips with him, meeting this thrusts, and they
were both groaning wildly, and she started to feel a coiling begin inside her that grew and grew
whenever he thrust hard inside, and pleasure started to ripple up and down her cunt, and the feeling
became greater and she felt she was heading to a grand explosion when unexpectedly Jon forcefully
jerked his hips, slamming into her a few more times with a finality, loudly groaning her name, and
collapsed onto her, exhausted, sweating, blissful. And just like that, it was over and she was no
longer a maiden. She liked it, she liked it quite a lot, especially where it was heading, but she
wished it could have lasted a little bit longer to where she felt she was going. Jon was breathing
hard, and he slowly rolled off her.

“I’m sorry,” said Jon, looking at her half dazed. “I couldn’t hold on any longer.” She looked at his
stunned expression and couldn’t help but smile, thrilled that she had this power to make him feel so
good and utterly lose control.

She kissed him tenderly. “I liked it a lot. A lot, Jon.” Jon smiled, and kissed her back, his fingers
finding her sopping core wet with her arousal and his seed. He brought her over the edge quickly,
expertly, as she panted into his mouth.

He held her after, both of them feeling warm and pretty wonderful.

“It wasn’t painful,” Brienne said, looking at him. “Just a little uncomfortable at first, then it started
feeling really good.”

“Oh gods, it was heaven for me, from beginning to end,” Jon sighed. “It’s sort of my first time too
– I’ve never come inside someone before.” He nuzzled her neck and kissed her. “Thank you.
Thank you.”

He kissed her neck and looked up at her. “I know we didn’t talk about this, but will you give me
one more chance?” His hands caressed her body slowly and she felt desire rekindling within her.
She could feel him against her thigh; unexpectedly, he was already hard.

She looked at him in surprise. “Already?” she asked. He grinned. She kissed him for an answer.
The second time, after Jon entered her, he brought her to release twice, once using his fingers to
tease and stroke her nub as he moved inside her, and later as he lifted her hips up to his and thrust
hard into her a certain way that touched something deep within her that felt amazing and he kept
hitting that spot until she just fell apart, nearly screaming with pleasure; and as he felt her cunt
violently pulse, he quickly followed with a cry, shuddering and spilling inside her.
Afterwards, they looked at each other and smiled a secret smile. They held each other, and even cried a little, because they both knew that whatever they had was ending. And it ended in the sweetest way possible, with them being as close as they could ever be, bringing each other pleasure and new experiences. And Brienne was glad that Jon had been her first, because his heart was good and he was the most dear to her, and she loved him and would always love him no matter where their lives would take them. And they lay together, side by side, arms around each other, and they fell asleep that way, holding to each other.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know your thoughts on Jaime and the sex between Jon and Brienne in the comments! Likely some of you won't like that she lost her virginity to Jon, but I think within the context of the story, it makes sense. If you don't like the Jon/Brienne thing, there is plenty of Jaime/Brienne up ahead. Trust me.

Kudos if you like. Thank you for readers who already given kudos.

And as always. I love you guys for reading and sticking with this story. We are getting closer to the end and it feels thrilling.
Chapter Summary

Brienne and Jaime go to Tarth.

Chapter Notes

Readers, I knew the last chapter would be received with mixed responses. I understand some readers' frustrations at the slow build of the Jaime/Brienne romance, and the inclusion of Jon/Brienne in the meanwhile. But I needed to follow the story and where it led. I needed to write about choices and decisions which made sense for this version of the Brienne and Jaime characters. And that is what I'm going to continue to do. I do not apologize for any story decisions I have made - they were crucial to Brienne's development, and showed the changes that Jaime has undergone.

Though I must admit, it's a little disheartening when readers repeatedly criticize a very important aspect of the story, especially since it's something I can't change. So...shrug? I'm not sure if comments like that are useful, except for making the author doubt their choices.

Anyway.... This chapter we go to Tarth!
From now on, the focus is more on the developing relationship between our main pairing.

Programming Note: Likely no chapter tomorrow. I just...need a day to breathe.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She had missed this: the sharp smell of sea salt in the air, the sound of waves crashing against the ship, the endlessness of the sea, which always brought out in her a yearning for more than what life had to offer. When she was growing up, what was in store for highborn girls like her was marriage to a lord or wealthy businessman. Then children, nothing more. But the sea always called to her; the sea was dangerous: it had taken the life of her brother when he was just eight years old, but the sea was also possibility: no one knew what was at the end of it, what strange lands, what strange peoples. And so every day she looked at the sea as a little girl, and thought: I can do more than this, I can be more than who I was supposed to become.

The girl who had left Tarth was fearful, shy, and thought of herself as worthless and ugly. She believed all that everyone told her about herself: that she was beastly, freakish, and that no one could ever love her. The woman who now stood on the deck of a very fine ship (a Lannister ship, of course) was a woman who was very much changed from the person she was years before. True, she was just as ugly and even taller. But she knew she was strong, both physically and mentally,
and she was smart and skilled; above all, she was herself, a person who she was proud to be. She had found love of all kinds: the soft, young romantic love from Jon, the love of friends, the love of teachers and mentors. She was buoyed by all this love; with it, she felt she could never drown.

And now, there was Jaime, who had, during this two-day sea voyage from King’s Landing, been unerringly kind. He gave her the best cabin, and entertained her with amusing chatter about the voyage, the people on board, and about his travels and military campaigns. He even extended his generosity to poor Pod, whom she asked to come on this trip with her and who had eagerly said yes, but who was currently suffering from acute seasickness. Jaime had sat with the boy, encouraged him to take some broth, and had generally been a fine nurse when Brienne was not able to check on him. The way they both interacted with each other was full of ease, for they had by now spent much time together, but she caught him sometimes, looking at her with an odd, fond expression. And when their gazes met in those moments, she felt a nervous stirring in her chest, like someone had shaken her heart and opened it a little. It was disconcerting, though not unpleasant, but was something she was unused to feeling. And moreover, it was hard to believe sometimes that a man who was so beautiful could be nice to her. The fact that Jaime was here with her was even a curiosity; he wanted to come to Tarth with her, that was obvious. But beyond that, she did not quite understand.

He spotted her on the deck, leaning against the wooden rails of the ship, looking out to sea. Her hair had been whipped loose by the wind, and floated around her head like wispy, errant clouds; her cheeks were red from the sea air, and she had an immense smile on her face which made his heart clench. She was wearing her blue cloak, which flapped open to reveal a light grey dress with tiny buttons from the bodice to her neck. Someday, he was going to slowly undo all the buttons of her dress, and give her body a kiss for each button he opened. He walked toward her.

“Here you are,” he said, bowing gallantly to her.

She turned to him and gave him a radiant grin, looking him up and down. He felt his cheeks warm. “You’re in your captain’s uniform!” Brienne exclaimed, her eyes wide and approving at the fine red coat he was wearing. “I’ve never seen you wear that before…you look quite dashing,” she added, lowering her eyes shyly.

Jaime grinned and pulled himself even straighter, feeling proud of how well he looked in his uniform. “Well, I am on official business from my father, at least for today, until I can deliver him the letters and items to the Evenstar.”

“Oh yes,” she said wryly. “The reason why you were chosen to escort me.”

“That’s right, wench.” He gave her a sidelong glance. “My father is quite commanding, as you well know.”

She laughed, and it wasn’t funny, but he found himself laughing along anyway, and suddenly it was very, very funny to him.

Normally, it was difficult to say no to Tywin, and he guessed that’s what happened to the wench. For some reason, she liked his father a great deal, and he liked her. What lay between the two was honestly one of the great mysteries to Jaime. Tyrion even said that his father had brought her a
bouquet of midnight roses during her recovery, which Jaime could hardly believe. In fact, until now, his father deemed no one but his late mother worthy of those particular roses, not even Cersei. He found it all rather curious.

Jaime had more experience saying no to his father; in fact, it seemed like it was all he ever did in recent years. But in this particular instance, he went along meekly, without a single complaint. Their needs did converge every once in a while, after all. Nevertheless, the wench insisted on bringing along a third person, the boy Pod, who was currently retching his guts out into a bucket down below. The boy was not born for the sea, that one.

He stood beside her on the deck, gazing out at the water. Up ahead, he could already see the island, which was much larger than he’d imagined. The terrain was mountainous, but the island was lush and completely covered in green. The waters around it were indeed the bluest he’d ever seen. He stared at it for a long time.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” Brienne said, a little breathlessly. Jaime couldn’t resist looking at her while she was looking at her isle. Her face was transcendent, full of sunshine and light. He wanted to kiss her.

She turned her face and met his eyes, a little startled to meet his intense gaze.

“Yes, very beautiful,” he said softly, leaning into her a little. “The waters of your island are very blue. But not as blue as your eyes, I think.” Somehow, when she was near, he was pulled toward her by some magnetic force, as he was now, and he couldn’t help but reach a hand out to stroke her cheek. Her eyes grew wide with surprise, but she tilted her head into his touch. She took his hand from her cheek and enfolded it in both her hands. She gave him a shy smile and he felt himself floating above the clouds.

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Her father still stood tall, his posture proud and straight. He’d grown greyer, and had a little less hair, and had more lines in his face, but he looked as good as he did when she left him years ago. He was standing out in front of Evenfall Hall, beside Master Goodwin, who looked as spry as ever. She couldn’t help but run toward them when they were close, and she flung herself into her father’s arms. He was one of the few men who made her feel small, as he picked her up with his long arms and swung her around. She gave Master Goodwin an affectionate hug; he was, in truth, there for her more than her father was at crucial times in her youth.

Jaime and Pod strode alongside them, and both bowed to her father.

“Evenstar Tarth,” Jaime said, smiling warmly. They shook hands.

“Captain Lannister,” her father boomed at him, looking him up and down.

“My father sends his regards…and some mementos.” Jaime said, gesturing at the small suitcase that Pod carried.

“Tywin Lannister’s son.” Her father smiled. “You are just as handsome as the newspapers say.” Brienne noticed that Jaime’s expression had frozen in place at the comment. She stifled a laugh.

“Father, this is Podrick Payne. We call him Pod. He’s just here to visit.” Brienne nodded to the
“Pleased – pleased to meet you Evenstar Tarth,” stammered Pod nervously.

Her father laughed. “Now both of you must call me Selwyn. We don’t do airs on our island here.”

He gestured to the man beside him. “This is Master Goodwin. He taught my girl everything she knows about sword fighting.” Everyone shook hands.

They were led inside, and Brienne was relieved to find that not much had changed. Evenfall Hall was made from white stone, and inside the great hall the ceilings were vaulted and high, its walls carved with imaginary beasts of the land and sea. The hall was light and airy, with large windows on the East and West sides of the great room, to see both the sunrise and sunset. The hall felt as serene as ever.

“This is quite impressive,” Jaime remarked, looking around. Pod, having been raised in King’s Landing, was astonished at the openness and largeness of the room. The boy gaped.

“Evenfall Hall is hundreds of years old,” said her Father. “And this hall stood as it did since the beginning. Since then, we made changes of course, like adding plumbing and electricity. But we’ve tried to preserve as much of the old as possible.”

He turned to them. “You must be tired. Gentlemen, Wanda will see you to your rooms.” He gestured to a lovely Wanda, waiting in the wings. He turned to his daughter. “Will you come to my solar when you’re settled? We have much to talk about.”

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“Father,” Brienne said, entering his solar. He offered her a seat and some wine.

“I see that you’re healthy,” her father said with a sigh. She self-consciously touched her scar.

“I know, father, I’m sorry I didn’t visit sooner.” She looked down at her hands; she felt again, like a child, chastised.

“I was worried, you know. When you were attacked I wanted to come right away.” He frowned at her.

“I’m sorry, father.” She sighed. “I just needed time to heal and sort things out on my own.” There it was, the guilt, the feeling that she was always disappointing him. She’d felt it since she was a child.

“You’ve always wanted to do things on your own, Brienne.” He said, sadly.

“I’m sorry.” She looked down at her hands. They seemed far too large.

“But that’s what made you who you are. Hells, if you’d listen to me, you’d be miserable in a terrible marriage and I’d feel even worse.” His expression was both fierce and mournful. He looked at her. “But child, from over here it seems like Tywin Lannister is more of a father to you than I am.”

She started, surprised at his words. “That’s not true. He arranged this trip, true, but you’ll always be the one I return to, even though I’m far away.” She went to him and gave him a kiss on the boy.
cheek. He put an arm around her shoulders.

“Now tell me about Tywin’s son.” He gave her a sidelong glance.

“Jaime?”

“Am I to believe he accompanied you here from the goodness of his heart?” He asked, with a raised eyebrow.

“No, he has some things, and letters, that Tywin wanted to pass along to you, apparently.” Brienne gave her father a curious glance.

Her father remarked, “He is as they say: the handsomest man in Westeros.” Brienne blushed, nodding her agreement. “And is it also true what the papers also say, that he’s in love with you?”

She grinned and shook her head. “I don’t think so. I think he was likely misquoted, to be honest. The newspapers get things wrong all the time, father.”

“I suppose so,” her father said, skeptically.

She pursed her lips. “Jaime is a good friend. I like him a lot. But in no way is he interested in me romantically. I think I’m more in danger of falling for him than him falling for me, if I’m to be honest.”

Her father rubbed his eyes and gave her a long look. “I did you wrong, trying to marry you off so young.” He face was filled with regret. “You encountered many unworthy men, and I’m sorry for that.” She nodded at him stiffly. If she was honest with herself, she was still angry at him about the betrothals that he had forced on her. The pain that she had to endure from those repeated rejections – all from unworthy men no less – had stuck at the root of her and stayed. He continued, “I just hope you haven’t closed yourself off to the possibly of finding love.”

She nodded, thinking about Jon, and how oddly resigned he was when he heard she’d be escorted by Jaime to Tarth. She bit her lip. If only she could love him the way he needed to be loved. That was one of the reasons she wanted to bring Pod along, to soften the blow of such a trip.

She gave her father a frank glance. “Well father, I’ve been focused on becoming a surgeon these last few years.”

“I know, child, and I’m proud of you.” He looked at her. “I just don’t want you to be lonely.”

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Selwyn Tarth stared at him as if he were a curiosity in a museum, looking him up and down.

“Captain Lannister. Jaime.” The man announced loudly; to whom Jaime could not say because they were the only ones in his solar. He looked at the letters, the trinkets, the framed photographs that had been sent by his father to the Evenstar. “I don’t understand why you’re here.”

Jaime looked at him in puzzlement, gesturing to the items on his desk, “I was tasked…”

“I know, to bring me these things.” Selwyn tilted his head.
“It’s curious,” he said slowly. “I was never good friends with your father, did you know that?” He took a sip of wine. “We were friendly acquaintances, at best. In fact, I haven’t heard hide nor hair from him in over ten years.”

Jaime tried to school his face into a neutral blankness. He had a strange feeling of dread and felt oddly unsettled.

“Imagine my surprise when he called me about my own daughter, telling me he was encouraging her to visit. And imagine my further surprise when he eventually arranges her visit, sparing no expense in the process.” He man tented his fingers and looked archly at Jaime. Jaime felt discomfited and more than a little warm.

“I know your father.” Selwyn continued. “Despite my daughter’s assurances at how ‘kind’ your father has been to her, I know he does nothing from the kindness of his heart.”

Jaime cleared his throat. “I don’t know what to say, Selwyn. My father does not share his confidence with me.”

He narrowed his eyes. “Does Tywin have intentions for my daughter?”

“In which way? She’s told me he offered her a position at Casterly Rock.” He had been surprised to hear this at the time; he knew he trusted few with this research.

“I see. Tell me, does your father have plans to remarry?” Selwyn asked with a sharp voice.

Jaime blanched. “You don’t mean to imply that he has designs on Brienne?” Jaime almost laughed at the thought.

“You find that ridiculous.” Selwyn said.

Jaime remained silent.

“It must be hard for someone as young as yourself to conceive that your father has an inner life of his own. He has wants, desires, hopes, and fears. I want to know if his plans include my daughter in those hopes or desires in anyway.”

Jaime looked blankly at Selwyn. “I honestly don’t know.” His mind was running through the possibilities, and the possibilities frightened him. He could not – will not – imagine Brienne as his new stepmother. The very thought made him shudder.

Selwyn sat back in his chair, relaxing, but still staring at Jaime. “Now, I want to ask you what your intentions are regarding my daughter.”

Jaime sipped his wine, unused to such direct questioning.

The Evenstar shifted in his chair. “We here in Tarth are far away from the mainland, no question about that. In fact, I haven’t been over to main Westeros for nearly ten years. I have no use for it. I like my island.” He leaned forward. “But we are not entirely cut off from the world. We do, for example, get the Westerosi Times.”

Jaime groaned inwardly. “Sir, if this is about my testimony….”

“Yes, it is about your testimony.” Selwyn looked down at him, making him feel small. “Now, tell me, Jaime Lannister. What are your intentions toward my only child and heir?”
Jaime fidgeted in his seat. He regretted getting on that ship now. “I can tell you that I did not lie under oath.”

“You are in love with my Brienne?” Selwyn tilted his head and gave him a probing glance.

“This is embarrassing,” Jaime said quietly. He looked into Selwyn’s blue eyes which were a lighter shade than his daughter’s. “Yes. I am in love with your daughter. But I haven’t talked to her about it. As far as she’s concerned, we’re just friends.” He wanted to flee the room.

Selwyn smiled for the first time in their encounter, rendering a sweetness to his previously menacing face. “I know. She said so herself.” Jaime started. “She doesn’t believe a man like you can fall in love with a woman like her.”

“There are no men like me,” Jaime couldn’t help retorting. “Only me.”

“Is that what you like to tell yourself?” Selwyn said, chuckling. His face turned serious. “I’m afraid her views on marriage and her…eligibility has to do with me…I betrothed her three times, and each time the man insulted and dishonoured her. She thinks no man would want her. She thinks herself unworthy.”

Jaime’s face twisted at hearing the older man’s words. This was her father, but he no more understood her than her idiot Septa did. He could imagine the pain that these arrangements had on the wench, and it explained why she seemed so…oblivious to his outward signs of affection toward her.

Jaime stood up, and confronted the surprised glance of Selwyn. “I believe we are finished with this conversation. Forgive me for saying this, but since this has been a rather…blunt conversation, I will be frank in turn. You love your daughter deeply, this I can plainly see. But you don’t understand her, nor do you know what’s best for her.”

“And you do, Jaime Lannister?” Selwyn raised his voice.

“No I don’t. But I believe she knows what’s best for her.” Jaime looked at the man half-scornfully, not bothering to hide his irritation. “If you want to be a good father to her, trust her. Support her decisions. This is something my father never did for me but I always wished that he did.”

Jaime stared at the man with an intense expression. “Brienne is the smartest, kindest, most sensible and the best person I know. I trust her completely. Her heart is pure, like no one else’s. And she knows what is best for her life. Leave her be.”

He stood up, bowing to Selwyn, who seemed stunned at his little speech. “Forgive me for leaving so abruptly. But I must go.” And with that, he strode out of the room, leaving a shocked Selwyn at his wake.

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“Come, Pod.” Brienne said in encouragement, as the boy tottered uncertainly on an old, piebald mare. Incredibly, the boy had never been on a horse, having grown up in the city, and it took more than a few tries for the boy to sit properly in the saddle. Sugar, his horse, was a gentle thing, and would trot slowly with any squirming thing on her. Jaime grinned at the sight of the boy, himself a gallant, knightly vision on his (literal) white horse, looking like he was born on horseback. Still,
Brienne slowed right down for the boy, and her own grey horse was as sweet tempered and patient as her rider was, Jaime thought. Still, it would be a while till they reached anywhere at the rate they were going. Brienne said she wanted to show Jaime some of the island, but at this pace, they’d be lucky to see just one thing.

Soon they stopped at a large farm to get some bread and cheese. The family who lived there had apparently known the family for years and three generations lived on the farm. Luckily, the grandchildren were around the same age as Pod, and he seemed to automatically get along with all of them. Unsurprisingly, Pod chose to stay behind to spend time and play with them. In fact, he seemed quite eager to no longer be on horseback. So it was just Jaime and Brienne who resumed their journey on the road.

She quickened their pace up a bit, and they went at a good speed. It was glorious to be out in the spring, on a horse again. The air smelled new and green and so different from the fishy, smoky stench of King’s Landing. She led Jaime up to the old mines, where they used to dig up marble. Then they rode through the little port towns and villages, through the big forests where hunters caught game when in season. For the last stop she led him through small, unmarked trails, though forests and bush, and up steep hills, until even the horses seemed tired.

“Are we there yet, wench?” Jaime called out. “We’ve been going back and forth for ages!”

“Almost!” she called out, smiling back at him.

About five minutes later, they came to a raised clearing, surrounded by a grove of trees, their leaves young and newly grown. The sunshine through the leaves filled the grassy space with an unnatural, almost holy light.

“Here we are,” she said, coming down from her horse. Jaime did the same, and held on to the reins. He looked at her questioningly. “Shouldn’t we tie them up?”

Brienne smiled. “Not necessary. The horses know this place. They like to wander around, eat grass, drink from the nearby stream. They won’t run away.” Jaime nodded, then looked around.

“Is this your secret spot?” He asked.

Brienne nodded, smiling shyly.

“It’s beautiful. Peaceful.” He looked around. “Everything sure is very green here on your island, wench.”

She giggled. “Is Casterly Rock not very green?”

“Portions of it is. But there is a great deal of rock, as you can tell by the name.” Jaime grinned. “I have a number of secret places there myself at Casterly Rock. I’ll have to show you some time.”

Brienne was walking in front of him. “Come on,” she called. “Let me show you.” She held out her hand. He trotted up to her and grabbed it, swinging it back and forth. She showed him the streams which lead to a nearby lake with a small waterfall. She looked at him playfully. “No one comes here. I used to swim here often. See that waterfall? There’s a cave behind it. That was my secret spot.”

She led him back to the clearing and laid out the blanket and they unpacked the food that they brought.

He looked at her. She was completely relaxed, completely free, and it occurred to him that she
should be like this always.

“I like your island, wench.” He said, biting into a hunk of bread and cheese.

“It is beautiful here, especially this time of year.” She looked up at the sky. “I used to come to this place to escape.”

“Escape?”

“Escape my lady lessons of sewing or dancing, escape the children who taunted me for my looks, escape my Septa. My father, even.” She gave him a guilty look and sighed. “There’s a reason I haven’t visited my father in years, Jaime. And I was reminded of that reason when I sat in his solar yesterday.”

“Oh?” Jaime peeled an orange and split it with her. She took a section and bit into it, juices running down her lips. He had to prevent himself from licking the juice off her mouth like he really wanted to.

“Yes. He just makes me feel like a naughty child who makes all the wrong decisions, who never listens, who never follows his advice.” She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand. Now he wanted to lick the juices off her hand. “I feel small – not just physically, but emotionally – when I’m around him. I love him so much, but I can’t be around him for too long.”

“Well, if it makes you feel any better, I had a few words with your father last night.” He looked at her, feeling a little guilty.

“Tell me.” She said, moving closer to him.

“He told me how he arranged your…betrothals, and said he felt bad about them.” He looked at her. She was nodding. “But he was asking all of these strange questions about me and my father, and our intentions, and I just told him that he needed to trust your judgement, that you are capable of making decisions in your life.” He lowered his eyes and admitted, “I was a little angry. I think I made a poor impression.” He sighed.

She shrugged, not overly concerned about the impression that Jaime had made with her father.

“Thank you for saying that, Jaime. Would that were true. I feel very ill equipped in making any big decisions at the moment.” She gave him a pleading glance. “Sometimes I want someone to tell me what the right choice is.”

“Is this about where you want to go after your residency?” He probed gently.

She nodded. “I think I want to go to Dorne,” she said quietly.

Jaime felt a pang in his chest and swallowed. “Really?”

She smiled distantly. “With the trial and all the fuss surrounding it, I don’t think I can stay in King’s Landing. Not that I’d be hired as a woman surgeon anyway. And Dorne sounds exciting. Oberyn’s work is fascinating and he’s been so kind, and I feel I could learn so much more from him. And I’m also tempted by their society there, which is more free and open toward unconventional women such as myself.”

“It sounds really, very good for you,” Jaime said lightly. He hesitated. “And Jon?” he asked.

“Jon? Well, he’s going up North, as he’s always planned. I’ll miss him of course. Terribly.”
Jaime wondered if anyone had ever missed him terribly in all his life. Certainly not his sister, he thought.

She glanced up at him through lowered eyes. “We... we... decided to end... whatever we had, I mean the physical stuff, a little early. To make it easier to say goodbye, before either of us become too attached.”

Jaime glanced sharply at her. She didn’t seem sad at the news. Indeed, throughout the trip she seemed in great spirits. He felt the sun hit his face and he felt wonderfully alive. He couldn’t help but grin.

She gave him an odd look.

“Well, wench,” he said, wanting to change the subject. “You’re the only person who’s never asked me about my testimony. Did you see it in the *Westerosi Times*?”

She blushed a deep pink. “Yes, of course I did... but...”

“But?”

“But I thought it couldn’t possibly be true.” She avoided his eye.

“Did you think I lied under oath?” Jaime said, amused.

She started, eyes wide. “No! Of course you wouldn’t. But I just thought that the reporter got it wrong.”

He raised an eyebrow questioningly. “And why would you think that?”

Her gaze met his now, and he was taken aback by the honesty and vulnerability he saw in them. “I just think that it’s not possible... you know, for someone as beautiful as you, to like someone as – as ugly as me.”

“Brienne,” Jaime breathed, moving closer to her, so they were sitting side by side. “I didn’t lie. And Varys didn’t get it wrong.” He leaned into her, feeling the heat radiating off her body. “And I don’t know what I was thinking when I called you ugly. You’re lovely to me, Brienne.”

“Oh?” she said, her eyes wide. He took in her beautiful eyes, the soft curve of her creamy cheek, that white scar that spoke of her heroism, and leaned his face toward her, moving closer and closer.

“I am,” he whispered, edging closer still, and continued, “In love with you, Brienne Tarth.” He stared at her lips, those plump, pink lips that he tasted just once before that night long ago. Her face, which was so close now, softened at hearing his words. He lurched forward, catching her lips with his, and he felt their warmth, their softness, and all of a sudden he felt he was sinking into her depths and it felt incredibly good. He pressed harder against her lips, and by the light of heaven she kissed him back, her mouth moving sensuously against his, nipping and pressing. His heart was pounding. His tongue licked at her bottom lip, and she readily opened her mouth for him with a soft moan, and he tasted the sweetness of her, the wet warmth of her mouth, and he groaned and she whimpered and they increased their pace, their lips sparring as if they were starving, as if neither of them could ever get enough. A wild heat was running through his body, from his lips and directly to his cock. His arms pulled her chest tightly to his, and he felt the little buds of her breasts against him, and then her arms were around his neck, her fingers in his hair, and he felt he could live like this, do this, forever. His body responded strongly, and he felt nearly out of control, as pure desire flooded within him; he was *this* close to just laying her on the ground and tasting the heat between her legs and plunging himself into her. He was uncomfortably hard. Temptingly hard.
Panting, he slowly broke off their kiss. Her blue eyes were engulfed by black, and he could tell that his was likely the same. They stared at each other, wanting each other, wanting more. Her gaze traveled down his face, to his chest and settled on the prominent bulge in his breeches. It was evident that he was embarrassingly hard. Her mouth opened, and she moistened her lips with a wet tongue. He quivered. It took all the strength in the world not to delve back into her mouth and take her right there, on the grass.

“Jaime,” she said softly, an expression of disbelief on her face. She touched her red, swollen lips. He wanted to smile at her. Instead he gave her a brief, tender kiss. “I love you, Brienne.” And another kiss. “Do you believe me?”

She looked slightly dazed. “I don’t know,” she said.

“Then let me prove it until you do believe me, wench.” He smiled then, feeling undoubtedly, undeniably happy.

She nodded mutely, as if she were in a dream. He kissed her again, longer this time, lingering. She moaned and melted into him, kissing him back with a fervor that made his blood rise.

He wanted to kiss her all the time, every day. They kissed and kissed and Jaime ignored the increasing need of his groin, and his impulse to do more. Her lips were perfect, her lips were heaven and he wanted to stay in that clearing forever. But eventually, the afternoon wore on, and they had to leave and pick up Pod from the farm. He took a walk away from her while took time to settle his body, and came back to find that the horses had returned. Brienne was perfect. He wanted to kiss her again for bringing the horses back with such ease. Instead, he had to settle for a long ride back to Evenfall.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think in the comments! What are your impressions of Selwyn? And the final scene?

Thanks for the kudos so far, and please hit that button if you like the story.

This time especially, thanks to the readers that have loved this story and sent so many supportive thoughts and comments to me. You truly make me want to continue this story until the (not so bitter) end. Love you!
Awake or Dreaming

Chapter Summary

Jaime and Brienne continue their adventures in Tarth.
[Warning: explicit sexual content.]

Chapter Notes

First of all, I'm overwhelmed by your comments, kindness and words of support for the story. They really touched me and I thank you readers from the bottom of my heart. I'm totally okay, and generally didn't take it all too seriously (I think I just felt bad on behalf of Jon, if that makes sense, lol). It is just a fic, after all. But I am so glad so many of you are enjoying this very, very long story.

This chapter is also very long! Pace yourselves! And have a lot of smutty fun.
(Related: warning for explicit sexual content in the last section)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Did my daughter show you the old mines?” Selwyn asked Jaime over supper, spooning fish soup into his mouth.

Master Goodwin, who joined them for dinner, looked up at them with interest. “You went to the Northern part of the island? That’s quite a way.”

Jaime nodded. “Yes, we did. We rode hard for quite a while. Seeing the mines was fascinating, for of course we still have working mines at Casterly Rock, though I believe production has slowed a great deal.” He paused, curious. “The marble mines in Tarth aren’t in use any longer?”

“There is still plenty of marble – in fact, the whole island is practically made of it, but what we’ve lacked are miners,” said Master Goodwin, seasoning his soup with salt.

“Young people flock to the mainland to work in factories, to create new things and forge their own paths. Like Brienne here.” Selwyn said, gesturing to his daughter.

“I suppose it’s their right for the younger generation to choose what they want to do with their lives,” Jaime said, looking carefully at Brienne. “Mining is hard and back-breaking work, from my observation of the gold mines at Casterly. If they choose a better, easier path, I suppose that’s progress.” Jaime said matter-of-factly.

“Yes, but we are losing the old ways and traditions with young people moving away. Brienne will have to face this when she eventually becomes the Evenstar. Tarth shouldn’t be an island full of old
Brienne sighed, pausing to sip from her goblet of wine. “Father, we’ve talked about this. I don’t even know what the Evenstar would do in this modern age. Things are changing. Gone are the days when lords ruled the lives of peasants. Now, people just want their own lives, and they want to raise their own families on their own land.”

“Dear daughter, if you stuck around the island long enough instead of visiting every few years, you would learn what I do every day. Being the Evenstar is a tremendous responsibility, as you will find out when I die.” Selwyn tore a piece of bread into his mouth. Master Goodwin looked anxiously from Brienne to Selwyn.

Pod sat there, looking wide-eyed at them and eating quietly. Jaime thought that this conversation reminded him too much of those he’d had with his father, about taking over the position of Lord of Casterly Rock. The poor wench was likely feeling a tremendous amount of guilt, judging from her chastened expression.

“I’m sure your demise won’t be for many decades, Selwyn. Your island is breathtaking and the people seem content. Much different from the suffering hoards in King’s Landing. Right, Pod?” Jaime said, looking at the lad. Brienne gave him a relieved glance.

Pod’s head snapped up. “Yes – yes, it’s true. People struggle to feed themselves in King’s Landing. And the air is much better here, and everyone seems happy,” the boy said earnestly, spearing a piece of boiled and buttered potato into his mouth.

Selwyn relaxed and smiled, leaning back into his chair. “This is true. There is much suffering in King’s Landing. I’ve always been convinced that our simple way of living on Tarth is far superior than toiling in the smoky factories of the city.”

Brienne thought about the patients she saw at the hospital who had worn out their lungs from working in the factories, to the working children who were robbed of their childhoods. “It’s true. Pod spent the afternoon with the Haworths among their grandchildren this afternoon. In King’s Landing, those children would be working in factories. People do lead better lives here, father.” She nodded at her father. “You’ve done a good job taking care of them.”

“As will you, daughter,” he replied, looking at her warmly.

Brienne gave her father a nod; she caught Jaime’s eye and sent him an amused glance. He winked and licked his lips. She frowned and gave him a look of warning, but couldn’t help smiling down at her plate quickly after.

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Ever since they embarked on Tarth, she felt unsettled. It was strange; she had expected to feel at home and at ease in her old environment, but instead, the ghost of her old self haunted her, the shade of that insecure girl who was desperate for her father’s love and approval, the girl who felt helpless in the force of her father’s will and societal requirements of what a proper lady should be. On the ship, she had thought she left that side of her behind. But the conversation with her father the night before had been difficult and strained; she didn’t know what she expected, but she
supposed she wished for a more harmonious reunion.

Selwyn Tarth had been a good father, though without her mother around, he was at a loss as how to raise a daughter, especially after Galladon died. He retreated from her life for a while after that, and Master Goodwin became the one she looked up to, especially when he started giving her lessons in swordplay. But there it was: her father allowed her to do fight and do all the unlady-like things on the one hand; but on the other hand, he hired Septa Roelle who hated that freedom-seeking side of Brienne and who pinched and insulted her into submission. She felt torn between her own desires, her father’s wishes, the strict and mean-spirited view of Septa Roelle, and society’s expectations of her. In the end, her unrelenting stubbornness won out when she finally convinced her father to send her to medical school instead of trying to marry her off once again.

She realized with surprise that the only times in the past two days she felt like herself were the times alone with Jaime. And this afternoon, in the clearing – she could not even dare think of it, it seemed like such a dream – was something that took her even more by surprise. It wasn’t that they had kissed, over and over, for what seemed like hours, but that he said he loved her. He said he was in love with her. She had been astounded; she still was astounded. And that beautiful afternoon really did feel like a dream and not at all real. She remembered their first kiss many moons ago – which was her first kiss – how the night was perfect and the stars were out and there had been music and he was overcome by all of it and that’s why he kissed her. The magic of the moment did that. He had been, after all, obviously in love with his sister at that point. She thought that this afternoon must have been the same – the clearing, the Spring, the sunshine, all made him declare his love for her in a fit of madness. He must be regretting his words this very moment.

Which was why she stood outside his door in the guest wing of the hall. She knocked softly. He opened the door, his eyes widening in surprise. He smiled at her and stepped aside to let her into his rooms.

“Visiting a gentleman’s rooms at night, wench? How deliciously naughty of you.” He wagged his eyebrows at her.

“Jaime,” she said, giving him a serious look. “Just don’t-” She did not feel like battling with him tonight.

“What is it, Brienne?” He said softly. He took her hand and pulled her close, their bodies nearly touching. His thumb rubbed the back of her hand, back and forth, spreading a heat there.

“This afternoon, what happened-” She blushed at the memory. It must have been a dream, she thought.

“Still doubting me, wench?” Jaime said, amusement on his face, his green eyes playful. He reached out to cup her face with both hands, and simply kissed her lips. Then he kissed the corner of either side of her mouth, then one cheek, and her other, scarred cheek, then her forehead and she felt overcome, like she was sinking and floating all at the same time. She closed her eyes, and she felt him kissing her eyelids. She swayed toward him like a sapling being pushed by a force of the wind, and all she could do was wrap her arms around his neck and hold on. She pressed against him tight, as she felt his arms wrap around in a warm embrace. It felt good leaning into the solidity of Jaime, in the fortress of his body. She held on to him and he held on to her.

“Jaime,” she said, as she slowly pulled away from his arms. “This feels like a dream. It doesn’t feel real.”

“Brienne,” he said, his eyes bright and shining into hers, “This is a dream, a dream come true.”
She almost had to laugh at his words, they were ridiculous, the words of a romantic fool in a storybook. Words that she would never thought would be directed at her.

“Jaime, don’t say silly things like that. They’re not for the likes of me.” she said, moving away from him, to the large window that overlooked Shipbreaker Bay. “I don’t understand what is happening. How can you say you love me?”

Jaime strode toward her passionately, but stopped short of touching her. “Brienne, I wanted you from the very first moment I met you, when I was dead drunk, in the hallway outside your rooms almost a year ago…when I looked into your eyes the first time, after you carried me to bed, something started to shift within me.”

She opened her mouth to protest. “But you called me monstrous, a beast....”

He winced. “I know I did. I was a fool trying to hide whatever it was you sparked in me, wench.” He looked at her with an intensity. “You were constantly in my thoughts; even though I didn’t realize my attraction to you, somehow, I always wanted to be near you. You were my anchor – I just didn’t realize it at the time.”

“But Jaime, you loved your sister. She is very beautiful, the opposite of me....” She recalled that afternoon when he said he was in love with another; she recalled the terrible sight of the golden Cersei on her knees in front of him that strange night. She shivered.

Jaime flinched at her words. “Wench, don’t you see? You saved me from her, from the person I was when I was with her. I was not even a man when I was with Cersei, I was a beast, living by the desires of my sister, at her whims, her beck and call. As you know, she is a selfish, cruel woman. She inspired me to do selfish, cruel things,” he said bitterly.

She paused, taking in his words. “Jaime. That’s not true.” She gave him a frank stare. “You freed yourself from her. Only you. And I’m glad for it because she wasn’t good for you, and you are a better man for it. You are so much better than her, Jaime.”

He lowered his head. “I never thought I was. I always thought we were the same. She always said we were the same.” He widened his eyes. “Brienne, it was you that gave me the motivation to change. And it wasn’t just that I wanted you and wanted to be with you, but seeing you be exactly how you are, the way you live your life, how you pursue what you want, and how kind you are through it all, to everyone. You are astonishing. And rare.” He took hold of her hand and held it to his chest.

“You give me far too much credit.” She smiled wryly. “And give yourself far too little. I have seen you. You are the same man who sacrificed his reputation when he stopped Aerys from blowing up the factory. You are a man of honour. And this man has always been with you. Just a little hidden away.”

He stared at her in disbelief, then his mouth quirked up. “I do feel…proud of myself for the first time in years, maybe decades. Testifying…was a huge weight off my shoulder.” Jaime admitted.

“I’m glad,” said Brienne, caressing his cheek. He closed his eyes at her touch and sighed. He put his arms around her and pulled her close, lowering her head to kiss her neck. At the touch of his lips, hot against her skin, she nearly swooned. Shivers ran up her neck and down to her very toes. He licked and sucked at her throat and she let out a long moan.

“Wench,” he said between kisses, “I don’t know how I’ll be able to keep my hands off you. I’ve been wanting to touch you for months.” He sprinkled kisses at the base of her neck and collarbone.
“Jaime,” she said, as she ran her fingers through his golden hair and down his back.

“Hmmm,” he replied, pulling at the collar of her dress to kiss the skin he’d uncovered there, “yes, wench?” The more he kissed her, the more the warm pool in her lower abdomen grew.

“Do you want to go back to the secret clearing tomorrow?” She asked, holding his face in her hands and looking into his eyes. She lowered her eyes. “We would be entirely alone.”

His pupils grew wider, and his eyes darkened with want. He raised his eyebrows. “Yes, Brienne. I would like that very much.” He kissed her lips then, seeking her mouth, her tongue, the heat rising, until she had to pull away, leaving both of them breathless.

It took a great deal of willpower to extricate herself from Jaime’s embrace and remove herself from his room. He was nothing if not persistent and affectionate. As she left his rooms, she felt the whole of her body flush, and her lips were sore from kissing; she couldn’t help but feel a giddiness overtake her. Her thoughts continually turned to Jaime and his words. His whole being seemed to put her on alert, as if her body was pinging with sparks from just being near him. Looking around to make sure no one was about, she let herself smile the widest smile and laugh.

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The next morning found her in the training yard with Master Goodwin, who was running her through their practice drills. She smiled when she did the familiar moves, and was astonished at the muscle memory that she still retained, even after all these years. He made her work hard and when they were finally done, she collapsed next to him on a stone bench, trying to catch her breath. He handed her a waterskin, which she gratefully took long gulps from.

“How’s it being home, after all these years?” he asked, looking at her with a kind, fatherly expression.

She smiled. “It feels a little strange. I feel like I’m a little girl again in front of my father.” She shook her head. “I can’t help but feel that he’s still disappointed in me for not following the path he wanted me to take.”

Master Goodwin shook his head and smiled sadly. “Your father has never been good at expressing his feelings, Brienne. Look at how after Galladon died, he just retreated into himself.” He looked at her. “He’s very proud of you, you know. The way you’ve made a career for yourself. The first female surgeon is no small feat.”

“He is proud of me?” Brienne asked. They had never really talked about her career. He nodded in assent.

“But he was just…very worried when he learned you were attacked.” The man lowered his head. “I had never seen him so distraught – well not since your brother. He was a little out of his mind, to be frank.”

Brienne looked up sharply and frowned. “I didn’t realize. How stupid of me.”

“Why would you, child?” he said, rubbing her shoulder. “You’re busy living your life. Doing what
you want to do.” He smiled at her.

He gave her a sly look. “So, what’s this between you and Jaime?”

Brienne blushed, unable to meet his eyes.

“Whatever it is, he clearly admires you.” Master Goodwin said, looking up. She followed his gaze and saw Jaime looking down at her from a veranda. He started, realizing he’d been spotted, and stupidly waved his hand, plastering a bright smile on his face. She giggled. Master Goodwin gave her a knowing look, but said nothing.

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Pod decided to stay at Evenfall, learning some basic swordplay with Master Goodwin. He stayed away from the stables, much to Brienne’s amusement. She couldn’t imagine Sugar the horse frightening anybody, and yet Pod did not want to go near any horse again. She chuckled. Today Brienne wore breeches, as they weren’t going to any towns, and it was much easier to ride wearing pants than being in skirts. They made quick time to the secret meadow, as they went there directly instead of detouring through the island.

“Gods, it’s hot today,” complained Jaime, plopping down on the blanket that they laid out in the clearing. The March day was unusually warm, and Brienne could already feel her skin forming new freckles because the sun shone so brightly.

“In Tarth we call this the false summer – in the spring, we experience a few days of high temperatures, then it quickly returns to the moderate March weather.” She removed her jacket. “It’ll get hotter as the day goes on.”

“Lucky that we have a lake to swim in, so close by….” Jaime wagged his eyebrows suggestively.

“Oh,” She said, “I didn’t bring my swimming suit.”

“Who says we need one? Didn’t you say we were all alone here?” He grinned charmingly. “Anyway, I’ve already seen all of you, Brienne,” he said seductively.

Her anger flared, and she playfully hit him in the arm. He caught her wrists and held them tight. He had a mischievous glint in his eye. She tried to resist, trying to pull her arms away, but he only tightened his grip.

“Jaime,” she said in a warning voice.

He gave her an arrogant look. “I’ve been curious, since you sent me to bed the first time I met you, about how strong you really are, wench.”

“I was strong enough to carry you, dead drunk to the world,” she retorted with a touch of annoyance.

“And I was strong enough to carry you to your rooms, all slippery and naked, when you fainted like a damsel in my arms.” He grinned.
“Jaime!” She stared back at him, and he looked at her, a challenge in his eyes. He was being very provoking today. Suddenly she lunged at him, knocking him off balance and down to the ground. He lay there for a second, dazed and silent. She looked down at him, slightly concerned, and laughing, he launched up and tackled her, pushing her to the ground under him, his hips pressed against hers.

“I win,” said Jaime. She grinned and placed one of her strong legs to the side of his hips and in one move, flipped them over, so she was straddling him and pinning his arms to the ground.

“No, I win,” she said, looking down on him. He looked up at her, his green irises growing smaller as his pupils became larger.

“No,” Jaime panted, “I think I still win.” He bucked his hips up against her and she could feel that he was hard, urgently pressing up against her core. A jolt of excitement ran through her.

“That’s not very gentlemanly of you,” she scowled, her face inches from his.

He smirked. “I never said I was a gentleman, wench,” and he lifted up his head and kissed her forcefully. She let go of his arms and he used them to pull her head down to him, deepening their kiss; she kissed him back just as hard, opening her mouth to his and allowing her tongue to explore the cavern of his mouth. His hands roamed up and down her torso, all along her back and down to her ass, and she felt herself instinctively moving her hips against his, straddling him, rubbing her aching core against his rutting manhood. She moaned.

“Brienne,” gasped Jaime, steadying her hips, “You’re undoing me.” With a grunt, he flipped her over on her back, but this time, he lay down beside her, the long, hard length of his body pressed along hers. Their bodies were tall and evenly matched.

He was kissing her ear. He murmured, “My maid of Tarth.” Brienne startled, and tensed, quickly sitting up. Jaime, panicked, sat up as well, facing her. “Brienne, what’s wrong?” he asked, his palm caressing her scared cheek.

“I’m not.” she said, looking at him directly in the eye.

He looked at her quizzically.

“I’m not a maid anymore,” she said, studying his face for a reaction.

A shade of comprehension clouded over his face. “Oh,” he said.

“It was after my testimony. I hated how they asked me about my maidenhead. So I decided to get rid of it.” She shrugged, but glanced at him shrewdly. “I don’t regret it.”

“Lucky Jon,” Jaime muttered to himself.

She gave him an annoyed look and started walking away.

He scrambled to his feet, quickly following her. “Brienne,” he called, but she ignored him. She led him to the lake with its nearby waterfalls. It had gotten only hotter as the day wore on. Turning her back to him, she began to undress, lifting up her tunic but leaving her sleeveless white chemise on. She took off her boots and socks. Then she unlaced her breeches and pulled them down in one smooth motion, leaving only her smallclothes. She looked over her shoulder at Jaime, who had stopped in his tracks as soon as she started to strip. His face was both shocked and desirous, his mouth hanging open, his gaze burning into her skin.
“I thought you wanted to swim,” she called out, and dived into the water. The water was cool and refreshing, as her head emerged from the water.

“You can swim, can’t you?” she yelled at him.

Jaime was still frozen in place, but at her teasing words, he quickly went into action, frantically taking off his shirt and pulling own his trousers, only to have to stop and remove his boots first. Finally, he stood, bare except for his smallclothes. She nearly gasped. He was a god. A golden shining god in the sunlight. She eyed him hungrily, without shame. His chest was wide and muscled, with a tuft of golden hair in the middle of his chest; his abdomen was well defined, his legs thick and muscular, and as he watched her devouring him with her eyes, she could see the bulge in his smallclothes become even more prominent. Brienne felt lust coursing through her. When, she wondered, had she become so wanton? Jaime smirked, fully aware of how merely looking at his body was affecting her, and walked slowly into the water. He swam with careful, relaxed strokes, and came upon her. She smiled and swam away from him, with fast, confident strokes.

“Wench!” Jaime called after her. “Are you part mermaid? I think you must be.” She laughed, turning in his direction. She led him to the waterfalls, which were small but strong.

“Come on,” she called to him. She disappeared under the curtain of water and hoisted herself up to the ledge behind the falls. Jaime followed.

He let out an exclamation of surprise at seeing the large cavern in front of him. “This is… unexpected,” he said as he looked around.

Brienne walked forward and grasped at something in the darkness. “Here it is,” she said as she found the old lantern she had stored away in the corner of the cave. She hoped the fuel was still good as she took out a match from the metal box. It worked and suddenly the cave was filled with a soft yellow glow. The waterfall formed a watery curtain in front of them. In this light, Jaime looked even more golden, even more like a god. He walked toward her, his eyes dark and mouth slack with desire. He kissed her then, a long, passionate kiss that made her head spin. He drew his arms around her and lowered her to the ground. The stone was pleasantly cool under her.

“Brienne,” he said, looking down at her, his face tender, “I want to worship you.” He kissed her again, and moved down to her neck, licking the drops of lake water off her and making her shiver. He bit her neck gently, causing her to cry out at the shock of pleasure. He growled and kissed her shoulders, and pushed her chemise up. She sat up and helped him pull it off her. His eyes widened as he took in her small breasts, and reached out with his hands to trace their small swells.

“Oh, Brienne,” he said, as if in a trance. His hands squeezed her breasts and rubbed her pink nipples, which were already tight and taut. She hitched her breath, as he moved his mouth over her breasts, licking and sucking, moving from one to the other; Brienne arched into him, his mouth on her sending bolts of electricity through her body. She keened, her hands running through his hair and down his firm back. “Jaime,” she cried.

He moved lower now, and pulled down her smallclothes with impatience. “Brienne, you’re magnificent,” Jaime marveled as he stared at the blond thatch of her cunt. He carded his fingers through the soft, thick hair and explored her soft folds. Brienne gasped at the sensation of his fingers slowly exploring, seemingly without any urgency. But she was feeling urgent; she felt her blood running hot through her veins, she was near delirious with wanting more.

“Gods, you’re dripping, wench,” Jaime said, his voice thick. “All for me.” With a groan, he slid two fingers into her and she arched into the sensation, as he lowered his head between her thighs. “I
love the way you smell,” he said, kissing the sensitive nub and running his tongue slowly around it.

“Oh!” Brienne cried, feeling herself become a pool of dripping warmth.

“Hmmm, you taste like honey, wench,” he said as he snaked his tongue inside her. She was all nerves at this point, just feeling the deliciousness of his mouth and tongue and fingers. He was doing things to her that were rendering her thoughtless; all she could do was feel. And she felt the pressure building in her cunt, as the need for release grew and she automatically pressed herself up against his mouth, wanting more, and her hands gripped his hair as he groaned into her, and his mouth and tongue and fingers started moving in earnest, intent on giving her what she needed, and she felt like she was outside of her skin, climbing higher and higher until with a rough cry, she shattered with an intensity that left her whole body throbbing. “Jaime!” She cried, over and over, all sense gone. He licked her slowly, tasting all of her as she recovered from her climax.

He came up to her and kissed her, opening her mouth with his tongue. And still she wanted more, she wanted him. She roughly pulled down his smallclothes, freeing his engorged length and she reached with her hand and squeezed his thickness. He closed his eyes and moaned. She opened her legs, settling him between her thighs, and she felt his manhood press against her soaking wet cunt.

He looked at her in surprise. “Jaime,” she said, “Please, I need to feel you.”

He felt his cock twitch forcefully against her. “Are you sure, Brienne?” he asked in a weak voice.

“Yes. Please, Jaime. I want you inside me,” she moaned, needing him desperately. His expression turned dark with lust. He rubbed the length of his thick shaft all along her slickness, and he eased the head of his cock into her slowly. She gasped at the sensation of him filling her to the hilt. She felt incredibly full.

“Oh Gods,” Jaime said in a desperate voice. “You’re so wet and tight. Fuck.” She wanted him closer still and entwined her long legs around his back, moving him even deeper inside her. He hissed, trembling, and started moving into her in earnest, thrusting fully and meeting the reciprocating motion of her hips. He groaned loudly. He gripped her hips and moved even more forcefully, slamming into her and hitting that spot inside her again and again and she was climbing, climbing, and soon she was falling over the edge, wailing in pleasure, outside herself, her passage pulsing with her release, squeezing him, and Jaime’s thrusts became more erratic and desperate; with a strangled cry of her name, and with a final hard surge of his hips, he spent strongly inside her. He collapsed onto her with exhaustion, his full weight on her.

She felt triumphant, physically depleted, but she loved the feel of him on her. As Jaime slowly came to his senses, he rolled off her with a groan, slipping out of her.

“That was – I’ve never-” Jaime said, helplessly.

She smiled and nodded, feeling in a daze herself. He kissed her on the lips, then on her cheeks.

“Oh Brienne,” he said, kissing her again. “I’d like to do that forever.” She giggled, rubbing the patch of rough golden hair on his chest. They lay there for a while, allowing their heart rates to slow.

“Let’s swim back,” she said, after a few minutes.

He groaned, “I don’t think I have the energy, wench.” She laughed, putting her chemise and small clothes back on.
“Come on. We can rest in the meadow.” With that, she lowered herself into the water.

“Wench! Wait!” she heard Jaime yell after her.

They lay on the blanket on the grass, letting the sun and warm wind dry them, and fell asleep in each other’s arms. When she woke up and opened her eyes, he was watching her with an expression of pure worship. She blushed, recalling what they just had done. She felt at peace, and felt free. She smiled lazily at him.

“Can we stay here forever?” Jaime asked, squeezing her to him.

She laughed. “Oh, Jaime.”

“I can’t believe we’re going back tomorrow.” He said, nuzzling his head into her neck.

She stroked his hair, and murmured, “It was a short trip.”

“I don’t want to go back to King’s Landing…to my family.”

“To Cersei.” She said.

He looked at her intently. “That’s over, Brienne. For half a year now.”

She nodded, looking at him seriously. “I know. I believe you. But Jaime, she’s still your sister. You have children with her. And your son just received the death sentence.”

“Joffrey can rot in hell after what he did to you.” He said angrily.

“I can’t say I feel different,” Brienne admitted. “But family is still family.”

He pulled her close to him, hugging her tightly. “I want to be with you, wench.”

She smiled. “You have me, Jaime.”

Jaime looked at her hopefully. “Truly?”

She blushed. “Of course. I don’t go around sleeping with men I don’t care about.”

He smiled brightly and kissed her. “Marry me, then.”

She laughed. “Jaime, that’s ridiculous.”

“I mean it, wench. I want to be with you forever. I want to sleep beside you every night and wake up with you every morning. And I want to fuck you every day for the rest of my life.” He smiled at her softly.

It took her a few moments to realize what he said. She was astonished beyond words. This was in no way supposed to happen in her life. No one was supposed to want to marry her, least of all someone like Jaime.

“Jaime,” she said, flabbergasted, “It’s too fast. I don’t-” He looked at her with amusement on his face.

He gave her a kiss. “I know, wench. I’ll be patient. But you are going to be my wife one day,” he said confidently.
She stared at him, both touched and annoyed at his complete conviction.

Chapter End Notes

I'm dying to know your thoughts on the chapter. Tell me in the comments!

Kudos if you like the story. Thank you for those who have already done so.

Thanks again, over and over, for reading and enjoying this story. I'm definitely seeing it through to the end.
“I hope you won’t wait another five years before you visit your old father, Brienne,” her father said gently, holding her hand and patting it. They were sitting in his solar, watching the sun sink into the waters, vivid red and oranges lighting up the sky for a final time before darkness took hold and night revealed itself.

“I promise, father.” She smiled at him, then gazed at the brilliant sky. “I miss Tarth, you know, the serenity of it, especially back when I’m in King’s Landing.”

He smiled at her kindly. “You need to write to me to let me know about what’s going on in this career of yours, child. What next? Dorne?” He raised his eyebrows.

She nodded. “Dorne. That’s the plan for now. And I will write to you, father.”

He hugged her. “You know you and Jaime are always welcome here. Always.”

She looked at him curiously. “Me and Jaime?”

Her father grinned. “It’s not a secret, Brienne. The man is in love with you! He declared it to the world. And I’ve seen it myself. He can’t keep his eyes off you.” He sighed longingly.

Brienne blushed fiercely. He looked at her with amusement. “Don’t be shy, child. Jaime just spoke to me about wanting to marry you.”

She stared at him in shock. “He did what?”
Her father cleared his throat, uncomfortable with the look Brienne was giving him. “Well, he didn’t ask for my approval or anything, and not in those exact words, but he said that he was going to marry you one day and he just wanted to inform me of that fact.”

“Oh Gods,” Brienne said, alarmed and mortified.

He patted her hand affectionately. “I *like* him. I thought he was an arrogant, spoiled man at first, but he defended you and spoke so glowingly of you that he’s won me over.” Her father tilted his head in thought. “He is a little old for you, but considering I first thought that Tywin was the one wanting to court you—”

“What?!? You thought Tywin wanted me to be his wife?” Her voice rose with incredulity. Her mortification knew no bounds.

“Well, child, give me some credit. Why would he send you out here on a private Lannister ship? What was I supposed to think?” He gave her an amused look.

He looked at her approvingly. “Anyway, Jaime is certainly the handsomest man in Westeros, and lives up to that reputation. Not to mention the fact that he adores you, my dear Brienne.”

His eyes took on a distant, wistful expression. “Seeing you two together reminds me of how it felt to be with your mother, Brienne. I’ve always wanted that kind of love for you.” He looked kindly into her eyes. “Gods willing, the Seven will give you much more time together than I had with her.”

Her heart ached for her father; how lonely he must have felt all these years, to still think about her mother with such affection. She thought that he was right about one thing – love, true love – was an exceedingly rare thing. And despite all that she thought and claimed at times, she did want it. *True love.*

Brienne was speechless when she finally left her father’s solar, both filled with affection for her father and feeling slightly annoyed at Jaime. She needed to have a word with the impossible man, who had apparently been telling people, *like her father,* that they were betrothed. But before seeking him out in his rooms, she was going to wash up a bit. She walked back to her room in the opposite wing of Evenfall Hall.

When she opened her door, Jaime was there, sitting at her table, an array of sweets and fruits on the table.

“Wench! There you are,” he called out to her. “I’ve been waiting for you.”

“Jaime! What are you doing here?” She hissed, looking around.

“I thought you might be hungry after…this afternoon,” he said slyly. He beckoned her to him.

She reluctantly made her way to the table, which was full of appetizing delicacies. “Well, that’s very nice of you, Jaime,” she said, her tone softening. She actually was quite hungry. And, well, arranging all this must have taken a lot of trouble. He was a silly man, she thought affectionately. She sat down on the chair next to him. He moved himself closer to her.

“Here, wench,” he said, feeding her a ripe red strawberry. It was sweet and juicy; as she bit into it, the juice ran down her lips and chin. Jaime quickly licked it off her.

“Jaime!” she said, shocked.
“Hmmm. Delicious.” he said, grinning. He held out a lemon cake for her to bite into. She did, and he bit into it after.

“I can feed myself, you know,” Brienne said, amused. He was really the most loving, most incorrigible man.

“I know wench, but this is more fun,” he said, offering her a grape.

She wanted to laugh, but she suddenly remembered her conversation with her father. She schooled her face into a stern expression and looked at him. “Jaime, why does my father think we’re betrothed?”

He looked uncomfortable and cleared his throat. “Well. I might have told him that I was going to marry you. Perhaps that’s the reason?”

She frowned. “Jaime, you can’t go around telling people that – we haven’t even been together for more than two days!”

“Then you admit that we are together, wench?” He asked, an eyebrow raised. “Not like in the way of – whatever you had with that Jon?” He made a face.

She gave him an annoyed look. “Yes, of course. But Jaime, we’re not engaged.”

“If you say so, wench.” He smiled like he didn’t have a care in the world.

“Jaime.” She sent him a warning look.

“Can I at least tell people we’re courting, then?” He gave her a glass of wine to sip, spilling some on her chin, which he promptly licked off.

She paused, both amused and annoyed. “I – I suppose so.”

“Good.” Jaime grinned. “Because I intend to court you, my lady.”

He stood up and walked toward the bathroom. “Be right back, sweetling. I’m running you a bath to wash the lake off you.”

Brienne wanted to laugh and cry at the same time. She was overwhelmed with the tenderness and care of his love, and his complete sincerity with which he loved her, for she believed him now, that he saw who she was, the unusual entirety of her, and loved her for it. Treasured her for it, even. For a man so wounded by love in the recent past and for so long, she was completely bowled over at his willingness to bare his soul to her. He was so incredibly open for her. She felt like she’d been presented with a priceless gift, an intricate and golden jewel that held the most precious thing of all: Jaime’s heart.

Jaime undressed her slowly and with care, as if she were made of fragile porcelain, pulling off her tunic and slowly unlacing her breeches. He took the pins out of her hair, one by one, and uncoiled her pinned braid. He ran his fingers through the thin, white blond strands, which were wavy from the plait they were in. Strands of it glittered through his hands, as if catching a star’s silvery glint.
“How can you be part mermaid and also come from the stars, wench?” he murmured into her hair.

She gave him a dubious look that he was beginning to love because she gave it to him often and it meant *Jaime, you’re being ridiculous but I adore you.* He liked putting that look on her face from time to time, *among another wild, passionate look on her face* that he witnessed this afternoon.

He couldn’t resist kissing her shoulders. He pulled off her chemise and lowered down her smallclothes, revealing the irresistible form of Brienne: her modest, little teats with their deliciously pink nipples, which he so recently learned were so sensitive; her lean, muscular torso; the soft curve of her generous hips; the thick mound of silky blond hair at the juncture of her thighs. She looked at him without a trace of shyness, standing straight and barring her body with a complete honesty that made his heart tremble. She was the tallest goddess. *His* goddess. His mouth watered at the sight of her. He wanted to taste her again.

Instead, he kissed her neck and the top of her breasts. Her eyes fell closed, and she leaned toward him. He smelled the musk of her arousal. He wanted to plunge into her right then, remembering today and overwhelming afternoon in the cave behind the waterfalls. He hadn’t *intended* to fuck her so soon; indeed, part of him wanted to marry her first, so he could do things right. But she was naked before him, flush from the pleasure that his mouth had just given her, and he was drunk on her sweet taste, and she opened her legs so boldly and begged him so sweetly to take her and any thought he had in his head left him, leaving only the primal *want* for her cunt. And entering her and being inside her was the sweetest thing he’d ever experienced, and feeling her come from his thrusts was even more overwhelming, and coming inside her was the most shattering thing in the world. He had been pulled out of himself and he saw stars. Immediately after, he cursed his age because he wanted to do that over and over again. He wanted to *live* inside her.

He was already hard from remembering that afternoon. He tried to ignore it, focusing on Brienne instead, kissing her with soft little kisses all over her face and neck and shoulders. He guided her into the bath. And he poured some oils in there, sweet lavender scented ones, and a little oil of spicy carnation.

She sank into the warm water with a relaxed sigh, taking a deep whiff and closing her eyes.

She opened her eyes and looked at him. “Where did you get all this?” She asked.

“Pod is a useful young man,” Jaime said, smiling. Her skin was pinking from the warmth of the water, making her even more tantalizing.

She looked up at him now, with her heartbreakingly beautiful blue eyes. “Why don’t you join me, Jaime?” she said with a low voice that made his cock throb.

The tub was big enough, he saw, since it was made for the tallest of the Tarths. She didn’t have to ask him twice. He quickly stripped off his clothes, and he smiled smugly when she noticed his hardness. She blushed. He got into the tub behind her, adjusting his erection so the underside rested at the small of her back. *Not that it rested,* he thought mischievously. He took a bar of rosemary scented soap and rubbed her body with it, all along her back, her front, paying particular attention to her most private of parts.

“Jaime,” she said, her voice breathless. She squirmed, leaning back against him and moaning softly. His right hand was at her sex, rubbing up and down her slit and folds and then circling gently on her engorged little nub. Even in the water she was slick with arousal. His left hand squeezed her breast and pinched her nipples, as she arched to his touch. He kissed, bit and sucked her neck as she writhed under his hands, making low, guttural moans that went directly to his cock. He played with her that way for a long time, teasing her with his hands and drawing out her
pleasure until eventually she let out a sharp cry, softly wailing her release and her entire body shuddering in his hands. She was limp in his arms as he held her, stroking her hair and face. He was painfully hard, surprised that he didn’t spontaneously erupt just from watching her release. She lay against him for a while, relaxed.

She opened her eyes and bent her neck to kiss him. He returned her kiss hungrily.

She gave him a dark, seductive look. “Let’s switch,” the wench said, maneuvering herself behind him with surprising grace.

“Now it’s my turn to wash you, you dirty man,” she whispered in his ear in a low tone, sending a new jolt of arousal down his spine. She slowly rubbed her soapy hands all over his body, deliberately avoiding his cock but caressing his thighs, abdomen, ass and all around it, so by the end he was whimpering, practically to begging for her to touch him. She kissed him softly, and finally she did, reaching her warm, soapy hand around his thick, impossibly hard cock which was flushed a deep pink with his need. He leaned back and groaned into her, nuzzling his face into her neck. She stroked him, at first hesitantly, learning his preferences from his sounds and gasps, and then with more confidence, running her hand up and down him with firm, regular strokes.

“You like that, Jaime?” she whispered in his ear, manipulating him with increased boldness.

“Yes, wench. Oh!” He cried into her neck. With her left hand, she started touching his chest, pinching his nipples, making him cry out even more, then the hand traveled down his thighs and she started touching his balls, cupping them and squeezing them while her other hand was rubbing his shaft faster and faster, as his pleasure was growing and growing. He felt helpless with rapture, groaning into Brienne’s neck. He could feel himself getting even harder and he could feel his balls tighten, and suddenly Jaime’s whole body shuddered again and again, and he was shouting her name and soaring as he shot his seed forcefully into the water a few times. He closed his eyes and fell back into Brienne. She was solid and warm as she steadied him in her arms.

She leaned over and kissed his cheek, then whispered, “I love you, Jaime.” He felt like he was floating; and as he heard those words in his ear he felt his heart expand to twice its size.

When the bathwater got cold they dried off and Brienne put on her nightgown, much to Jaime’s protestations. He wanted to stay in her room desperately, and wondered if she was going to drive him away. But she just looked at him playfully and got into bed, and pulled down the blankets for him on the other side.

“Are you sure wench? You don’t want your father to walk in on us, do you?” Jaime said nervously.

Brienne laughed. “He already believes we’re betrothed, anyway, Jaime, thanks to you.” She paused. “Anyway, I’ve locked the door.”

It was all he needed to hear and he slid into bed beside her, fully naked, and glued himself next to her, holding her from behind. He felt entirely happy. Blissful, even.

“Wench, you said you love me, right? I wasn’t hearing things?” He looked at her earnestly.

She laughed, inclining her head toward him. “I love you, Jaime.”

He grinned widely as he felt his chest expand. “Excellent. Because I love you, wench. So very much.” He kissed her on the neck and nudged his body even closer.
She giggled. “Now sleep, Jaime. We’ve got a long couple days of travel ahead of us.”

He hummed into her skin. He then realized, with astonishment, that it was his first time sleeping overnight with a woman in his arms. His sister always kicked him out of her bed, and only tolerated a few cuddles after they’d finished. But this was something else. He was happy. And he was sure he would remember this day for the rest of his life. And the wench loved him, and he loved her, and she was there, willing in his arms, beautifully relaxed, and he listened to her breaths, now becoming regular as she quickly fell asleep. He closed his eyes, willing himself to contain his excitement, willing himself to fall asleep. He paid attention to her warm body next to him, his arms encircling her, his face against her neck, the slow, steady evenness of her breathing. And soon enough, even before he realized it, he was lulled in a blissful, dreamless sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Send me your thoughts about this chapter in the comments! Isn't Jaime just over-the-top wonderful? What did you think about Brienne's reaction to him? Hmmm?

Kudos if you like. Thanks for those who have already given kudos.

As always, thanks for reading and sticking with this huge beast of a story. I appreciate each and everyone of you for reading.
Choices

Chapter Summary

Brienne and Jaime return to King's Landing. Brienne has interesting encounters.

Chapter Notes

Thanks readers for the comments. I'm glad you enjoyed our little vacation on Tarth. Now, we return to King's Landing!

Also, I've decided to put smut warnings only on chapters with very long, extensive smut scenes (like the last couple of chapters). Otherwise, I want the little smut interludes to remain a bit of a surprise. Plus, the fic is rated Explicit anyway, and that's what you're here for, LOL.

We return to KL, and the pace ramps up this chapter and in the next.

Left and Right, Lady Olenna’s manservants, ushered in the black-suited men, all of whom were carefully carrying slim leather valises. The men placed the objects in a row on the large dining table, and slowly entered the combination locks to each valise, unlocking each one and leaving them open for display. Inside each case were intricate jewels: a set of necklace, earrings and bracelets set atop a black velvet form. One set of jewels surpassed the other in extravagance: one was emeralds and diamonds in yellow gold; another was rubies and emeralds with filigree platinum; another was sapphires and emeralds; on and on they went. Brienne, who was sitting next to Margaery and Lady Olenna, was stupefied at the display of the jewels, knowing that each item probably costs more than her yearly salary.

“Are these all?” Margaery said to her grandmother, looking at the jewels in a skeptical, assessing way. Brienne gave the young woman a shocked look.

“What?” Margaery asked, looking at Brienne in puzzlement.

Olenna pursed her lips. “Margaery, my dear, I’ve brought over the most exquisite jewels in all of Westeros, all for your perusal. The best artisans, the most expensive artists.” She frowned at her granddaughter. “If none of these meet with your approval, I’m sure there’s no hope for you.”

Margaery let out a high, musical laugh. “Oh grandmother, you’re just too dramatic! I wasn’t criticizing, I was just wondering if there were more.” Her eyes moved over the five open suitcases. “These certainly are very beautiful.” She turned to Brienne. “Which one do you think would suit me best?”
Brienne tried to look interested. “Well, you should probably try them on,” She said practically. “What colour is your dress?”

The young woman smiled, revealing her very pretty dimples. “It’s green and gold, if you can believe it.” She turned to her. “Not the traditional wedding shades, of course, but I wanted to wear my house colours. That’s why I had you bridesmaids wear white.” She beamed. “It will be the talk of the town!”

Brienne had only agreed to be a bridesmaid for Margaery because she begged Brienne, and with her big brown doe eyes and pouty lips, no one could say no to the formidable woman. However, Brienne said she would accept the position only if it involved no commitments on her part, as the end of the residency was consuming her entire life. Still, here she was, somehow roped into this jewel selection.

Brienne sighed. “You should try them on, to see which looks best on you.”

Each set of jewels looked as good on Margaery as the other. Brienne thought with mild bitterness how wonderful it would be to look beautiful in absolutely everything. She had a hard enough time with the costume fitting for the bridesmaid dress, which was a low-cut, off the shoulder dress in heavy white silk that hung down to her feet; it fitted her well, it was long enough, and she didn’t look terrible in it, but the idea that seven other shorter, thinner, prettier women would be wearing the same dress filled her with anxiety. She knew that in comparison, she would look intensely freakish. But that was her own problem. Someone like Margaery would never have understood.

While Margaery was examining the platinum ruby and emerald necklace in the mirror, she caught Brienne’s glance and quirked her lips. “Brienne. Tell me about Jaime Lannister.”

Lady Olenna gave Brienne a shrewd look. “Jaime Lannister? I thought you were with that delightful Dr. Jon Snow. It certainly looked like you liked each other from the way he had his hands all over you at Margaery’s engagement party.”

Brienne blushed, feeling mortified.

“Grandmother. How ill-informed you are. And here I thought you were friends with Varys!” She turned a mischievous eye on the old woman. “Brienne was with Jon Snow, but it was never anything serious, as Jon is going back North permanently next month, when their residencies end.”

“Up North? How horrid.” Lady Olenna turned to Brienne. “I don’t blame you, my dear. I wouldn’t send my horse up North. Dreadfully cold and the people are so…unrefined, to put it mildly. Still, your Jon Snow is such a nice, handsome young man, for a Northman. And soon to be absurdly rich, if rumors of the moon tea pill are true.”

All Brienne could do was stare blankly. She felt as if she were in a particularly torturous hell, prodded by the Maiden and the Crone.

“All Brienne could do was stare blankly. She felt as if she were in a particularly torturous hell, prodded by the Maiden and the Crone.

“Now, what’s this about Jaime Lannister, child?” Lady Olenna asked, looking pointedly at Brienne.

She could feel her face going red. “We…uh…we’re courting.”

Olenna raised an eyebrow. “Are you?” She frowned. “And he is free of any…encumbrances? I have never known him to court anyone. And he is no spring chicken, that one.”

Margery grinned. “He is in love, grandmother. You should talk to him. I have never personally seen him so happy.”

Lady Olenna turned her alert gaze to Brienne. “He is handsome, and smart enough, and wealthy as all Seven hells, but do you love him, child?”

Brienne blushed fiercely and gave a curt nod.

Olenna sighed. “I suppose there is nothing much one can do. The heart, for someone like you, Brienne, is a fragile thing. Who it calls out to is sometimes out of our control,” she said wistfully. “Of course, that isn’t the case with Margaery here. Child, do you even love Renly?”

Margaery pouted. “Love Renly? Of course I do. I adore Renly. Loras is the one in love with him though.” She shrugged. She looked into the mirror again. “I think this one will do,” she said, admiring herself in the intricate necklace. “My dress has gold, but I think the platinum with rubies and emeralds will make it stand out. Plus, with my cool colouring, I believe my complexion will benefit.” She turned to the women. “What do you think?”

Lady Olenna clapped her hands. “Oh thank the gods. Finally, we have a decision.” She turned to Margaery, “It looks fine, dear. Beautiful.” She nodded to the men, who closed the other valises. Left and Right quickly escorted the men out.

She turned to the women. “Now let’s consume some lovely cocktails, my girls.”

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Jon lay on her bed, exhausted in spirit and body. They had a rough day at the hospital: an emergency surgery for a stabbing outside one of the cotton mills; the young man’s lungs were punctured and his injuries were impossible to repair, but try they did in the operating room but they were ultimately unsuccessful. Of late, they were also frantically copying and writing notes for all of Oberyn’s research that he would need to take with him to Dorne.

Jon moaned in exhaustion. “Can this day please be over?” He stretched dramatically on the bed.

Brienne laughed from the kitchen, where she was heating up some soup. “Jon, if this day were over, then we’d be back at the hospital, having to do a similar day over again.”

He sighed. “You’re right.” He flopped to his side, propping himself on his elbow, facing in her direction. He stared at her. “There’s one thing I miss about us, Ostrich.”

She walked toward him and sat on the bed near him. “What?”

“Me being able to touch you and sleep beside you,” Jon said mournfully, sadly smiling. “I feel a little…lonely.”

“Oh Jon,” she said, reaching out to stroke his hair. “I’m sorry. But we can still hug. Just not that…sexual stuff.”

“Really?” Jon said, sitting up and winding his arms around her. He sighed happily. She hugged him
back, smiling. It did feel good to feel him in her arms again. He was just so…comforting. And she was convinced that they would always be important to each other, despite the geographical distance between them.

“This is nice,” Jon murmured into her neck. Eventually, they broke apart and sat side by side. He relaxed and they leaned into each other.

“You know, I always knew that you and Jaime would end up together.” Jon glanced at her with a frank gaze. She looked at him with surprise.

He continued. “I knew he was always crazy about you, ever since the very beginning. He was always around you, like a moon orbiting a planet.” He bit his lip. “Even though you did say that he was ‘the most unpleasant man you’d ever had the misfortune to meet’ which I think were your exact words.” He smirked and Brienne threw a pillow on his head.

“Hmmm. He’s changed a great deal.” She tilted her head in thought. “I think you knew before I did, about us.”

“That trip to Tarth.” Jon sighed wearily.

“Yes. The trip to Tarth,” agreed Brienne.

She looked at him now. He had shadows under his eyes, and he seemed more somber of late. “Are you okay, Jon?”

He nodded, smiling dimly. “I miss you, Brienne.” She took his hand. He looked off into the distance. “And I’ve been talking to Robb. Things at home are difficult. Catelyn has come down with tuberculosis, and she’s been struggling. So far she’s been kept away from the children, but that means Robb has the extra burden of caring for her and them. The youngest, Rickon, is only four.”

Her heart swelled as she heard Jon’s troubles. “Jon, I didn’t know. I’m sorry.” She knew that Jon’s brothers and sisters were the most important things in his life, and he must have had complicated feelings for Catelyn as well, having been the only mother he’d ever known, though from the sound of things she was rather hostile to him.

“I’m anxious to get up North as fast as possible, to see how I can help.” He gave her a small smile and looked down. “But of course, I don’t want to leave King’s Landing. I don’t want to leave you.” He looked at her with his dark, deep eyes.

She hugged him again and he nuzzled into her, resting his head on her shoulder. After a while she drew back, standing up and offering him her hand. “Come, Jon, let’s eat.” She pulled him up to his feet and led him to the dining table.

She spooned out the soup into bowls and tore off chunks of bread for them. They ate ravenously, neither one realizing how hungry they were until they started eating.

“How did Oberyn react when you told him about Dorne?” Jon asked, curious.

Brienne grinned. “He was extremely happy and gave me the biggest smile I’ve seen on him. He’s quite relieved that I’ll be there, helping to transition the team, and already having all this knowledge about what we’ve been working on together.” Jon nodded.

“He’s even offered to rent me rooms very cheaply at his Sunspear Estate. It’s apparently huge, with water gardens and even wild animals like peacocks running about!” Jon raised his eyebrows.
“Hmmm. I definitely would like to see you in Dorne,” Jon said. “I think you’d look great in one of those flimsy, flowing silk things that they all wear over there,” he said, playfully wagging his eyebrows.

There was a knock at the door. Jaime came in, and started with surprise when he saw Jon sitting at the table. “Oh. Hello Jon.” Jaime said with a small smile, joining them at the table.

Jon nodded. “Good to see you, Jaime.” Jaime nodded, his mouth tight.

Jaime looked from Brienne to Jon, as if reading their expressions. “Rough day at the hospital?”

Jon groaned. Brienne nodded and explained, “We operated on a young man who was stabbed at the cotton mills. Unfortunately, we couldn’t save him.”

“At the Baratheon factories?” Jaime inquired with interest.

Jon nodded. “We’ve been seeing patients from them for weeks. It’s getting worse and worse. Violence, attacks, and all the workers seem to be sick.”

“Who’s running things with Joffrey in jail?” Brienne asked, curious.

“Cersei.” Jaime said flatly, his lips a thin line. A cloud seemed to descend over his face. They sat in silence.

Jon gave Brienne a look and cleared his throat. “I…uh…should be getting along. Another exhausting day tomorrow.”

Brienne nodded, getting up after him and handing Jon his jacket. She hugged him and kissed Jon on the cheek. Jon gave her a familiar smile. He looked over at Jaime, who was looking at them with a mild expression.

“Good bye, Jaime.” Jon said quietly.

“Jon, good bye.” Jaime said equally quietly, with a slight wave of his hand.

After Jon left, Jaime walked to her and enfolded her in his arms. He sighed.

“Wench, I’ve missed you,” he said, kissing her cheek.

She laughed. “Jaime, we saw each other only this morning.”

“You’ve been gone all day and it’s almost bedtime,” he softly whined into her neck, making her shiver. He paused. “What was Jon doing here?”

“He’s my best friend, Jaime. He’s going to be here from time to time.” She looked up at him. “You will be nice to him, won’t you?”

“Of course, wench! I rather like Jon, as a matter of fact.” Jaime grinning winningly. “He’s not a bad sort of fellow at all.”

“I’ve been run off my feet today. I’m so tired,” Brienne complained later that evening, rubbing her eyes and yawning.
“Come, let’s go to bed,” he said, starting to undo the buttons of her blouse. Soon she was left in her smallclothes and he led her to the bed and tucked her into the blankets. He made quick work of his own clothes and soon slipped into bed beside her. She lay on her back and Jaime pressed himself on his side beside her, placing an arm around her waist, their faces touching. She felt enormously comforted with him next to her, holding her.

Since Tarth, Jaime had more or less permanently moved into the apartment opposite, spending most days with the children at Tywin’s but returning in the evening. However, Brienne’s schedule was more hectic; sometimes she came home late at night, and sometimes she had to sleep in the cot in her office at the hospital because she could not get away, so did not come home at all. But when she was home, Jaime was always there – sometimes he would have food ready, or a bath, or some entertaining story to take her mind off the miseries of the hospital. They spent the night together when they could, though these days it was mostly just sleeping because she was so bone-weary. But he was always patient with her, content to just kiss and cuddle, even though he may have wanted more.

Still, she couldn’t help but feel that what they had – not only their happiness, but also their living situation – was transitory, and all of this would soon disappear. Her life, in the past five years, had been a series of changes, and this particular year she had endured more change – most for the better – than she ever had in all her life. She wanted to hang on to Jaime, the exact way he was at this particular moment. She turned her head to kiss him softly, giving him a sad look.

“What is it, Brienne?” he murmured, lightly stroking her shoulder.

She sighed, and hoped that he wasn’t too disappointed in what she was going to say. “I’ve told Oberyn that I’ve chosen to go to Dorne.”


She bit her lip and looked at him with big eyes. “I would have a two month break before I have to leave for Dorne, Jaime.”

He perked up at the news, smiling slyly. “So I’ll have the whole of you those two months, all to myself?”

“Entirely.” She smiled shyly.

“I like the sound of that, wench.” He kissed the side of her neck in approval.

“You don’t mind?” She asked, her eyebrows raised.

Jaime lifted himself onto his elbow and looked down at her, a tender expression on his face. “Look, Brienne. Do I wish that you’d stay in King’s Landing with me instead of going off to Dorne with one of the most seductive, handsomest men in Westeros? Of course. If it were up to me, that’s what I would want. But I can’t ask you to stay; you need to do this for yourself and your career. I won’t see you unhappy, wench.”

She stroked his cheek. “I’ll visit, and you can visit.”

“Wild horses and Targaryen dragons couldn’t stop me, Brienne.” Jaime grinned his usual confident smile, but underneath she could sense his worry. He looked like he was thinking far too much.

They kissed. Jaime held her from behind until her exhaustion overwhelmed her and she drifted off to sleep, feeling warm and safe, and feeling, for one of the few times in her life, not entirely alone.
In King’s Landing, spring was promising to turn into an early summer, with recent warmer temperatures and a brighter sky. Her basket laden with groceries, Brienne returned home sweaty and a little too warm. Nevertheless, she was happy because it was the first time in a couple of weeks that she’d actually had the time to run errands. She longed for a glass of cold water and quickened her steps. As she entered through the side door of the building, she heard Pod call out.

“Dr. Tarth! Dr. Tarth, my lady?” Her ears perked up; he sounded loud and desperate. She put down her groceries at the bottom of the stairs and went into the backroom; not seeing him there, she walked through to the main shop.

“Pod, what is it?” she asked, looking at him with concern.

He was standing near the door, wide-eyed and terrified, looking frozenly at the sight before him. She followed his gaze and gave a start. There, in front of the main entrance, stood Cersei Lannister. She was wearing a beaded black day dress made of silk crepe, cut low on her bosom and cinched tight around her waist, her shiny, golden hair swooped up in a complicated mass of braids and curls atop her head. She was breathtakingly beautiful, with her fine, delicate features and high cheekbones, red lips and green eyes that reminded her more of Joffrey’s than those of her twin brother. She was an entire vision of what any man would desire. And right then, Brienne was struck with the utter absurdity of it, that Jaime would want to be with her, she who was so broad and tall and awkward, and not Cersei, who was the ideal of feminine beauty, just like he was the ideal of male beauty.

Standing a few paces behind her was a tall, dashingly handsome blond man with blue eyes who had a similarity to Jaime, though this man was a few years younger. He stood looking at both Cersei and Brienne, his face impassive, and stood apart as if he were on guard.

“Mrs. Baratheon is here, m-m-my lady doctor,” Pod stammered, scared and pale.

Cersei gave the young man a withering look. “Lannister, not Baratheon, boy.” She turned to Brienne, “Of course, Brienne, you may call me Cersei. After all, aren’t we practically family now?” She narrowed her eyes and smiled, reminding Brienne of a particularly nasty serpent.

“What a surprise to see you here, Cersei,” Brienne said, keeping her voice even and expression neutral.

Cersei walked around, looking at the piles of untidy books with distaste. “I decided to pay my little brother a visit. I’ve never been here before, in this bookshop…in this building.” She wrinkled her nose at the dusty tomes. “Imagine my surprise when I found out that he wasn’t here…and only this…stammering boy around.”

Brienne nodded. “Well, I’ll be sure to let him know that you called, Cersei.”

Cersei dismissed the blond man and told him to wait outside. She took a few steps toward her. “You live here, don’t you, Brienne? In the dingy upstairs apartment?”

Brienne nodded.
“And I hear that Jaime has taken the other upstairs flat?” She golden woman tightened her jaw. “Or is he living in your apartment?”

Brienne blanched. “He keeps to his own rooms, Cersei.”

“He just comes over to fuck you every once in while then?” Cersei laughed cruelly. “It’s certainly what he’s used to.” Cersei smirked knowingly. Brienne raised her eyebrows and looked over at Pod, whose eyes were alarmed and confused. The woman did not seem to care who knew of her incestuous secret.

Her eyes took on a wild, fiery gleam, and she licked her red lips. “Everything Jaime knows about fucking he learned from my cunt, my teats, my mouth, my tongue. Everything. I’m sure he’s doing his best to please such a hulking beast like you. Though I imagine it must be difficult for him to pretend that you’re me to perform the deed. We are just so…unlike, you and I.”

Brienne stood in shock. Beside her, Pod vibrated with anger. “You leave her alone, Mrs. Baratheon!”

Cersei flashed with annoyance, looking at the young man, then turned her terrible gaze back to Brienne, resuming her reptilian smile. “Oh, I forgot. You saw us in the garden, all those months ago, didn’t you? When I was on my knees pleasing my brother? I heard you had run off in a terror at the ball; it wasn’t hard to put two and two together, Brienne.” She raised an eyebrow and tilted her head. “Why would you be with a man like that, a man who’s fucked his own twin for over twenty years? You’re even more pathetic than I thought. At least when you were with that Jon Snow, it made sense, even though the man is a lowly bastard.”

Brienne felt anger course through her. She clenched her fists, trying to prevent herself from punching Cersei’s perfect little face. She could almost feel the melodious crunch of the woman’s fragile bones at the impact of her fist. Cersei saw the anger written on her face and smiled triumphantly. She stepped toward her, close enough to touch. She looked up at Brienne’s face, examining the scar.

“I wanted to see this in person. What my son did to you. Gods, it’s made you so much uglier. You deserve it for what you did to him. He’s going to die because of you,” she said, her eyes wet and gleaming, the vision of a vengeful mother.

Pod stepped in between them, “You leave Dr. Tarth alone!”

“Pod,” Brienne said, reaching out to maneuver him quickly behind her and squeezing his shoulder reassuringly.

Brienne had enough. She looked down at the woman, who was clearly desperate and angry and powerless. A hot rage she rarely felt consumed her. “Cersei, you need to leave right now. Unless you want me to physically throw you out.” She paused. “And being the ugly beast that I am, you know I’m strong and quick enough to smash your face in before your man outside can understand what’s happened.” Cersei glared at Brienne.

Brienne continued, in a low, threatening voice. “Too bad I didn’t get to do that to your son. I would have loved to break that pretty face of his.” She paused. “But I guess I’ll have to settle on watching him hang. If the gods are merciful he’ll break his neck right away instead of being strangled by the rope. But of course, that’s what he did to Ros when he almost killed her.”

At this, Cersei lunged at her, screeching and trying to claw at Brienne’s face. Unfortunately for Cersei, Brienne was much too tall for the short woman to reach and she was able to keep the
struggling Cersei at arms distance, with Pod’s help.

She heard the door open and the blond man ran over to grab Cersei, and at the same moment, Tyrion came in with Jaime through the back, both looking shocked and alarmed at the sight before them. Jaime ran to Brienne, putting a protective arm around her and pulling her away. Meanwhile, Cersei had regained control of herself, though still being held on the arm by the blond man. She shrugged him off and adjusted her hair and pulled down her bodice. She smiled sweetly at Jaime.

“Cersei, get out,” Jaime hissed, looking at her with cold eyes.

The woman stood up straighter. “This is the greeting I get? I haven’t seen you in weeks, Jaime. I’ve needed you. I miss you.” She looked at him seductively, smiling with her lovely red lips. Brienne felt Jaime turn thunderous with anger; she’d never seen him so full of rage.

“Get out!” he shouted, and Tyrion walked over and with the blond man’s forceful hold on Cersei, ushered them out.

Jaime clung to her. He was still shaking with emotion. She gave Tyrion a look, then a grateful nod and smile to Pod, and led Jaime upstairs to her rooms. She held him, pressing his chest tightly to hers and wrapping her arms around his shoulders.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry.” Jaime was saying, over and over, as he hugged him and made soothing noises into his ear. Gradually, his breaths started to slow and become more regular.

She held his face in her hands and kissed him, over and over, and soon, he was responding fiercely, devouring her mouth and kissing her long and hard. With a surprised squeak, she found herself being lifted to sitting on the dining table. He kissed her some more and parted her legs, nestling his hips in between them. She gasped; she could feel him against her, startlingly hard, and she let out a moan at the sensation of his hardness pressing between her spread legs. He was breathless and his hands were suddenly everywhere, over her shoulders, back, squeezing her breasts, as he moaned into her, moving his hips, rubbing against her in a way that made her core turn liquid with want.

“Brienne, please,” Jaime gasped into her mouth, “Can I….” His touch turned urgent, fiery. She placed her hands between them and unbuttoned his trousers, pulling them down along with his smallclothes, freeing his cock which jutted out stiffly in front of him. He moaned indecently as she stroked him a few times. He reached down and frantically pulled up her skirts, reaching under her smallclothes to feel her wetness. He then pulled down the thin barrier, leaving her wet cunt open and bare for him. He looked into her eyes, and she saw a desperation and need there, and whispered, “Yes, Jaime,” and with a long groan he entered her in one hard, hurried thrust, leaving her gasping at the sudden feeling of being completely filled. He pushed into her fast and frenziedly, as if exorcising demons inside him, and she had to grasp the edge of the table as it moved alarmingly each time he slammed into her. He was panting, groaning with the force of his need. He reached between them and touched her nub with his fingers, rubbing and pressing and kissing her desperately, until she swiftly rose and fell apart, shuddering helplessly, as he continued to pump deeply into her. When he felt her release, he let out an anguished cry and thrust wildly, spilling his seed inside her with a few final, erratic thrusts. He collapsed, his head on her shoulder, out of breath and panting. She held him against her, and she felt him slip out of her, along with splashes of his seed. She felt dampness on her shoulder and she lifted his face, and saw that tears were rolling down his eyes. Her heart squeezed, and she kissed him softly and hugged him again and stroked his hair.

“I’m sorry, Brienne,” he sobbed into her shoulder.

She shook her head, a little confused. “You have nothing to be sorry for.”
His arms tightened around her. “I couldn’t live with myself if anything happened to you—” He cried, as she felt his body tremble.

“Shhh. Jaime, I’m okay. Nothing is going to happen to me,” she said, stroking his hair.

He shook his head into her neck. “Wench, you don’t know what she’s capable of, she’s evil. She’ll do anything to harm you. Hurt you.”

“Jaime. I can take care of myself. Please, Jaime.” She held his face in her hands, wanting to somehow alleviate his pain.

“I love you. I love you so much.” Jaime cried, kissing with an agonizing urgency.

“Jaime, I love you too.” She hugged him, her heart aching for him. “You won’t lose me. I promise.”

He squeezed her so tightly that she almost couldn’t breathe.

“Wench, you have to go to Dorne.” His face was pained and had the edge of anguish in it. “You can’t stay in King’s Landing.”

“Jaime. I’ll go to Dorne when I need to go. Meanwhile, I’m going to spend a lot of time with you, okay?” She wanted to say something that would make him feel better, but she was at a loss for words.

He nodded, still shaken. He looked like someone who was haunted and had just realized the peril they were actually in.

She led him to the bed and they laid down. She held him. And even though it was the middle of the day, and they were still fully clothed, they slept in each other’s arms.

Chapter End Notes

I'm very curious what your reactions are to the scenes! Let me know in the comments.

Kudos if you like. Thank you for those who have already given them.

Readers, you are the best. Thanks for your attention, enthusiasm, and keen eyes.
The Factory

Chapter Summary

Events boil over at the cotton factory; the hospital deals with enormous injuries.

Chapter Notes

Thanks for commenting on the last chapter. Most people thought Cersei deserved to be punched by Brienne, and I definitely agree.

This chapter is dark. Warning: people getting hurt in this chapter....

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Mrs. Lannister, my little birds tell me that the workers are going to stop working at 5pm tomorrow, starting a Baratheon factories-wide strike.” Qyburn said, meekly looking down at his wrinkled hands, dull-looking in his grey suit.

Cersei sighed, as she tapped her fingers impatiently on her desk in her factory office. She stood up and walked to the large window, which overlooked the factory floor. She had been spending more and more time here the month and a half since Joffrey’s sentence. The Red Keep was still and empty and lonely; it echoed with the ghost of Robert. And she couldn’t bear the thought of her son being murdered next month. She was filled with anguish when she allowed herself to think about it. But here, it was warm, and the factory was filled with cotton fibers floating in the air like a beautiful snow storm. She liked it; she felt she was living in a snow globe. She also liked watching the workers move, as if they were pieces of a large machine. There they were, the little sheep, toiling away, their skin red and cracked, their rags filthy and unwashed. She felt a shiver down her spine. It was true that she made them work hard, but it was certainly their choice to show up every day. To even bring their children to work every day, instead of sending them to school. She frowned in disapproval. No, these workers weren’t sheep, Cersei thought. They’re rats, sad, dirty, and multiplying by the dozen. And they have chosen to betray the company that put money in their pockets and food on their tables. She felt her anger turn to steel.

“There will not be a strike,” Cersei said, turning to Qyburn.

The man looked at her blankly, mouth agape. “But…Mrs. Lannister, tomorrow, they’re walking out.”

Cersei stood up straight, and stared at him with a queer, cold expression. “No one is walking out from this factory tomorrow. They will work until the end of their shift as usual.”

The grey man, the damned fool, looked flabbergasted. “I – I don’t understand.”
She sent him an arrogant grin. “Tell the Golden Company to chain the doors tomorrow afternoon. And guard the exterior of the building.” Her eyes blazed. “No one is walking out tomorrow. I’m teaching them a sharp lesson.”

Qyburn looked puzzled, and sputtered, “But…but…what use is this…”

She skewered him with her glance. He was a fool, but at least he was an obedient old fool who did exactly what she asked of him. His sputtering turned to obsequious silence. He nodded discreetly and turned to go.

“Oh, Qyburn.” The man paused, turning to her. “Tell Captain Strickland to come see me,” she said, smiling down at the view of the factory floor.

Harry Strickland was the only good thing in her life since Joffrey had been found guilty. Even Taena Merryweather was a disappointment, having returned to her husband after the verdict, citing some weak excuse or another. And Jaime, the one person she’d thought she could always rely on was a lost cause, since he’s deluded himself into thinking he was in love with that beastly whore. He did not even come to her when Joffrey was sentenced – their own son – and she would never forgive him for that. Now he was practically living with the ugly freak. Cersei did not know what such a beautiful man saw in someone so hideous, but was convinced that he would eventually come back to her, after he’s gotten over the novelty of fucking such a creature. In the meantime, she had to make do.

She was glad she hired the Golden Company now, even though they were outrageously expensive, because it brought her this tall, blond, statuesque man who looked like a more sensuous and younger version of Jaime, except that he had blue eyes, instead of green. Still, he was pretty to look upon, and even better to kiss. As the leader of a mercenary army, Harry Strickland was a lonely man, only finding solace in the laps of whores; he was ever grateful that a highborn lady such as herself would pay attention to him, and he proved to be as besotted and devoted as a teenage Jaime. He liked pleasuring her, and could do so for hours; but she liked it best when he fucked her, especially here in her office, overlooking the factory floor. She smiled, remembering all the times that she screamed out her climax, knowing that she could never be heard below because of the loud whirring and mechanical noise of the large machines. Yes, she would make do, and Harry Strickland would most definitely do for now. She licked her lips, and loosened the fastenings on her bodice. She smoothed her hair. And waited.

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Tywin placed the piles of paper on this desk in order. He refilled the ink in his pens and arranged his pens according to size in his drawer. It was aggravating how restless he was; it was certainly unlike him to be so…fidgety. He liked order; he liked control, but the past few months he had precious little of it. Since Joffrey’s verdict, there had been little peace in his life, and the Lannister name that he’d been so careful to cultivate over decades was the subject of salacious gossip, scorn, and blame. Never mind separating the criminal from the family – the Lannisters as a whole were apparently evil and corrupt, through and through. He did not fail to notice that he was longer invited to social events or charity benefits; no medical journals asked him to review studies; and to top it all off, he had been asked by the King’s Landing hospital executives to step down from the hospital board, which he’d been a part of for over twenty years. They had explained that it was ‘poor optics’ to have the grandfather of a convicted murderer on the board, and that his involvement negatively impacted the donations they received. It was as if his years of medical
service, research, publications had all been forgotten. He stifled a sigh. His children would be his downfall, he thought. The only bright spot in the past month and a half was that Jaime was now officially court ing Brienne; he had returned from Tarth the happiest he’d ever seen him, and since then, he’d been spending nights at the apartment. Jaime had even mentioned getting married to the doctor. This indeed, was the only piece of good news that he’d had in months, and it was surely only a matter of time that they were betrothed. Both Jaime and especially Brienne did heroic deeds in the terrible affair, and with their union, it was Tywin's hope that the Lannister reputation would be restored.

There was a knock on his door, and the valet announced that Petyr Baelish had arrived and was waiting in the sitting room. Tywin straightened his tie and spine, got up, and walked out of the room.

Littlefinger was waiting impatiently on a chair, jiggling his knee, checking his watch and looking around at the Lannister brothers who both observed him coolly. As always, his bespoke suit was immaculate. He stood up nervously when Tywin entered the room.

“Dr. Lannister-” Littlefinger began.

“To what do I owe this unexpected pleasure?” Tywin interrupted, his voice clipped.

“I have some urgent news,” he said, glancing at Tyrion and Jaime.

“All right. What is it, Baelish?” Tywin stared at the man, who was squirming in his seat.

“The factories,” he said, “There is to be a walk out, and workers are set to strike today at 5pm.” Both Tyrion and Jaime looked up at the news and frowned.

“Ah,” said Tywin. He frowned. “I suppose it’s a long time coming, since my daughter has made the conditions worse and worse for the workers.” He supposed this was an error of his, not stepping in and letting his daughter run the companies. But to his credit, it had only been a few months; one hardly expected things to fall apart this quickly. He had thought to give her time to prove herself; she had always boasted that she could run a business better than Robert ever could, which perhaps was too low of a bar, Tywin thought in retrospect. And giving her the run of the company kept her…distracted from other things she could have ruined.

Littlefinger hesitated. There was sheen of perspiration starting to show on his face. Tywin stared at him with a raised brow.

“There’s something else…Cersei has ordered that the doors to the King’s Landing factory be chained and the Golden Company to guard from the outside. She wants to prevent workers from walking out. Literally.” He said, with a slight smirk. He looked more himself now that he had delivered the bad news. The man took a moment to straighten his tie.

“What – how – what is she thinking?” Tyrion said, a puzzled expression on his face.

“She doesn’t think. She reacts,” Jaime said flatly.

“But this will lead to violence, surely,” said Tyrion.

Jaime had gotten up, and put on his jacket. Tyrion looked up at him in confusion. “Jaime, what are you-”

“She has to be stopped. Those people can’t be locked in. People are going to get hurt.” Jaime’s tone was curt and clipped. He looked at his watch. “It’s 4:30. I have half an hour to get there and
try to convince her that this is a ridiculous plan.”

“I shall come with you.” Tywin announced, to the surprise of the room. “She will more likely listen to me than you, Jaime, given the state of your…relationship.” He gave his son a withering and knowing glance.

“And I,” Tyrion said, walking toward the bar, “Shall stay here and entertain our guest.”

Littlefinger smiled and nodded, an ease settling back into his skin. He leaned back into his chair.

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They could smell it before they could see it. The smoke slowly filtered into their carriage, and as the horses got closer to the factory, they could see grey plumes in the distance, rising and growing as they came closer. Jaime was gripped with fear and a cold dread. He knew – he just knew that the smoke was coming from the factory. He willed the carriage to go faster as panic began to rise within him. His father remained cool, though there was a deep frown between his eyes that normally wasn’t there. For some reason, this disturbed Jaime even more than the sight of the smoke.

When they arrived, his fears were confirmed; red flames erupted from the windows of the huge building and black smoke was filling the air. He heard screams – of men, women, and horrifyingly, of children coming from the building. They burst out of the carriage and ran toward the factory. A shocked and crying crowd had begun to gather outside the perimeter walls. They spotted Qyburn running toward them, axe in hand, his whole person covered with soot and smoke. He was out of breath, severely panting.

“The doors are chained – people are inside-” He bent at his waist, gasping for breath.

“And Cersei?” Jaime demanded, his need urgent, as he stared at the fire that was quickly engulfing the large building.

“She left soon after the fire started, with Harry Strickland – she’s safe.” Qyburn eked out, his voice hoarse. Jaime didn’t know if he felt relief or anger or happiness that his sister was alive and safe. He tried to take deep breaths. Twenty years ago, he tried to prevent this very thing from happening with Aerys, and now it was happening right in front of him. He looked again, toward the blazing factory, saw the chains still on the door – one or two doors were open, and a few people – men mostly – straggled out, coughing and staggering. He didn’t even think, he grabbed the axe from Qyburn, and started to move.

A hand gripped his forearm. His father. “Jaime, don’t. Just wait until the fire brigades come. Cersei’s safe. Don’t risk yourself.” Jaime thought he saw a flash of worry in his father’s eyes, an edge of pleading in his voice.

“I have to, father. There are children in there.” Jaime shook off his father’s grip, wound his scarf around his nose and mouth and ran toward the inferno.

He made quick work of the chains – Qyburn was a weak old man, after all, and it took no more than a few blows of the large axe to unchain the doors, but when he flung them open, he was hit with intense whoosh of heat, and had to duck to avoid the flames that shot out the door. People lurched out, all blackened with soot, some screaming in pain, whether men or women he did not
know. He saw a way in – one of the entrances was clear and not yet burning, and he took a deep breath of air and went in, listening for shouts of help.

He heard them now, children’s voices, screams in the far corner. Heat assaulted his body, waves of it seemed to fling him from side to side and he found himself wavering, trying to find air, and he bent low and ran as fast as he could toward the voices, and there they were, he saw them, four or five children who were about seven years old, hiding under heavy machinery. Jaime pulled them out, one by one, and told them which direction to run, but there was a little girl who was passed out and he reached out for her, when all of a sudden he heard a huge thump from up above and saw chunks of the burning roof and heavy beams fall down toward them, and his hand was still trying to reach the little girl and he was pulling her out, just in time, and all of sudden the machine collapsed on his hand and he felt a sharp, crushing pain. He used his other hand and shoulder to lift and he pulled out his right hand and it was burning and bloody, and he couldn’t breathe, and he grabbed the girl and flung her over his shoulder and ran out, as fast as he could, even though he could barely take a breath. He could see blood dripping from his hand, and all he could do was concentrate on the little girl and saving her. He ran. Soon he felt the cool air, smelled it almost, and they burst out of the building, running as quickly as he could until finally, he had to collapse on the street. And he was grateful for the air, which he gulped, and for the sliver of blue sky hidden behind the thick black smoke that surrounded him. Blue, he thought, as he surrendered to the pain in his body.

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At the hospital, they were slammed with survivors of the fire, as stretcher upon stretcher of men, women and children came in. Unfortunately, it looked like just as many people were led to the morgue. The number of fatalities was huge. All the doctors were on the floor, treating as many patients as possible. Spare rooms and wide hallways were used as improvised treatment rooms, and cots were dragged out from storage to house the overflow of patients. Brienne had never seen anything so alarming and at such a grand scale. She and Jon exchanged looks of despair. What exactly happened at the factory?

Many of the patients were suffering from smoke inhalation, and just needed some fresh air to clear their lungs; those were the lucky ones. Other lucky ones were those with minor burns that could be cleaned and dressed. However, there were a number of patients that arrived with terrible burns all over their bodies; nothing could be done for them except to provide pain relief to ease their passing. Brienne felt helpless and useless. She could only watch these people die, their burns were so bad.

Oberyn had taken charge and moved patients who were already close to discharge, and cleared a unit that would be specifically for burn victims. Brienne was run off her feet, treating wounds, slathering ointment, wrapping burn injuries; she didn’t even have time to talk to patients, who were mostly unconscious anyway, but still; she only saw wounds, not faces; heard pain, not names.

“Brienne!” A commanding voice called to her, and she looked up and saw Tywin striding toward her, an intense look of worry on his face. The fact that he looked worried made her even more anxious.

“Dr. Lannister, what are you doing here?” she asked, finishing up dressing the wounds of a patient.

“You’re needed,” he said, pulling on a lab coat. “Operating theatre, with Oberon. Quickly.” His
jaw was tight, his eyes narrowed. “I’ll take over from you.” He paused, then said, “Just do you best with him,” he said, lowering his eyes.

She strode quickly into the operating theatre, scrubbed and put on a clean smock in record time, and entered the room. Jon and Oberon were there, standing in front of the patient, whose body was fully draped with a white cloth.

“A factory survivor?” Brienne asked, taking her place.

Jon looked up, surprised to see her, his face full of concern. He opened his mouth as if to say something, but closed it after Oberyn gave him a look.

Oberyn’s smile was tight. “Yes, but not a burn though, a crushed hand. He was saving some children.” She looked at the injured hand, which looked crushed and bloody. They had already ligatured off a bleeding artery, thank goodness, so this man would not be dying of blood loss.

She idly glanced over to the man and over to his face. She saw golden hair, a familiar chiseled jaw, that face. Her blood ran cold and she feel colour draining from the face. “Jaime?” she breathed, shocked. His face wavered in front of her eyes, and she could feel her body trembling, her knees buckling. She stared uncomprehending at his still face. He looked like a waxwork mannequin.

“Brienne, stay with us. Deep breaths. We need you here,” Oberyn called to her in a loud calm voice.

She nodded, gulping air. Jon looked at her, worried. After a few moments, she came back to herself. Focused. This was no time to fall apart; Jaime needed her. She thought of Tywin’s words to do her best. She would. For Jaime.

She knew that for hand crushing injuries, blood flow was paramount and swelling was a concern. Already, his hand swollen to twice its normal size. There may have been multiple fractures on his hand.

“This looks bad,” Oberyn murmured. “We can save the hand, but whether it will be functional will be another matter.”

They found all the severed vessels and clamped them to stop blood loss; thankfully, for small vessels, blood automatically clot on its own and required no stitches. Brienne concentrated on the debridement of damaged tissue and bits of metal that had embedded themselves in his hand, all the while inspecting the veins to see if they were still healthy. Soon, they did all they could do with the hand and started to suture the skin using fine steel wire, and wrapped it loosely in gauze to accommodate the swelling.

“It’s the best we can do, doctors. How well he heals will depend with time, and the body’s processes.” Oberyn said, as they finished.

“Brienne,” Jon said, looking at her carefully, “We’re short of nurses here, so would you mind wheeling Jaime up to the private room? Tywin paid for the best, obviously.” She nodded, stripping off her smock and washing up. She stared at Jaime’s pale face.

Jon touched her arm gently as she was about to wheel him away. “He’s alive. He’ll be fine.”

She nodded, unable to think of what to say. “We’re going back to the floor to deal with burn patients,” said Oberyn, looking at her intently. “He’ll need someone to be there. The bandaging is important in the first 24 hours, as you know. Do this yourself, if you want to give him the best chance with his arm. We’ll take care of the chaos downstairs.” Brienne nodded gratefully.
She took him to his private room, which was the same room that she had recovered in after her attack. Jaime had paid for that room, she remembered. She met Tyrion waiting by the door, and she quickly updated him before going in. Tywin was still obviously treating patients downstairs. Jaime need to be monitored for a little while before visitors could come in. They were short of nurses, so she had to do much of the adjustments of the bed and his body herself. He was still unconscious and would likely be for another thirty minutes or so. Then she would have to carefully administer pain medication.

She glanced at his face, which was peaceful in sleep, though much of him was stained with soot and smoke. Thankfully he was breathing all right, though she suspected that when he woke up, his throat and lungs would be hurting and uncomfortable. She readied a bowl of warm soapy water and slowly cleaned him up the best she could. Black soot came easily off his skin. She couldn't help but admire the planes and angles of his face, and marveled at how utterly beautiful he was.

And yet again, he had been a hero, saving countless lives. Gods, she thought. How could she ever have hated him at one point? How easily the pendulum had swung, she thought. He is noble and good, and she loved him; it was a simple fact. She didn’t dare think of him not being in this world. Part of her cursed him for going into the burning building to save those children – what a foolish, stupid thing to have done – but she knew that if it were her in the same circumstance, she would have also made the decision to go in, same has he did. Lovely, honorable, adorable man. She thanked the gods he didn’t perish in that factory.

She sat by him, just looking at him, making sure he was breathing. Making sure he was alive.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry to dampen the holiday spirits with this chapter. Tell me your concerns and thoughts in the comments!

Kudos if you like this story, and thanks for those who have already given them.

Huge thanks to the readers. Wishing all of you a very happy holiday season, whatever and however you celebrate. I'm hoping to keep updating throughout this time, though there may be random days when things get too busy for me to post. XOXOXO
His last memory before losing consciousness was blue: the tiny patch of blue that he saw through dense smoke. His first sight when he opened his eyes and emerged from the dense fog of his sleep was again blue, the sapphire blue of Brienne’s eyes.

“Jaime,” she said softly, sitting by his bedside. There were dark shadows under her eyes and she looked tired. She sometimes had the look of someone holding up the world, as she did now, and the expression dominated her countenance, though the clouds of her face parted a little when she smiled in relief as he opened his eyes. She was stroking his hair. At least he could feel that, he thought. At least his heart was still intact.

Her eyes were the most extraordinary blue, deep as the seas but lit within somehow, as if someone had deliberately buried bits of light in her irises. He felt himself smile, lazily. He longed to kiss her.

“Brienne. Wench.” He croaked. He noticed now that his throat was in pain, a burning in his lungs. He thickly swallowed.

“Shhh.” Brienne said, her hand resting on his cheek. “Don’t talk. You’ve inhaled a great deal of smoke. Your throat will be sore for a while.” She smiled at him softly. “I’m glad you’re awake.”

He felt a dull throbbing in his hand, and he looked down. His right hand was a thick globe of gauze, wrapped with what looked like a factory’s worth of cotton. He closed his eyes. He remembered now: the fire, the axe, him running into the building, the screams of children. Something falling on his hand. He groaned. His vision swam.

“Jaime.” Brienne said, her steady voice leading him away from those horrific sights. “You were in the factory fire, you saved many people. Your hand got crushed.” He watched as her face crumpled a little bit. “We operated on your hand, and it’s just a waiting game now.”
He looked down at the large wad of cotton that contained his hand. “We hope that you’ll be able to maintain function and feeling, but…your injuries were bad, Jaime. I’m sorry.” He closed his eyes; he couldn’t bear her wide eyes any more with their blue expression. He heard her, but he needed to go away. There was too much pain in his head. He surrendered himself to sleep.

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The next time he awoke she was bandaging his hand. He turned his face away, unwilling to look at the wound. His whole arm throbbed, and he didn’t know if it came from his hand or his arm.

“I gave you some pain medication just now, Jaime. It’ll hurt less soon.” He looked into her kind face. He couldn’t seem to speak or form words, only look at her in silence. His mouth was dry. He was thirsty.

“Here,” she said, lifting his shoulder up. She held a cup to his lips. “Drink,” she said, looking down at him.

He opened his lips and felt cool water slowly fill his mouth and run down his throat. It was delicious, and he opened his mouth wider, wanting more, but she took her time, giving it to him sip by sip. Her hair was a golden halo around her head. He remembered the beach that first night and how he thought that she looked like an angel. He also remembered how happy he was when he was in her arms, and he in hers. But the way she looked at him now, her gaze so full of concern, made his heart hurt.

“Sleep,” she said, stroking his hair. He closed his eyes, and he felt the lightest brush of her warm lips on his own.

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Jaime opened his eyes and met the black and green mismatched eyes of his brother. Tyrion looked exhausted and seemed to have aged five years since he last saw him. He felt clearer, less foggy. He looked around, and saw that he was in a private room at the hospital.

“Tyrion,” he said. His throat was less sore, but his voice still came out creaky.

“Jaime,” Tyrion smiled, his eyes wet and worried.

“Jaime,” a deep, commanding voice boomed. He looked up and saw Tywin on the other side.

“The fire,” Jaime croaked.

Tyrion lowered his eyes, shaking his head. Tywin’s jaw tightened and he looked into the far distance, speaking in a detached tone. “The factory is gone, obviously. Many dead. Some survivors, but too few of them.”

“It’s a disaster.” Tyrion said sadly.

“And Cersei?” Jaime asked, remembering the chain of events.
Tywin let out an uncharacteristic sigh. “She was arrested by the Gold Cloaks. Negligence. Perhaps even manslaughter.”

Tyrion added sadly, “No one knows how the fire started, but given the negligent safety conditions of the factory and the generally high flammability of cotton mills, the fire was not a surprise. She had been warned about the fire risk numerous times. Of course the worst part was the fact that she had the doors chained.”

He shrugged. “But she’s out on bail, having used her Baratheon money.” Tyrion continued.


“She denies everything, of course,” Tywin remarked dryly. “But the Golden Cloaks have been talking to members of the Golden Company, Qyburn, and Littlefinger. Both Qyburn and Littlefinger are chirping happily.” His eyes turned hard. “I suspect she will not get away with this and will end up in prison.”

Jaime let out a breath. He could not believe that anyone would chain the doors so people couldn’t get out. Anyone, no. But Cersei…yes. He winced as he recalled the screaming, the trapped children, the blackened bodies streaming out the doors when he opened it. There was no reason for it. No meaning to it. A wave of nausea came over him, the world spun, and he felt himself start to wretch.

He heard his brother shout.

And suddenly he felt a steady hand support his shoulders, lifting him upright, a basin under his mouth. He threw up splashes of water; he hadn’t eaten anything, of course nothing substantial would come up…. He was propped back down on the bed, and felt a warm cloth wipe his mouth. He opened his eyes, saw the bluest eyes and the tallest, goddess-like form, and grinned wildly. He had never been so happy to see anyone in his life.

“Wench! I love you,” he said loudly. Tywin raised an eyebrow. Tyrion smirked.

She looked back at him, blushing and embarrassed, trying not to smile. He smiled wider. “Wench.”

“Jaime. Are you feeling alright? You had a bout there.” He nodded. He reached out to grab her hand, but all he did was futilely move the white globe of his hand toward her, sending a dull ache up his arm.

“Oh,” He said, slightly confused. “Right.”

Brienne reached over and grabbed his other hand and held it. She looked down at him with a calming glance. “Jaime. You’ll get better. Rest.”

Jaime nodded, feeling drained. His father and brother observed them during their exchange. Tywin’s brow, in particular, had smoothed and he had a glint in his eye. Tyrion had a pleasant and placid expression on his face.

The wench was stroking his hand now, and he concentrated on the warmth of her skin, the hypnotic movement of her fingers on his knuckles and the back of his hands. He felt sleepy and closed his eyes.
“Jaime,” Jon came into his room, holding a small tray of medical supplies. The young man looked worn out, dark circles under his eyes, his shoulders slumped with exhaustion.

“Jon,” Jaime sat up, and gave the man a small smile. He looked around.

“Where’s Brienne?” he asked. She had been by his side every time he woke up; not seeing her here for the first time, he missed her.

Jon smiled. “Brienne is just napping on the cot in her office.” He looked frankly at Jaime. “You know, she hasn’t slept since you came in, a couple of days ago.”

Jaime nodded, feeling bad for the wench, and realizing how selfish he’d been. “You look like you haven’t had much sleep yourself, Jon.”

He shook his head and looked at Jaime thoughtfully. “No, none of us have had much sleep. There were so many patients that came in that day.” Jon set his tray down on the small table beside Jaime’s bed. “I’ve never seen so many people injured on such a grand scale.”

Jaime sighed. “It was something that was entirely preventable, I hear.”

Jon’s jaw tightened. “The environmental and working conditions in the factory has unfortunately been a huge subject in all of the papers, I’m afraid. Your sister has been the focus of quite a number of sensational reports.” Jon looked at him sharply, studying his reaction.

“She’s a goddamn fool,” Jaime said bitterly.

Jon nodded. He pulled up a stool next to Jaime, and straightened his spine, assuming a professional air. “Jaime, I’m here to change your bandages and assess your wounds.” Jaime nodded, closing his eyes. “Brienne has told me that you’ve been avoiding looking at your hand, but I think it’s important to lay your eyes on it today, so you can see what you’re dealing with. The swelling has gone down significantly, so it won’t be as bad as it was a couple of days ago.”

Looking at his hand was the last thing he wanted to do, and of course the wench had noticed his avoidance. But he supposed this was a good a time as any; he gave Jon a curt nod.

His pain was surprisingly minimal, especially when he didn’t move his arm. He watched as Jon carefully unwrapped the gauze, his anxiety increasing as the dressing on his wound got smaller and smaller. He closed his eyes. When he opened them he gasped. His right hand – or what was left of it – was monstrous. It was red and covered with stitches; his entire hand looked like a bloody patchwork quilt. It looked like it had been chewed up and spit out by a bear or some sort of ghastly beast.

“I know it looks bad,” Jon said, closely examining the wounds and stitches. “But it could have been a lot worse. You could have lost your hand entirely. We’d thought that you’d had massive fractures, but thankfully your bones seem intact. And the stitches will heal, although I must warn you that your scarring will be extremely severe.” Jon looked at him sympathetically. He then washed his hands and proceeded to touch various parts of Jaime’s hands, looking over at Jaime as he did so. “Can you feel me touching you, Jaime?” Jaime had been staring at Jon, as he moved his hands up and down his wounds. He had the odd sensation of being outside his body. He felt very little of Jon’s touch. A ghost of a touch. He knew logically that he should be feeling pain and quite a lot of it, considering the freshness of the wounds, but Jon’s fingers were a mere echo on his skin.
A distant pain, a distant touch.

“Not – not really,” Jaime stammered, trying to remain calm despite a rising panic. “I feel a vague sense that you’re touching me, and a bit of pain, but it’s like I’m wearing thick gloves or something. Very little pain. And I should be hurting quite a bit, right?” He looked at Jon with increasing desperation.

Jon frowned. “It’s hard to say. Frankly, it’s too soon to guess at how your hands will heal. The nerves may be damaged, but we’ll start to work on movement and getting the blood flowing to your hand again. It just might take time, Jaime.” He paused. “But you may not regain full use of your hand. You must prepare yourself for that possibility.”

Jon slowly rewrapped his hand with new dressing. Jaime closed his eyes, willing himself to go away, wishing himself to fall asleep. He couldn’t face it. He’d be a useless one-armed man. He wouldn’t be able to hold things, touch things, feel things. What use would he be now, and who would ever want him? He squeezed his eyes tight. Willed himself away.

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Jaime didn’t know whether it was that same night or the next night or another evening altogether, but he heard his door open and footsteps approach his bed. He felt a gentle touch on his face, hands stroking his cheek, carding through his hair. He kept his eyes closed. He didn’t want to face the world.

“Jaime,” a voice called out. Brienne. “Open your eyes.”

He felt a kiss on his forehead, his cheeks, then a pair of soft, plump lips on his. Brienne. He opened his eyes, and saw her blue eyes, the blue of summer skies. “Brienne,” he murmured. He wanted so much to hold her.

She kissed him again, longer this time. Upon seeing her face, he automatically smiled, but the smile quickly died as he remembered the state of his hand.

“Wench, I’m ruined. My hand…” He turned his face away and avoided her eyes.

“I know, Jaime. I’ve spoken to Jon.” She looked at him with an expression of kindness. “I’m sorry that this happened to you, but now you have to work hard to make your hand better.”

Jaime shook his head. “No, the hand is useless. Might as well cut it off, the good it will do me,” he said bitterly.

She shook her head fiercely. “No, Jaime. It’s too early to think like that. Your hand has undergone severe trauma and will need time to reconnect itself and for the nerves to heal. You need to help us do that. You need to work with us.”

“What’s the use, wench? I can barely feel my hand. My hand should be hurting right now, but I feel next to nothing!” Jaime scowled. He turned his head away from her and closed his eyes.

“I didn’t know you were a craven.” Brienne said in a challenging tone, her voice low.

“Craven?” Jaime stared at her and felt anger rise in him. No one, in his life, had ever accused him
of cowardice. The gall of this woman. He felt irritated.

“That’s better,” Brienne said, glaring at him. “Be angry, instead of just giving up.” She glowered. “You’ve been moping far too long here. Tomorrow, you’re going to wash, get dressed, and I’m going to personally oversee your hand exercises.”

“Wench! You have terrible bedside manner, has anyone told you?” Jaime said, angry and annoyed. He loved his wench, but she was being too much.

“My compassion is for the people who are way worse off than you, Jaime. You’re lucky you have a hand. You’re lucky you have your life. Many in that factory could not claim the same.” Brienne gave him a hard stare.

Jaime stared back, both angry and chastised. He lowered his head and felt suddenly deflated. He nodded. “Tomorrow, then, wench. I shall be under your command.”

Brienne’s hard expression crumbled and she broke into a lovely smile that made his heart beat faster. She kissed him and he reached out to her with his good hand, cupping the back of her neck, drawing her closer, deepening the kiss.

“Thank you,” she said, stroking his cheek. He leaned his head into her touch. No matter what, Brienne just made him feel whole.

“Jaime,” Brienne said, looking at him lovingly, her eyes glistening. “I’m so glad you’re alive.”

He smiled. “I would never leave you, wench.” He kissed her again, wanting her even closer.

Chapter End Notes

Send me your thoughts and concerns via comments!

Kudos if you like and haven't done so. Thanks for those who have given kudos.

Many thanks, dear readers. Happy holidays and Happy New Year! My fondest wish is to see NCW and GC work on a very good project together.
The Northstar

Chapter Summary

Jon says his farewells.

Chapter Notes

I enjoyed your comments about the last chapter, which was more of a quiet one. Thank you so much for sending me your thoughts - your support has really motivated me to continue to write this story.

This chapter, Jon says goodbye.

Jaime was surprised to find the brooding form of Jon darken his doorway this morning. He was, of course, expecting the wench, Pod, or even Tyrion, all of whom were taking care of him since he was discharged from the hospital a week and a half ago. Not that he needed looking after, Jaime thought. He was fine. Just a useless man with a useless hand. Initially, Tywin had wanted him to come to his home, where there would be servants, but Jaime insisted on recovering in the apartment with Brienne near; surprisingly, Tywin relented almost immediately to the idea.

“How are you, Jaime?” Jon said, approaching him and pulling up a chair next to where Jaime was sitting, on his right side. There was an air of expectation about Jon today, as if he were on the verge of blurting something alarming.

Jaime nodded, lifting up his right hand for the doctor to examine. He was almost nearly all healed now; the stitches had long since been removed and his hand was no longer inflamed. His hand was crisscrossed with red lines, like a map of roads in a very busy city. Oberyn had assured him that the marks would mostly fade to white, but would never look normal. Jaime supposed he was fated to horrify and disgust every man, woman, and child that he met.

Jon held the hand, running his fingers along the scars. “You still have no pain?” Jon asked, looking up at him. Jaime could faintly feel the man’s fingers, but the feeling was a tenth of what he should feel. “No,” Jaime replied, “But I can sense that you’re touching me, though I can’t say I fully feel it.”

Jon nodded. “Can you move your fingers?” The man looked at him curiously.

Jaime shrugged and closed his eyes to concentrate and focus his mind; though it took a lot of effort, his fingers twitched up and down. “It’s hard.” Jaime said, frustrated. There seemed to be some kind of disconnect between what he was telling his brain to do and the clumsy, dull twitches of his
waxwork hand and fingers.

Jon nodded, looking somewhat pleased. “Better than a week ago,” he said. “You’ve been doing daily exercises?”

Jaime rolled his eyes. “The wench has been torturing me with an hour of dull, repetitive exercises twice a day. She’s a slave driver.” Brienne really had been beastly toward him, and harsh when he refused to do his exercises. When he’d explained that they were exhausting and that he didn’t want to do them, she’d glared at him and argued until he gave in. His wench was really very infuriating.

Jon smiled, perhaps in delight at the thought of the wench being mean to him. “I wouldn’t expect any less of her.” He looked at Jaime. “The body is a mysterious thing. Sometimes, nerves that have been severed make new connections. You might regain more feeling in your hand yet.” He paused, giving him an impish look. “You should listen to your **wench**. She knows what she’s doing.”

Jaime chuckled. “She certainly leaves me no choice, Jon.”

Jon folded his hands and leaned back on the chair. “I actually haven’t just come here to track your progress, Jaime.” He tilted his head and looked at him. “I’ve come to say goodbye. I’m leaving soon for Winterfell.”

A few weeks ago the news would have filled him with delight, and he would have been certainly jumping up for joy. But he’d somehow gotten used to Jon’s intelligent, sensible presence; he also observed how much Brienne valued his company. Somehow, these two very serious people made each other smile an awful lot; of course, he thought, it was Jaime who made Brienne smile the most. Jon had visited him often while he’d been in the hospital, and he’d genuinely come to like and respect the man, never mind the still persistent jealousy that vaguely lingered within him (which he was able to almost wholly ignore).

“Oh.” Jaime said, at a loss for words and frowning. “Jon, I believe I shall actually miss you.”

Jon laughed, standing up to go. “I venture I will feel the same.” He held out his left hand – good man – for Jaime to shake. They shook and Jon pulled him into a hug.

“Take care of Brienne.” Jon said. “She has a soft heart.” He looked at Jaime sadly.


Jon nodded. “I’ve known that for a long time,” he said, surprising Jaime. He suddenly narrowed his eyes and looked at him very pointedly. “But Jaime, if you break her heart or hurt her, I will kill you. I mean that.” Jon gave him a dark look, no doubt meaning every single word.

Jaime grinned and nodded. “I understand. But it’s likely she’ll break my heart first.”

Jon smiled vaguely, then turned to Jaime with a serious expression. “Dorne…will be very good for her, Jaime.” He furrowed his brow. “I hope you don’t try to hurry her into anything. She’s a good surgeon, and that’s been her life’s ambition. But as I say, she has a soft heart.”

Jaime nodded. He understood that Jon was formally relinquishing his care of Brienne to him, and was sad to have to do so.

“Come North, will you?” Jon said, smiling and raising his dark eyebrows. “That’s an official invitation, by the way.”

Jaime chuckled, nodding his head. “Take care of yourself, Jon.” Jaime called out to him as Jon left
“Come,” Brienne said, leading Jon by the arm. It was a fine May afternoon, and the sun shone on the streets of King’s Landing, making all the windows of the dull brick buildings sparkle. It was on days like this that she realized how much she would miss the city. But she supposed the city was too small for her ambitions now. They were both done their residency, finally, and were now officially surgeons. They had come such a long way from the frightened, unsure, insecure medical students who made their own way to the Citadel, despite all of the odds against them. They were the oddballs and misfits that somehow gravitated to one other, and found solace, friendship, and love with each other. Brienne had no idea how she could have survived medical school and the residency without Jon.

“Where are you taking me, Brienne?” he laughed, holding her tight by the arm and leaning into her.

“You’ll see,” said Brienne, grinning mischievously at him. She was pleased that Jon seemed in brighter spirits in the last couple of weeks; Robb had told him that Catelyn was much better, and was back on her feet, which seemed to ease Jon’s mind quite a bit. And Jon had been especially kind to Jaime after his accident, and Brienne would even dare to say that they had become tentative friends. She turned them around a corner.

“Here it is,” Brienne said, stopping them in front of a storefront, whose window was filled with portrait photographs of couples, men, families, and children.

“A photography studio!” Jon marveled, his eyes wide. “I haven’t had my likeness taken in years! I remember having to sit still and not move for twenty seconds. It was difficult.”

Brienne looked at him with merriment. “This studio specializes in instant portraits, and can have pictures ready within the hour.” She lowered her eyes and blushed. “I want something to remember us by, and I want a picture of you, if you’d let me.”

“Brienne!” Jon said, smiling. “And I want a picture of you to take with me, so I won’t ever forget your magnificence.” She rolled her eyes at him.

She smiled eagerly. “It will be my parting gift to you, Jon.” In general, Brienne was leery about having her looks - that is, her profound ugliness, enhanced her obvious facial scar - be captured forever on camera, but strangely enough, she didn’t seem to mind her looks too much these days, perhaps in large part that people who loved her liked the way she looked. Most days, she thought she looked fine, especially in quality clothes that she commissioned from Mistress Nysterica. She remembered how moved Jon was when he was given his aunt Lyanna’s portrait by the dying Robert, and how just looking at that photograph made her seem so present and alive. And she wanted a record of the two of them together, just like this, fresh and young and full of promise and ambition. She wanted to remember this strange and wonderful time in her life with Jon, her best friend and first lover.

They went in, and posed for three sets of pictures: one of the two of them, sitting on a settee side by side, posing like a couple; one of Jon standing tall and proud, and another one of Brienne. An hour later, they returned to pick up the pocket-sized portraits, which were framed in a thin, etched silver
frame. Brienne had ordered a copy of the photographs for each of them.

“The photographer did a good job,” Jon pronounced, examining each of the portraits. The one with both of them was her favourite, as they looked somehow relaxed and comfortable next to each other; it was as if their affection for each other was a palpable and visual thing that leapt off the paper.

Brienne giggled, holding Jon’s portrait. “You look like a Romantic poet here, Jon. Gods, your hair, your eyes. You could be standing at the edge of cliff, your pose is so dashing.” She again could not believe that someone as good-looking as him loved her and wanted her. She remembered the first time they had kissed, in the movie theatre, where Jon had brought her to see her first motion picture. She remembered how happy they both were to have found that thing between them. They were still happy now, of course, but so many things happened in their lives, and they had grown so much just in the past year.

Jon laughed. “You’ll always have this to remember me by. Even when we’re old, you can marvel at how handsome I once was.”

Brienne playfully hit him on the arm. “Gods, your vanity knows no bounds, Jon.” He laughed.

Jon carefully examined Brienne’s portrait. “I don’t know how he did it, but the photographer captured your eyes. Even though it’s in black and white, he somehow made them look alive and so blue. Of course, he captured your determination and your kindness.” He looked up at her, his eyes suddenly glistening. “I will never forget you, my dearest Ostrich.” He took her hand and held it. Brienne felt a tear roll down her cheek. Jon looked like he wanted to hug her, but they were in the middle of a public street. Instead, he squeezed her hand. She squeezed back.

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The next morning there was a knock on her door; she opened it and was surprised to find Jon, dressed in his traveling suit. She stepped aside and let him in.

“Jon! I thought I was supposed to pick you up on the way to the station,” Brienne said, confused.

Jon smiled, and reached into his pocket. “I wanted to return this,” he said, placing a set of keys in her palm.

She smiled. “The spare keys. I’d forgotten.”

“I’ve made tremendous use of it, as I recall.” He looked at her puckishly. She smiled at him fondly.

Jon looked down, fidgeting, then he looked up and met her eyes. “I want us to say goodbye here. Pod and Oberyn are sending me to the station.” Brienne opened her mouth to protest.

“Brienne, I don’t think I can say goodbye to you at the station. I don’t want to be on the train and see you standing on the platform, receding from me and getting smaller and smaller.” He looked at her with dark, sad eyes. “It would be too hard.”

She nodded. She could feel her throat constrict with emotion. Her Jon. She suddenly launched herself into his arms, and embraced him. They held each other tight and for a long time. She was
filled with inexpressible sadness; the taste was bittersweet in her mouth.

When they finally broke off, Jon smiled and reached into a jacket pocket, pulling out a small blue velvet box. He handed it to her and fixed her with his gaze.

“Jon, what’s this?” Brienne said, slightly alarmed and very surprised.

Jon chuckled. “Don’t worry, it’s not an engagement ring,” he said. “Anyway, I think Jaime has dibs on that particular ring finger,” he remarked dryly.

She opened the box, and couldn’t help but gasp. Inside was a silver pendant of a wolf’s head in profile, with a glittering sapphire for its eye. It was attached to a silver chain. “Jon, it’s beautiful.” Brienne breathed. “This is too much.”

Jon smiled, seeing her pleased reaction. “Nonsense. It’s a direwolf, my family - that is, the Stark family’s sigil - I had it made especially for you, and had them add the sapphire for the blue of your eyes.”

“Jon,” she said, looking at him with wide eyes. She was overwhelmed with affection for this adorable man.

Jon smiled gently. “This is the first thing I commissioned when I got the moon pill money. I wanted you to have something to remember me by no matter where our paths will take us. I want you to know that I will always protect you, Brienne. I will always be there when you need me.”

"And I will always be there for you, Jon." She felt her chin quiver and her throat suddenly felt tight. Tears rolled from her eyes. Jon took out the necklace and fastened it around her neck.

“You look beautiful, Brienne. Like a warrior queen.” He said, looking at her with serious eyes. “May my wolf always protect you.”

She touched the pendant, which hung in the space between her collarbones. The silver was already becoming warm from her body heat.

“Promise you’ll visit,” said Jon. “You can even bring Jaime.” He smiled, cocking his head.

“I promise, Jon. I will come see your North one day.” She kissed him on one cheek, then the other, then back to the other cheek.

Jon grinned, his eyes wet and threatening tears. “I shall very much miss your Dornish kisses.” He gave her a Dornish kiss in return. His lips were warm on her skin, his breath hot. He stroked the scar on her left cheek, then stepped away.

He turned to go, giving her one last look full of longing before he closed her door.
What did you think of Jon's final exit? Tell me in the comments! I love reading your responses.

Thanks so much for all the kudos!

Happy Christmas to those who celebrate. Wishing all of you great warmth and friendship with your family and/or chosen family. And remember you are not alone. :-)

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Cupid's Arrow

Chapter Summary

Brienne helps Jaime recover and gets him out for the first time since the accident. [WARNING: explicit sexual content]

Chapter Notes

Happy Christmas, my lovely readers. Here is a smut-filled chapter as a present from me to you.

Thanks for the beautiful comments about Jon leaving - he will be missed!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Inside his room, Jaime heard footsteps echo down the stairs; thinking it might be Brienne, he opened his door, and saw that her front door was ajar. Curious and with a vague feeling of unease, he peeked in, and let out a sigh of relief when he saw the wench, safe, sitting on her bed, her back to him. He looked carefully and saw with alarm that she was crying, her shoulders subtly moving up and down and little anguished sobs emerging from her chest. His insides squeezed at the sight. He walked toward her.

“Brienne?” Jaime said, sitting down next to her on the bed. She turned to him, her eyes sad and her face flushed. His poor wench. He took her into his arms.

“Brienne. What’s wrong?” He clumsily stroked her head with his dummy right hand. He barely felt the strands of her hair, the heat of her head; but still, she did not seem to mind.

“Jon just came by and said goodbye…he didn’t want me to take him to the station.” She pulled back and stared at him, and more tears dropped from her eyes. “And then I suddenly realized: what am I going to do without him? He’s always been there for me.”

“Oh, wench,” said Jaime, pulling her back into his arms and kissing her forehead. “I’m so sorry. I know it’s painful.” He squeezed her tighter, wanting somehow to make her feel better. “But if it’s any comfort, I’ll always be here for you whenever you need me. I promise.” She nodded into his chest. He held her until her sobs subsided, until her tears dried up and she started to hiccup adorably.

He went to the kitchen and got her a glass of water, mainly holding it with his right hand, but in a way that was significantly supported by his left one. He felt a fool for holding a glass with two hands like a toddler, but at least his right hand was doing something. And it would not do to break the wench’s glassware at this very moment.
He held it out to her, and she looked at him and smiled as she took the water from him.

“You’re holding it with your right hand,” she said, her face practically beamed at him.

“Well, technically, I’m using both my hands, wench,” he said in a sarcastic tone, but nonetheless he couldn’t help the pride that came over him all because she noticed his efforts.

She took a gulp of water and set it down. She wiped her nose and face with a handkerchief. “Gods, I must look a mess,” she exclaimed, embarrassed at her flood of tears.

“Nonsense,” Jaime murmured, kissing her cheek, and then all along her scar. She made a cute little noise in her throat.

Her face nudged his and her lips found his, soft and warm and oh so welcoming. Kissing her always felt like home, a home he never knew before her. He took her bottom lip between his, biting it a little, and she opened her mouth, allowing his tongue to dart into the warmth of her mouth. A surge of desire rose within him and he loudly moaned into her. He kissed all along her neck, her collarbone, and was startled to meet the eyes of a strange little wolf at her throat. He drew back a little.

“What’s this, wench?” He asked, fingering the pendant.

Brienne blushed and self-consciously touched the little wolf. “Oh, it’s a direwolf. Jon gave it to me as something to remember him by.”

He couldn’t much help it, but Jaime felt more than a twinge of jealousy. What was the pup doing giving jewelry to his woman? His wench?

Brienne’s face was an equal mixture of annoyance and amusement. “Jaime! Don’t be jealous.”

“I’m not,” he protested futilely, “It’s just so very considerate of Jon to give you jewelry featuring his family sigil and a sapphire that resembles exactly the colour of your eyes,” he said sarcastically. “Perhaps I should give you bracelet with a lion with a sapphire in its mouth,” he lifted an eyebrow. “Or better yet, a ring.”

The corners of her mouth were tight. She frowned at him. “Jaime. What is this about? I know it’s not just because Jon gave me a necklace. He’s gone up North for gods sake, or have you forgotten? What exactly is the matter?”

Jaime suddenly felt very tired, and very old. There was a piece of melancholy music in him that had been plucked by the sight of the necklace and the dissonant minor note repeatedly sounded within his soul. He did not know what it was or how to even begin to explain it.

He looked into Brienne’s eyes, and the face and her person that he loved wholly and completely. Yet he felt shame. “Brienne – I don’t know why you’re still with me. I’m old, no longer have a career, and have become a useless piece of furniture with this blasted hand. I was in love with Cersei, my own sister who also happens to be cruel and evil. I fathered three bastards by her. I don’t know why you haven’t gotten rid of me yet.” He looked down, unable to meet her glance.

She reached out and gripped his face in her hands, so he was forced to look into her eyes, which were filled with fierce, determined fire. “Jaime. Why would I ever leave you? I love you. You make me feel everything. You make me love life. You’re a goddamn hero, and you’ve saved my life and countless others. You are a good man. You’ve worked hard to change yourself and circumstances for the better. Why wouldn’t I love you?”
He stared at her, dumbfounded. His heart was thumping hard in his chest like cannon fire and he felt his soul expand. He had no words, but he could feel tears slowly run down his cheek. What a fool he was, he thought. Crying in front of the woman he loved.

She let go of his face, and looked down. “And if you think I would stop loving you because of your hand,” she picked up his mangled hand in hers. “Then you don’t know me.” She lifted his hand to her face and started kissing the long tracks of his scars. He thought he could feel the heat of her lips on his marred hand. His heart was bursting with every beat.

“Brienne,” he breathed.

“If you don’t mind this ugly scar on my face, why should I mind this hand? The hand that saved so many people from terrible pain and death?”

He just looked at her with a profound thankfulness, his face softening with adoration and love.

She kissed him long and hard, until he felt weak from happiness. His cock roared to life.

“Let me show you, Jaime.” She said, looking at him with darkened eyes as he perched on the edge of the bed. She started unbuttoning his shirt, kissing his throat and chest as the skin was exposed. In an instant his shirt was off, and she regarded his golden, sculpted chest, his strong shoulders, his muscular arms and taut stomach with greedy eyes that traveled up and down his body in unabashed appreciation. He felt himself grow even harder at her gaze, lust turning his blood hot. She continued kissing down his chest, pausing to tongue and lick his nipples, producing in him a cry, then kissing the sides of his torso and abdomen.

“Brienne,” he panted, reaching out to touch her, undress her. She stepped out of reach and quickly unbuttoned her shirt, taking it off with quick efficiency. She came over and kissed him, pressing her naked chest to his, leaving both of them moaning at the sensation. She resumed kissing down his body, and stopped to press a hand on the very prominent bulge in his trousers, stroking his thick shaft through the fabric. Jaime quivered and let out an involuntary groan. She started to undo his trousers, pulling them and his smallclothes down slowly, as he lifted his hips from the bed to help her slip them off. His stiff erection sprang out, at last released from its confinement. Brienne knelt before his bent legs now, as he sat on the edge of the bed. He sucked in a breath.

“Brienne, you don’t have to—” he started to say, but his well-intentioned words abruptly dissolved into a choked cry as she began to deliberately lick up and down his shaft, taking her time with her tongue to taste and caress him. Her tongue then traced the head of his cock in lazy circles, licking of the drops of wetness at the very tip. He hissed, groaning his approval. She took him into her mouth now, first the head and he felt her soft, plump lips surround his shaft and move all the way down to the base of his cock. He was in heaven. It felt incredible, how her lips were simultaneously massaging and caressing him; he felt near faint and entirely overwhelmed with the feeling of her mouth so boldly on him. Somehow she was able to take all of his long length in, deep in her mouth and throat. He looked down and almost came right then from the sight of her plump pink lips moving up and down his cock, the sound of her wet slurps, her eyes looking at up him, eyes that were still so innocent but also full of lust. He threw his head back and let out a cry; everything felt too good, too much, and as he felt the pressure within him building, he knew he wouldn’t last very long with the way her mouth was moving, and he felt, oh gods, he felt her hand grab the base of his cock, allowing her mouth to move even faster on him, and he suddenly felt her other hand fondle his balls, and that was it, he was lost.

“Oh, fuck, Brienne!” he yelled, snapping his head forward and bucking up his lips, thrusting into her mouth as he came astonishingly hard and astonishingly long, shooting his seed down her throat with several strangled cries. She took all of him, swallowing every drop, and gently sucked all of
the remaining spend from him. He fell back on the bed, whimpering and exhausted, his whole body tingling and twitching with pleasure.

“Oh gods, Brienne,” he cried, breathing hard. He was covered in sweat. She moved on top of him, kissing him deeply, her tongue exploring his mouth, so he tasted himself on her. She sat up and stroked his hair. He felt entirely boneless. She picked up his right hand and kissed the palms, then turned it over and kissed the back of his hand.

“What do you believe me, Jaime? That I want you and will always want you?” She looked at him lovingly.

He nodded. “Yes. Yes. I believe you.” He allowed his right hand to slowly stroke her face. “And I think I’m the luckiest man alive.”

He moved to touch her now, bringing his hand to reach under her skirts. She shook her head, a smile on her face. “This was just for you, Jaime.” She winked. “You can take care of me later.” She stood up, picking up her shirt and putting it back on.

He made whine of protest. “I’m giving you thirty minutes to rest.” She gave him a commanding glance. “When I come back, you’ll be dressed. We’re going out today,” she said to an astounded Jaime, as she left him in her rooms, with him still slumped on the bed like a beached jellyfish.

===== She led him outside, where a two-person carriage drawn by a couple of horses awaited them. She looked at him and wondered if he was nervous. She remembered her own first outing after her attack; she remembered being so afraid that she insisted on wearing a veil. If Jaime looked nervous, he did not show it in his glittering emerald gaze.

“Whatyrion’s?” Jaime asked, recognizing the vehicle. He was wearing a light coat and black gloves. She was unsure if he was wearing the gloves for warmth or to hide the scars. He appeared nonchalant about them, in any case.

She nodded. “He let me borrow it for the day.”

He climbed into the passenger side, and she up the driver’s side. They began to gallop at a moderate pace; the spring air was lovely, as the trees were all a fresh, young green. She felt a fresh breeze in her hair. She looked over at Jaime, whose expression was one of pleasure and peace. She had just wanted him out of the apartment, and did not have much of a plan about where to go, but the burst of spring had inspired her to drive in a certain direction.

“Isn’t it nice being out after being cooped up for almost two weeks?” she asked him.

He nodded, smiling at her. He sighed happily, leaning his body into her.

She grinned and him and handed him one of the reins. He gave her a look of surprise. “We’ll drive it together,” she said, and they did, Jaime sitting up vigilantly and echoing her own movements of the reins.

They turned and stopped in front of a large park, with large paths and quiet rolling hills and giant trees with large, overhanging branches.
“Is this the botanical gardens?” Jaime asked, looking around.

Brienne looked at him with surprise. “You’ve never been?”

Jaime shook his head. “I’ve been to plenty of private gardens on large estates, of course, but not this public one.”

She shook her head. “Dear me, gods forbid that you set foot in a public garden,” she said in a teasing voice. Jaime laughed, got down and offered his right hand to help her down. She smiled at him.

“Good,” she said, noticing that was using his injured hand. Jaime smirked.

They strolled casually through the walking paths, admiring the freshness of the air and the lushness of the plants that lined their way. They followed a path that led to a large glass conservatory, the first of this immense size in all of Westeros. It was amazing to look upon, as the entire structure was made of glass and held together with intricate wrought iron. It was an architectural marvel. Brienne gaped admiringly.

“Hmmm. That’s something that they don’t have in Casterly Rock or Highgarden,” Jaime observed.

Brienne giggled. “I’m glad it managed to surprise even you, who’s apparently seen it all.” She excitedly led him by the hand. They entered the glass house, and was immediately immersed by heavy, hot, wet air. It was intensely warm. They were surrounded by large tropical palms, tall banana trees with its large, shiny leaves, vines that twisted around tree trunks, and mysterious, dark ponds on which large water lilies of all colours grew. The sound of chattering birds and whirring insects filled their ears.

Jaime looked around, expression of wonder at the environment he found himself in.

“It’s beautiful and strange in here, wench.” Jaime pronounced, “But so very hot.” He unbuttoned his jacket, and after some hesitation, took off his gloves. His right hand was intensely scarred and not pretty to look upon. But she knew from experience with the scar on her face that it was important to show this new self to the world as quickly as possible. He needed to get used to this alteration. She took his healed hand into hers and squeezed it. They walked around the glass house slowly, pointing out the big colourful birds that were squawking roughly in the trees. They encountered other couples, who barely gave either of them a glance. She could tell that Jaime was gaining a bit more confidence in leaving his hand bare; no one even gave them a second glance.

Eventually, the heat became too much – she could imagine how red and unattractive her face was – and they exited into the fresh air, taking a few deep breaths. Jaime, aside from a sheen of perspiration which made him glow like a fancy burnished stone, looked none the worse for wear, much to her annoyance. He actually looked delectable. She wondered again why she always surrounded herself with such incredibly beautiful people.

“Where to now, wench?” Jaime smiled, offering his right arm. She noticed with delight that he hadn’t bothered putting his gloves back on.

“This way,” Brienne said, looking at him playfully, and led him away from the main paths, away from the crowds, and through an unkempt patch of trees. Finally, they came upon a clearing and stood in front of an eight feet tall hedge that stretched on either side of them. In the middle was an opening for them to go through.

“Is this….?” Jamie began, looking around.
“Yes, it’s a labyrinth, a hedge maze. It hasn’t really been properly maintained for some years, but we can still go in.”

“And you’ve succeeded in getting out of this maze, wench?” He asked skeptically.

Brienne scoffed. “I have. It may be tall, Jaime, but it’s not all that complicated.”

“If you say so, wench.” He said, holding on to her hand.

They got lost; Jaime insisted he lead the way despite repeated protests from Brienne. Nevertheless, it amused her to see him get flustered and increasingly annoyed at every wrong turn. He turned to her, throwing up his hands in frustration. “We’re lost, wench.” He looked around at the dead end he had led them to; it was a pleasant little alcove, with a sculpture of Cupid, standing on a large, stone pillar, pointing his arrow in the air. There was a bench on one side of the hedge, and Jaime plopped himself down on it.

“There isn’t anybody around.” He looked up at her, alarmed. “How long do you think we’ll be stranded here? A few hours? A day? A week? Who would even notice we were gone? Tyrion? Pod, maybe.”

She looked at his handsome, aristocratic, puzzled face and started giggling. He frowned, giving her a sharp look. He walked toward her. “What’s so funny, wench?” His left hand reached out to caress her waist, spreading a heat through to her skin. Her thoughts flashed to what they did – what she did to him – this morning and she felt her whole body flush.

“You’re right, Jaime,” she said, drawing closer to him, “We are entirely all alone here. It’s a wonder if they’ll ever find us.” Her face was inches from his, and she could feel the warmth radiating from his skin.

Jaime widened his eyes in surprise and grinned. “You are a naughty wench, aren’t you? Leading me here to have your way with me.” He pulled her waist roughly to his, and she kissed him then, and wound her arms around his neck, running her hands through his hair. Jaime quickly opened his mouth and licked her lips, and their tongues slid and danced in each other’s mouths. She felt herself falling and could feel the core of her opening up, heating her blood; she felt that powerful feeling of wanting him. And she could feel how much he wanted her from the already shocking stiffness of his manhood against her hip, which he pressed insistently against her. He was kissing and sucking her neck, making her keen and whimper.

“Brienne, please, I want you.” Jaime gasped. “Can we….”

She didn’t even hesitate; she pulled him so they were behind the large stone pillar of the statue. “Yes. But quickly, Jaime.”

She kissed him, and her fingers quickly unbuttoned his trousers and she reached inside to pull out his rigid cock, making him groan. He frantically reached under her skirt and pulled off her smallclothes, which were already soaking wet. She lifted her skirts for him, leaning against the stone pillar, revealing her golden bush and glistening sex to him. He let out a low growl. His eyes were dark with lust as he simply lifted one of her long legs and hooked it behind him, opening up her cunt for him. With an aching moan, he slid into her with one hard thrust. She gasped at the sudden shock of being so quickly filled, and she realized suddenly that being a little taller than him made this position so much easier. She was so wet, even from this morning, and already felt on the verge; his every stroke made her tremble, as the angle of his hips made the base of his cock rub against her nub exquisitely. All she could do was grunt out her want, every time he forcefully pumped and ground into her, and she moved her hips against him just so, so she was closer and
closer than ever to her breaking point, and then he was frantically moving in and out of her, slamming into her depths, and he threw his head back and groaned, and hearing him so near his release made her even wetter and she frantically ground down hard against him, desperate, and she suddenly broke open, shattering with pleasure. Her whole body, from her cunt to her head to her toes exploded into little lights. And he too, slammed into her a few final times, shuddering and groaning helplessly into her neck. They were panting and could barely catch their breaths. They slid down to the ground, knees no longer capable of holding them up.

“Brienne,” Jaime murmured, exhausted, and pulling her close to him for a slow, gentle kiss. “That was incredible. Gods.”

She nodded shyly, still out of breath. “It really was.”

They sat for a few moments, then quickly rearranged themselves and brushed the grass off their clothing. Brienne rewound her hair into a bun, as it had been loosened by frequent…contact with the sculpture.

Jaime leaned into her and kissed her cheek.

“Well, wench, I think so far this has been a…successful outing. But how in the hells are we to get out here?” Jaime asked her with a raised eyebrow.

Brienne laughed. “Well, Jaime, if you’d listened to me and let me lead in the first place, we would in all likelihood not have gotten lost.”

He exhaled into her skin, making her shiver. “Oh, but I loved us getting lost.”

She pushed him away playfully. “As I was saying, I know the way out. There are clues on every statue in the maze. For example, this Cupid,” she said, pointing up to the sculpture they had just made love against, “Is pointing his arrow to the route to take. From there, it’s a quick matter of figuring things out.”

She grabbed him by the elbow. “Come on.”

She quickly led them out, much to Jaime’s chagrin. Thank the gods, they didn’t see a single soul about. They shouldn’t have done that in public, she realized in retrospect; it would have been far too easy for someone to stumble upon them fucking, and that would have been disaster indeed.

Sometimes, she almost didn’t recognize herself when she was alone with Jaime – some animalistic need nearly always took over; he brought out something primal and wild in her she had no idea even existed. It was so easy to want Jaime, to be with him in all ways and in all senses. When she was kissing him or when they were making love, she was lost to herself, and yet she never felt more like her real self. It was the strangest thing. But she made a mental note not to do something so risky again.

They were at their carriage. Instead of taking the drivers’ seat, she sat beside it.

“Well?” Jaime asked, puzzled expression on his face.

“You’re driving,” Brienne said simply. Jaime widened his eyes and started to shake his head.

“Jaime,” she said, looking at him kindly. “You can do this. I know you can. You already half drove on the way here, remember?”

He bit his lip, undecided. She held out the reins to him.
Jaime looked at her and grinned. “Only for you, wench,” he said, hauling himself up to the driver’s side and grabbing the reins.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think about the chapter in your comments! Did cupid land its arrow?

Thanks for the kudos!

Cheers to you readers. Again, posting is erratic this week because of holiday things.
“Pod, this is useless,” Jaime sighed, frustrated at the sight before him. It was lunch time, and in front of him were a delicious bowl of stew, some bread, wine, and a plate of vegetables. Jaime was very hungry, but for some torturous, sadistic reason, he hadn’t been able to eat a decent mouthful. Every time he’d held up the spoonful of food in the direction of his mouth, his grip would slip and the spoon with all its contents would clatter and fall. He had no sense of how hard to grip the damn cutlery. His hand felt like it was put on backwards. And Pod would not allow him to use his left hand.

“Captain Jaime, my orders are to have you practice eating with your right hand, and I think you’ve got to try some more.” Pod declared, this chin set, stubborn as a stuck mule. Jaime would have been a little impressed by the boy’s persistence if he hadn’t been prevented from eating his lunch. It had gone disastrously: a cup of spilled wine, spilled water; stew spilled all over the table and over his napkin covered (thank gods) lap and chest. Of course, now the food had gotten cold and the congealed brown stew looked as appetizing as something you’d find in the toilet.

“Did Brienne also order you to starve me to death, Pod?” Jaime glared at the boy.

“No. But she said to ignore all your insults and complaining.” Pod said, a smirk on his face. Jaime scowled. Who was this boy? What happened to the meek, stuttering, fearful boy who was afraid to ride a sweet-natured horse named Sugar? He shook his head. The wench. The wench happened to the boy. She had made the boy his torturer whenever she wasn’t around to do it herself.

“Fine,” he said, shoving some bread into his mouth. At least bread was easy to hold, he thought. He supposed he wouldn’t entirely starve. He chewed sullenly.

Pod looked at him, suddenly seeming nervous, like he wanted to say something but was afraid to.
Jaime raised his eyebrows. “Yes, Pod?”

“It’s just that, I’ve been helping out at the bookshop, and now with you, and Dr. Brienne sat me down the other day, and asked if I wanted to be a shop boy forever. I am fifteen now, almost a man grown,” Pod said, puffing up his chest. Jaime admitted that there was a certain manliness about the boy now; he’d grown a bit taller and had a certain maturity about his face.

Jaime nodded and smiled at him encouragingly. The boy nodded.

“Well, I told Dr. Brienne – and for some reason this popped in my mind – that I wanted to be a doctor like her and Dr. Jon.” The young man fidgeted with this hands.

“What do you, really?” Jaime raised a single eyebrow.

“I mean, take Dr. Jon. Well, he didn’t have money, like me, or parents like me, and he worked his way to get where he is, and I admire him for it.” He looked up at Jaime earnestly.

“Go on,” said Jaime, unable to hide a trace of irritation in his voice. He liked Jon well enough, but did he have to hear yet another person sing his praises as if he were Azor Ahai himself?

Pod cleared his throat. “Well, Dr. Brienne thought that if I studied with her, that I could eventually make it to the Citadel in a couple of years.”

“Studied with her?” Jaime asked, suddenly curious.

“Yes.” Pod grinned shyly. “She asked me if I wanted to go to Dorne with her, to study there. Dr. Martell agreed to have me study with his daughters, and allowed me to stay with Dr. Brienne.”

“She did?” Jaime said, impressed at the wench. Dorne would be a good place for an orphan boy like Pod to work hard and make a name for himself, and with Martell’s support, he could go far. But why was the wench talking to Oberyn so much? Jaime frowned. The man was much too seductive to be left entirely alone with his wench. He suddenly missed Jon Snow’s presence in these certain times.

Pod nodded. “So, Captain Jaime. What do you think? Do you think I’m smart enough to become a doctor?”

Jaime gave him a confident smile. “Of course you are, Pod! You’ve been keeping my brother in line for a while now, and you’re a fast learner. I think you could do anything you put your effort into.”

Pod gave him a relieved smile. Jaime shook his head; his wench was so good, always trying to help others. If only she didn’t make this boy torture him with her ideas about his rehabilitation.

There was a knock on the door. Waving Pod aside, he pulled off his napkins and walked to the door and opened it. There stood Cersei, dressed in Lannister red, in a close-fitting gown that followed her every curve, hair loose and flowing, looking both like an innocent and seductress at the same time. Her coming to his rooms looking the way she did would have sent him to his knees a year ago. He truly would have done anything for her. However, now, all he felt at the sight of her was irritation and a sense of doom.

“Cersei,” Jaime deadpanned, “Out of widow’s weeds so soon?”

“What a greeting. I’m used to so much more affectionate hellos from you, brother.” She stepped toward him, pulled his head down and kissed him on the cheek, her lips lingering on his skin for
longer than he was comfortable. She subtly brushed her breasts on his chest. She smelled of flowers and spice. Out of instinct, Jaime took a small step back.

She looked over at Pod and narrowed her eyes. “Leave us, boy.”

Pod looked extremely uncomfortable and stared at her suspiciously. Jaime glanced over to the young man. “It’s okay, Pod. You can leave us. But stay close, if you’d like.”

He nodded. Not leaving his eyes from Cersei, Pod slowly slid out of the room.

“Jaime,” Cersei began, looking up at him with wide eyes, folding her hands demurely in front of her. “I want us to get out of here. I’ve booked passage on a ship to Essos tomorrow night.” She looked at him pleadingly. “For us. We can run away together as you’ve always wanted.” She cupped his face with one of her small, white hands.

“I was under the impression that you’re out on bail, Cersei.” Jaime’s eyes gleamed. “You wouldn’t dream of evading the law, would you?”

Cersei lowered her hand and pouted. “It was that Captain Strickland who chained the doors. I’m entirely innocent. I’ve placed the wrong trust in people, Jaime. I’m the victim here – they’re blaming me for the fire – I certainly didn’t set it.” She ended softly, her voice almost whimpering.

“Captain Strickland is your new lover, I believe?”

Cersei smiled, revealing her shiny teeth. “Now, don’t be jealous, dear brother. I’m only with him because he reminds me so much of you. Anyway, I can certainly forgive you for being with that ugly doctor of yours.” She reached up to stroke his hair, smiling up at him. “We’ll always be each other’s one and only true love. We were born together, Jaime. We belong together, remember?”

“I used to believe that with all my heart, Cersei. I loved you blindly, and would have done anything for you.” He narrowed his eyes. “But that was before I finally realized what an evil human being you are, sister. And that while we may be twins, we are as alike as a viper to a lamb.”

Cersei’s mouth compressed into a thin line, angry, but then her expression turned earnest and pleading. “I’m offering you what you’ve always wanted, Jaime. To run away together; we’ll get married, live simple lives as man and wife. No one would know us. Please. I love you, Jaime.”

These were the words he’d waited more than twenty years to fall from her lips; he’d always thought that he’d be the happiest man in the world the moment he heard them. He couldn’t count the number of times he’d asked her to run away together. Once, it was what he thought he’d truly wanted, to be married to her. But as with most things involving Cersei, her words rang false. Additionally, she was no longer who he wanted. Jaime shrugged, and gave her a shrewd glance.

“Sister,” he said, smiling at her. “You haven’t asked me about my injury.” Slowly he lifted up his right hand, pushing it toward her face. Cersei’s face turned to disgust and she visibly recoiled, taking a step away from him.

“I’m not so desirable now, am I sister?” Jaime laughed. “You wouldn’t want this hand to touch your perfect form now do you, Cersei?”

“Jaime,” she said, avoiding her gaze from his right hand. “I still need you. Run away with me.” Yet her pleas seemed half-hearted now, as her eyes darted to his injured hands fearfully.

Jaime laughed. “Didn’t you know that my hand got crushed from trying to save the children that you trapped in the factory? Do you have any idea how many people died? What it was like to hear
men, women, and children burning and screaming for their lives? What it feels like to go into to a burning building, not being able to breathe?” Jaime was furious, raising his voice with every sentence. His sister backed away from him, alarmed.

“So no, Cersei, I don’t want to help you escape justice. Because your stupid, impulsive actions led to people dying. No one should get away with that. Least of all you.” Jaime stared at her.

She glared at him, a sneer on her perfect face. “You’re a stupid fool, Jaime Lannister. Why did I ever think we belonged together? You’re a sad, pathetic old man.”

“We’re twins, Cersei. We’re the same age.” Jaime said, smirking. He lifted his right hand to wave that her.

She looked disgusted and nearly sick, and stormed out of the room. A few seconds later, Pod came in.

“Pod, dear man,” Jaime smiled. “I believe I’ve found one good use for my ugly, useless arm,” Jaime said jubilantly. “It’s very good for driving my sister away.”

He sat back down on the dining table. “Now where were we? I think I shall attempt the wine.”

Pod grinned, and sat next to him. Jaime smiled, and was hit with the inspired idea to call up his old friend Addam Marbrand. It had been a long time since they had a talk, he observed. He slowly gripped the goblet, and carefully lifted it up to his lips for a sip.

Pod clapped, grinning and pleased as if Jaime had resurrected The Stranger himself.

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The Baratheons and Lannisters Fallen: The Tragedy of a Mother and Son

By Varys

Last night saw the final living moments of young Joffrey Baratheon, convicted in March of this year for multiple counts of murder, attempted murder, rape, attempted rape and assault. At only eighteen years of age, the young monster of King’s Landing was executed by hanging in the city jail, witnessed by yours truly, other press, and a few of his victims, including Ros Snow. Special permission was given to Baratheon’s mother, Cersei Baratheon, who was in the women’s prison, to witness the death, at her request. Other family members chose not to be present.

The mood was somber, as everyone involved was aware of how young the man was, and what a colossal waste of potential his short life had been. With his social, economic and family advantages, Joffrey Baratheon could have been anybody, yet here he was, on the short end of a noose. He was led silently to the gallows, and one sensed that the young man was trembling inside his prison uniform. The sneer that was often etched on his face at trial had faded away; he looked entirely like a scared little boy, his golden hair matted with sweat on his head. He was given last rites by the light of the Seven and when asked if he had last words, he looked around at the crowd, locked eyes with his mother, and smiled. He declined to speak. Soon after that, a hood was put over his head. And for an excruciating moment, time seemed to stop. All of a sudden we heard the trap
door open underneath him; controversially, it was a short-drop gallows, so the young man strangled to death instead of his neck being instantaneously broken as it would have been in a long-drop hanging. This reporter must say that watching Joffrey Baratheon die was truly disturbing, as the young man slowly strangled; the hood on his face had slipped up, and one could his face turning blue, then purple as he choked his last breaths and died. The sight was truly horrific, no matter the magnitude of the inmate’s crimes. Everyone was silent except for his mother, who was wailing and screaming that they had murdered her son. Soon, guards led the distraught mother away to her own cell at the women’s prison.

How mother and son ended in jail is a tragedy of profound proportions. Cersei Baratheon, once in the top echelons of society and considered the most beautiful woman in Westeros, was now reduced to wearing a grey and dingy cotton prison uniform, after having been dressed in the finest embroidered silks and chiffons. Only a month ago, she was making tremendous amounts of money running the Baratheon cotton factories in place of her son, who was heir to the recently departed Robert Baratheon. However, it was greed that caused the devastating fire that led to the death of over a hundred factory workers, many of whom were women and children. Since Mrs. Baratheon took over control over six months ago, working conditions swiftly deteriorated; she apparently defied safety regulations and created all the elements that would have easily led to a spontaneous mill fire.

“We went from working 12 hours to 16 hours, overnight. And they reduced our pay, so we had to work longer to earn the same amount of money,” said one factory worker to his reporter. Another worker added, “Everyone got sick because they didn’t try to reduce the cotton in the air. We breathe them into our lungs and suddenly we got lung disease.” Another worker spoke of the guards that Cersei Baratheon hired the criminal “Bloody Mummers” gang (also known as “The Brave Companions”): “They beat us every time we tried to organize or unionize. It seemed like every day one of our folk was being sent to the hospital.”

Indeed, it was the terrible working conditions, reduced budget for safety, and the foolish acts of Cersei Baratheon that set the stage for the fiery devastation to come. Trying to prevent her workers from working out on a strike, Baratheon ordered the exit doors chained, an act which spelled death for men, women, and children, when an unknown fire started. That day, Baratheon escaped the fire with her alleged lover without a thought to the poor workers trapped.

Petyr Baelish, the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Baratheon Industries, now renamed Lannister Industries, gave a statement, announcing that “The newly formed Lannister Industries is committed to safe working conditions, fair wages, sick days, and days off for our workers. Past management led the company disastrously astray, but we are committed to protecting workers and their rights.” Indeed, the new CEO appears to have plans to reverse the changes made by Cersei Baratheon, and has verbally committed to the promise of providing better lives for their workers. It is interesting to note that Baelish was fired by Cersei Baratheon due to his objections to her demands, and was a willing, if not enthusiastic witness to the Gold Cloaks about Baratheon. Tywin Lannister, the patriarch of the Lannister family and father to Cersei, along with being the money behind the Lannister Industries, declined to be interviewed for this story.

In a twist, Cersei Baratheon, free by bond after she was charged, tried to escape her punishment. About a week after she was released by bail, Addam Marbrand of the Gold Cloaks caught the woman trying to board a ship bound for Essos. She was accompanied by her rumoured lover, the golden and handsome Captain Strickland of the Gold Cloaks. The woman, caught red-handed, was allegedly enraged, causing a scene, screaming that she had been betrayed and vowing vengeance to the persons responsible. As a consequence, her bail was revoked; when faced with the overwhelming testimonies and evidence, Cersei Baratheon quickly agreed to prison term of seven years in at a local women’s prison. However, it was rumoured that Captain Strickland was so
enamored of the beautiful Cersei that he attempted to take all the blame for the fire and the chains on the doors. This ruse, however, did not fool the intrepid Detective Marbrand, who was incidentally also responsible for the arrest of Joffrey Baratheon and the Bloody Mummers, along with many of the high profile arrests this year in King’s Landing.

However, what emerged from these two violent stories involving these two morally corrupt individuals are two bonafide heroes: Dr. Brienne Tarth and Captain Jaime Lannister, confirming the old adage that there is a silver lining to every cloud. Brienne Tarth was the heroine who saved women from the Bloody Mummers, while Jaime Lannister was the man to save Dr. Tarth in the incident. Captain Lannister was also the man who cut the chains from the burning factory and went into the inferno himself to save young children.

That this hero and heroine together found love is a romance out of the storybooks; that these two brave, noble souls have bonded together in tragedy is a testament to the enduring bond that can exist between two people. Captain Lannister unfortunately suffered a severe injury to his right hand, igniting speculation that he will retire from the military. As of this writing, he is being taken care of by the brilliant surgeon Brienne Tarth. There are rumours that the two are betrothed, yet this reporter has yet to have confirmation of that news. Mark my words, ladies and gentlemen, this love story will endure for ages.

However, there may be an obstacle in the love story that all of us Westerosi are so invested in: it is said that since King’s Landing Hospital refuses to hire female doctors, Dr. Tarth has had to find a position elsewhere; it is believed that she will go to Dorne to work with the wickedly infamous and seductive Oberyn Martell. Is this a possible bump in the road for our couple? Will one of them sacrifice their life or ambition to follow the other? What will this change do to our favourite love story? Only time will tell. This reporter, for one, is looking for a happy ending for this star-fated pairing.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know your thoughts on this chapter in the comments. We’ve gotten rid of our two troublemakers! Oh my.

Thanks for the kudos :-)

Many thanks to the readers for still following and reading this story. I truly appreciate it.
Yet Another Family Meeting

Chapter Summary

Brienne attends her first Lannister family meeting; Jaime and Brienne have a talk about the future.

Chapter Notes

I continue to enjoy your comments and responses to the story. Thank you so much!

This chapter, Brienne experiences a Lannister family meeting for the first time, and our couple discuss the future (also there is smut in the last section).

“If Cersei were here, she’d want a proper service, with a large reception,” Tyrion said, looking around the table. The Lannisters were quite diminished these days, he thought, with Cersei being incarcerated and Joffrey being dead. Yet he could not help the crooked smile that appeared on his face at the thought of the two of them being removed from this life.

Tywin nodded, his mouth grim. “It’s true, that would be exactly what she would want.” He looked at each of them coolly. “Yet, she isn’t here, and I’m not sure we should mourn the short life of a convicted killer. It might look bad in the press,” he continued, gesturing to the article about Joffrey and Cersei in the Westerosi Times.

“We wouldn’t want to look bad to the press, now do we?” remarked Jaime dryly. Brienne, beside him, sent him a disapproving glance.

“So says the hero of King’s Landing and one half of the most romantic pairing in Westeros,” Tyrion not-so-subtly remarked. Jaime smirked.

Tywin gave them a sharp glance. “Unless you have a burning desire to celebrate the life of a spoiled killer and rapist, I suggest we forgo any ceremony, private or public.”

Tyron shrugged. “It’s not like we have a body to bury,” he wisely pointed out. Like most prisoners who were executed, Joffrey’s body was buried in the prison graveyard, and no amount of influence or money could change that, not that Tywin or any of them had tried to influence anyone. Tyrion thought it was curious how they all were so unmoved by the young man’s death, he himself most of all. Even Jaime, who should have been the most upset, considering the little monster was a product of he and Cersei’s unnatural relations (here he shuddered at the thought), seemed relieved that Joffrey was no longer in this world. Well, he reasoned, Joffrey was a profound shit of a human being, and that’s being generous. No one except Cersei mourned him, and she was incarcerated.
The only person in this room who looked vaguely sad was Brienne, who was actually one of his victims, and she was probably sad on principle, because he was so young. She was much too noble for his brother, Tyrion thought.

He observed Brienne and his brother and smiled. They were very obviously in love; she was a little more restrained, stealing glances at him now and then, but Jaime was the worst, he kept on touching her hand, moving his seat closer and closer to her (any nearer and he would be in her lap, Tyrion wryly observed), and looking at her adoringly, like she was the moon and sun combined. He was lucky, Tyrion thought, to have found someone so good and honorable and worthy. If Joffrey was the worst of the human race, Brienne was the best of us. He was suddenly very glad that their dear sister wasn’t here; he doubted that Jaime could have hidden the force of his feelings for Brienne, and Tyrion could only imagine how horrible and potentially violent Cersei would have been to the dear doctor. Joffrey did take after her, after all.

“Perhaps one of us should have attended the execution,” Tyrion ventured mildly. He’d thought about it to be sure; it would have given him an experience to draw on in his future novels, but he decided against it, as it would have called too much attention to himself. Still, he put it on his list of things to experience, as a writer must not shy away from the worst of human experiences.

Tywin pursed his lips. “I didn’t see the point.” He paused, a pained expression on his face. “But I suppose we should take turns visiting Cersei in prison. It is our duty.”

“Not mine,” said Jaime, pointedly raising his hideously scarred hand. Brienne reached for it and held it in both her hands, stroking it. Tywin nodded, looking at both Jaime and Brienne with a pleased expression. Tyrion was dearly glad that the perverted bond between the twins had been destroyed; he remembered all too well how far gone Jaime had been, emotionally wrecked and without an independent thought of his own, thoughtlessly approving of Cersei’s little cruelties.

Tywin turned his inquiring glance to Brienne. “I understand you’re to be leaving for Dorne next month. Are you absolutely fixed upon this decision?”

Tyrion noticed the pained look in his brother’s face at the mention of Dorne. He doesn’t want her to go but is probably afraid of saying so, he thought. Brienne nodded, her face determined. “Yes, Tywin. I’ve made my decision.” She glanced briefly at Jaime, who managed to smile at her. “I would like to try to finish what Oberyn and I have started here and see the project through. It feels we’re close.” She looked at Jaime again. “But I don’t anticipate me staying more than a year.”

Tywin nodded. “It is probably the decision I would have made if I were young again and in your position, Brienne.” He gave her an approving look. “But remember, you always have a place at Casterly Rock when you’ve done in Dorne.” She nodded, smiling at his father warmly. They certainly had an odd relationship, Tyrion thought; his father seemed strangely fond of the giantess.

“Who would have thought that out of all of us that Brienne would have the most exciting future?” Tyrion observed, raising his glass to Brienne. The woman, gods bless her, blushed a deep pink.

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sadly only accommodate one growing kitten at a time.

Myrcella looked at both of them guiltily. “He asked,” the girl said, “And I couldn’t lie.”

Jaime cleared his throat. “Well, that’s true. Joffrey won’t be coming back.” He gave Brienne a worried glance.

“Is he dead like father? Is he with father, doing all the things he loves?” Tommen asked, turning to Brienne. Brienne suddenly remembered their conversation at Robert’s funeral; she honestly didn’t know if the thought of Joffrey doing all the things he loved would be a good mental picture at all.

Brienne smiled at the boy. “He may be there, or he may be somewhere else. We don’t know for sure.”

Tommten nodded, satisfied with the answer. “I’m glad he won’t be around to bother us anymore.” He petted Lady Whiskers.

Myrcella played with a strand of golden curls with her fingers nervously, and she looked up at the two of them. “Where is mother?” the young girl asked. “Is she in jail now?”

“Mother’s in jail?” Tommen asked, his eyebrows raised.

Jaime gave the girl a warning look. Tommen handed Boots to Brienne, who gratefully took the purring black and white bundle into her lap. “Why is mother in jail? Isn’t that where bad men go?” the boy asked.

Jaime gave Brienne a helpless glance and she gave him a look of encouragement. “Well, Tommen, your mother did a bad thing and she’ll be in a women’s jail for a few years,” Jaime hesitantly explained.

“Oh, that’s too bad,” he looked down. “Isn’t not my fault, is it?” His upturned face looked at them.

“No, no, no, of course not,” Jaime rushed in. “It’s your mother’s own fault. When people do bad things, sometimes they need to go to jail to be punished.”

“She did a very bad thing,” Myrcella added darkly. Jaime gave her a look. “I read the papers, Uncle Jaime!” the girl protested. “The story is everywhere!”

“Be that as it may,” Jaime said, “It’s best not to discuss the details right now, right Myrcella?”

The girl nodded, and took a sip of lemonade.

“Does that mean me and Myrcella are orphans?” Tommen asked.

Brienne shook her head. “No, of course not. Your mother is going away for a while, but she’s still alive. In fact, you can even visit her if you want. I’m sure she’ll like that.”

“Maybe,” Tommen said skeptically. He enthusiastically bit into a fruit tart.

“Meanwhile, you still have your grandfather and your uncles here. Nothing’s changed.” Brienne said, looking at Jaime. Tommen nodded, satisfied. Myrcella nodded, exchanged a strange look with Tommen, then stole a sly glance at Jaime.

“Uncle Jaime, can we see your hand?” Myrcella asked curiously, her eyebrows raised.

“Yes, Uncle. I want to see it too!” the boy piped up. “I heard mother say it was horrible!”
Jaime narrowed his eyes and looked at them doubtfully. “I don’t know. I don’t think you two can handle it.”

“Why?” Tommen asked, his eyes wide.

“It’s scary. I bet you’ll be scared.” Jaime explained slowly, looking back and forth at them.

Myrcella laughed. “We can never be scared of you, Uncle Jaime!”

“Yeah!” Tommen said, “Show us. Please?”

“Wench, do you think my hand will scare them?” Jaime said, his eyes twinkling, turning to Brienne.

Brienne smiled and tilted her head in thought. “Maybe for children who are mice. But these children are lions, aren’t they?”

“Yeah! We’re lions! We’re not scared of an ugly old hand!” Tommen cried jubilantly. His sister laughed at him.

“Well, okay, if you insist.” Jaime first peeled off the gloves on his left hand, then raising up his right hand as if to display it, slowly removed the glove. He was smiling, but there was tension in his face.

Both children stared at his hand, mouths open, eyes wide. Tommen uncertainly looked at the hand, then to Jaime’s face, then back to the hand. Myrcella merely stared.

“It’s not so bad,” the young girl said casually. She reached out and tentatively touch it.

“Yes, Uncle,” Tommen agreed. “Why did you think we’d be afraid? We’re lions!” Following his sister’s lead, the boy darted out a finger and touched Jaime’s hand, then quickly drew it back.

Jaime had a strange, soft look on his face. Brienne reached out to grab his right hand and squeezed it. And before she was about to let go, she felt his hand weakly squeeze back.

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It had been nearly a month since the factory fire, and Jaime was slowly regaining some use of his hand, as he awkwardly washed and brushed his teeth. He could hold things badly, and small things like forks and spoons he nearly always dropped enroute to his mouth. He could forget about writing for now. But he could certainly push and pull and hook, so he wasn’t entirely useless.

Sensation had gotten better. He could feel things now, but the hand still felt removed from touch, as if the sensation happened over layers of leather. He could feel if things were hard or soft, hot or cold, but the nuances of texture and weight were all but lost on him. Brienne said it would be a matter of time before things would improve, but he doubted that he would gain any more feeling. The functioning he could improve; he felt like the movements were a matter of muscle memory and his hand needed retraining around how to do certain things. Well, that’s what the wench said, in any case. He was lucky to have his own personal doctor, he supposed, although at times her persistence in making him do exercises was aggravating. Annoying.

She was a stubborn wench, he mused, smiling at himself in his reflection. He stared and he noticed
with alarm the beginnings of a few white hairs in at his temples and his beard. When did they come in? He wondered if Cersei had the same, though he hadn’t been close enough to notice in the past few months. Nonetheless, he thought he looked good – a lot more relaxed, and much happier. And for the first time in years – or was it decades? – he was able to look himself honestly in the eye.

He entered the wench’s rooms, ready for bed. He spent most nights there now, much to his delight, though there were some nights were she declared that she needed time alone, but those were rare and far between. He’d never thought that bedtime would be his favourite time of day, but it certainly was now, as he got to spend it in the wench’s arms. To Jaime, holding, kissing, and making love to Brienne were the greatest things on earth; nothing made him feel more alive. And what they had wasn’t borne of guilt or dependence or of a desire to manipulate the other like he had experienced with Cersei; it was pure and strangely innocent. She loved him, it seemed, for who he was, and not who he appeared or pretended to be. It seemed like a miracle. And yet the cloud of separation loomed over them: Dorne. They would have to talk about it soon.

“Wench,” Jaime said, spotting her already on the bed, under the covers. She gave him a brilliant smile that made his heart swell. He did not know how this organ in his chest could get bigger, but it seemed to every time he was with her. He quickly undressed to his smallclothes and got under the blankets. He quickly attached himself at her side like a parasitic creature: his arm around her torso, his chest against her arm, face nuzzled in the crook of her neck.

“Jaime,” she said, turning her face toward him. “We should talk about Dorne.”

He nodded. “I know. We seem to be avoiding the subject.” He kissed her shoulder.

“You truly don’t mind me going?” Brienne asked, biting her lip.

“Of course not. You decided on Dorne before we got together, and as Tywin said today, it’s probably the best choice for your career.” He gave her a squeeze. “I want what’s best for you, wench.”

She raised her eyebrows and smiled at him. “I do want to go to Dorne. I’m excited about what I’ll learn and discover there. But part of me just wants to stay here, to be with you.”

Jaime’s chest throbbed; the wench staying was what he wanted, were he honest with himself. He liked the arrangement they had here, and soon they’d be engaged, and get married, and perhaps she would soon have his blond, blue or green eyed children that he could be a real father to. But he realized that this was what he wanted and may not be best for her at this stage in her life. She was still so young.

“I could go with you, you know. You’ve never asked.” Jaime suggested, his face close to hers.

Brienne’s eyes widened. “I could never ask that of you Jaime – to give up your life and all that you know for me? It wouldn’t be fair.”

“But I would. For you, wench, I’d do anything.” He kissed her on the ear.

She lowered her eyes. “Isn’t that how you felt about Cersei? This same level of…need? I don’t want the same kind of obsessive love that you had with your sister.”

He was taken aback by her comment. He had been consumed by Cersei of course, he planned his whole life around her needs and desires. He was obsessive, while his sister was indifferent; he would have done anything – any sin or act of dishonor – that she wanted him to do in the early years of their relationship. He had wanted to be with her all the time, and no one else mattered; he
cared only about her. But it was a version of Cersei, he realized now, that didn’t even exist. He fell in love with his own invention of Cersei, and transformed her into someone who fulfilled his every emotional, physical and basic need. He had transformed her into the air he breathed.

“What we have is nothing like I had with Cersei, Brienne,” Jaime said vehemently. “I love you for who you are, and you love me for who I am; with my sister, I loved her for who she never was. It wasn’t real love.” Jaime declared passionately.

She stroked his hair. “I know, Jaime. And I’m glad that we found each other.” She looked kindly at him and kissed him. “But I don’t know if you coming immediately to Dorne would be the best thing for you, after what you experienced with your sister for over twenty years.” She paused. “And there are the children. They need you, at least for the short term.”

The children. He’d even forgot about them in his enthusiasm to go to Dorne with the wench.

“I know they don’t know that you’re their father,” Brienne said. “But their brother just got arrested, convicted and executed, and their mother is in jail. And the man who they knew to be their father recently died. I know they’ll be fine with Tywin and Tyrion, but in the next while, they’ll probably need their Uncle Jaime too.”

Jaime nodded. She had a point. It wouldn’t be fair for him to also disappear from their lives on the heels of their brother and mother’s fates, horrible people as they may have been. Although to them he would always be their uncle, it was crucial for him to be around for the next few months, until they settled in, at least.

Jaime sighed. “You’re right, wench. But part of me just wants to follow you wherever you go. Being with you is the only thing I care about.”

Brienne kissed him. “That’s sweet. And that’s why I love you – your capacity to give yourself over to love, your capacity to love fully.” She caressed his shoulder and chest. “Before I met you, I don’t think I ever let myself love fully, Jaime. You brought that out in me.”

He pulled her closer, so their bodies were touching. His hand started to roam her magnificent, strong, solid body that he loved. “It’s been my pleasure, wench,” Jaime responded quietly in her ear. He felt her shiver against him. She turned her head to kiss him and their mouths opened, and their tongues danced. She tasted sweet. He sucked at her neck the way she liked, eliciting from her a guttural moan that made his cock fully stand to attention. He took off her useless nightgown, and chuckled with surprise to find that she entirely naked underneath.

“No smallclothes?” He asked.

Brienne blushed. “I didn’t see the point.”

Jaime grinned a wolfish smile. “I agree with that,” he said, nudging off his own smallclothes over this straining manhood. She ran her fingers all over his body, and squeezed his ass and reached over to squeeze his cock, making him groan loudly. He licked and sucked her nipples, and she arched helplessly at his attentions, her breaths coming out short and hard.

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“Touch me, Jaime,” she pleaded, “But with your right hand.”

He looked at her with an arched eyebrow. “Is this another hand exercise, wench?”

She grinned. “Maybe.” She reached for his scarred hand now, and kissed it and licked it. She then brought it down to her sex. Jaime felt lust thrumming through his body at the sight of her boldness. His hand was awkward, but he could feel that she was incredibly wet. He tried his best to rub up
and down her slit, as she moaned and squirmed beneath him; she moved herself over his fingers to reach her aching spots. He seemed to be doing something right. He plunged two fingers into her core, and she gasped and opened her legs even wider. She was hot and wet inside, and it made his cock ache. She was bucking in time with the movements of his fingers and he could tell that she was chasing her pleasure and wanted it badly. The sight of her so wanton with wanting almost undid him. He lowered his mouth to her mound, and started to lick and suck at her swollen little nub. She writhed uncontrollably, making incoherent moans, which became louder and louder.

“Oh, Jaime, yes!” Brienne cried, shaking through her release. He could feel her cunt squeezing and clenching his fingers as she came.

He was painfully hard and couldn’t wait. He hauled her up to her hands and knees and plunged into her from behind, nearly shouting at the immense heat and tightness of her in this new position. She cried out, surprised at this different angle. “Is this okay?” Jaime managed to gasp out. She looked back at him, her eyes wide with lust. “Oh yes, Jaime,” she said and experimentally moved her hip back against him. He groaned, and started thrusting into her, savouring the slickness of her passage, and the sight of the wench’s creamy, round ass. She continued to move her hips back to meet his thrusts, and he became wild with the feeling of moving inside her, and he held her now by the hips, slamming hard into her over and over, and soon, she started to quake in front of him, and he quickly slipped his right hand and pressed his fingers to her nub, circling, and she screamed when she came, her cunt squeezing his cock. He’s lost his rhythm, he was fucking her senseless, slamming harder into her until soon he too started to shudder as he spent his seed deep inside her in a few last, desperate thrusts, shouting his release. She collapsed onto her stomach and he soon followed. She reached over to the bed and pulled out some cloths to wipe his spend and her wetness off them.

She looked at him curiously. “That was different, the position.”

He grinned and pulled her close. “Did you like it?”

She blushed and nodded. He kissed her. She was adorable. She tilted her head and looked contemplative. “I’ve never done it that way before. Will you teach me all the positions, Jaime?”

He laughed, and took her into his arms. “Of course, wench. While I don’t know all the positions, but we can certainly learn together and practice them repeatedly. Just like the hand exercises you make me do, wench.” He kissed her. Her eyes were bright and happy, her face flushed from their carnal activities. She nestled into him, and he moved closer to her. He was happy. He was with his wench, and her warm body was slowly relaxing into his as she drifted off to sleep. He closed his eyes and he too, let sleep overtake him.

Chapter End Notes

I love your comments, so let me know your thoughts on this chapter! Are the Lannisters cold as ice, or what?
Thank you for kudos!

Thanks as always, for reading and supporting this story. I appreciate you readers so much.
The Wedding

Chapter Summary

It's time for Margaery and Renly's wedding!

Chapter Notes

First of all, I'm very touched at your praise and support of the story. Your kindness and generosity toward this fic has been tremendous. Reading comments from the last chapter made my heart warm. Thank you.

This chapter, we attend a wedding! I hope you enjoy another party!

It was Brienne’s worst nightmare, walking down the aisle into an ornate sept in front of hundreds of onlookers who were all gawping at her freakish height, her unsightly scar, and grotesque muscular proportions. The fact that the white dress fitted her well wasn’t even a consolation. Worst of all, they saved her entrance as the last of the line of women, after all of the other perfectly tiny and beautiful bridesmaids gracefully glided in front of her. Nevertheless, she tried her best to project confidence, and lifted up her head, straightened her spine, and walked with slow, measured steps. She tried to focus on Margaery and Renly; this day was about them, not her. The only saving grace there was Jaime, who she hadn’t seen all day, since she’d been helping Margaery before the ceremony. He sat up straight in one of the front pews, his whole torso turned to watch her; he looked at her like she was a vision, like she was the most beautiful woman in the room. His face was entirely adoring, and made her cheeks redden a little. He may have thought she was ugly once, but he certainly did not think so now. He looked like he wanted to get up from his seat and walk her down the aisle himself, and marry her right then.

Thankfully, the walk was a short one, and she stood at the end of the row of bridesmaids, half hidden by a stone pillar, which was the only thing around her taller than herself. Margaery made her entrance in her beautiful green and gold gown, adorned with roses and the most exquisite emerald and ruby jewels. She opted to go without a veil, as she wanted her full face on display. She looked incandescently happy and radiantly beautiful. Renly, who stood at the altar smiling mildly, watched as she walked slowly to join him. He was extremely handsome in his black and gold tuxedo, the colours of his house. Beside him stood the dashing Loras, also wearing his house colours, who looked as pleased as Margaery did over the occasion. Brienne marveled, remembering how when she was fourteen, she wanted to be in Margaery’s place, marrying Renly. She could not even imagine it now, especially not marrying for romantic love. As the two recited their vows with Loras standing so close that it seemed like he was part of the ceremony himself, Jaime’s eyes remained on her. She locked eyes with him, and she could sense how moved he was
by the traditional words and the rituals; he smiled at her, giving her a wistful look.

When the ceremony was over and they had moved to the nearby Rose House for the reception, there was the matter of wedding photos to endure. After the wedding party had posed for what seemed like an endless number of pictures in the gardens, Jaime approached her. He looked incredibly handsome in his tuxedo, his hair rivaling the sun in its golden shine.

“You look beautiful, wench,” he said, leaning to whisper in her ear. His breath made her shiver. She could tell he wanted to kiss her and embrace her, but cognizant of the people around them, he settled for offering her an arm instead. “You know,” Jaime said, leaning into her, “When I saw you walk down the aisle in this white dress, I thought you were the bride, and I felt like I was waiting for you at the end of the aisle.”

Brienne blushed and gave him an admonishing look. “Jaime, you realize that half a dozen prettier girls in the same dress walked out before me, right?”

“Were there?” Jaime grinned. “I didn’t notice.”

She rolled her eyes. She was about to lead them inside where the reception awaited, but Jaime pulled her into a shadowed alcove at the edge of the gardens. He looked around to make sure they were alone, and suddenly kissed her, pulling her body close against him. She felt her whole body hum, and opened her mouth to allow him to deepen the kiss. She wanted to melt into him. It took her quite a bit of effort to finally pull away.

“Jaime!” Brienne said, in a disapproving tone. “We’re at a wedding. There are people around.”

“I just needed to hold you and kiss you, wench. You’re irresistible.” He kissed the base of her throat, which made her moan softly.

He looked up at her, a tenderness in his face. “I pulled you aside to tell you that I love you, Brienne.”

Her heart quivered and expanded, and she felt filled with a golden light. “Jaime,” she said softly, stroking his cheek. “I love you too.”

He smiled, and hugged her joyously, rocking her back and forth in his arms. “I’m glad wench. So glad.” They pulled apart and he gave her a lingering kiss.

“Oh, and I wanted to give you this,” he said, pulling out a small box of dark blue velvet from his jacket, which he held out to her.

She looked at him in wonder and surprise. Her heart began to race. “Jaime, what is this?”

He grinned. “Open it, wench.”

She opened it, and nestled inside was one of the prettiest rings she’d ever seen, but one that was also vaguely familiar to her. It was of a bright yellow gold, with a small sapphire set close to the band, and flanked by two smaller sapphires.

“This looks like….,” she trailed off, speechless.

Jaime smiled. “It was your mother’s engagement ring, Brienne. I had it resized for you, but it remains the same.”

Brienne looked up at him in shock. “But how did you…?”
“Your father gave me the ring to take with me after I told him I was going to marry you, wench.” He smiled softly at her.

“What? But that was two months ago when we were in Tarth! We weren’t even properly courting then.”

“Of course, we were, wench. I distinctly remember our…date at the waterfalls.” Jaime looked at her slyly. “Let’s just say I was very persuasive when I declared my love of you in front of your father.”

She shook her head in disbelief and gaped at the beautiful ring. It was simple, modest, and set with the loveliest sapphires. She didn’t remember her mother wearing it, but she did remember how her father used to sit with her and show it to her, among her mother’s other things, after she died.

“Brienne,” Jaime said, moving closer to her and lifting her face to his with his hand. “Will you marry me?” His face was hopeful and expectant; at that moment, he looked incredibly young and vulnerable.

She hitched her breath. She could hardly believe this was happening, that a man as wonderful as Jaime Lannister would ever want to marry such a…creature as herself. It was inconceivable; she would never have imagined it in the girlish daydreams of her youth, that such a noble and handsome man would want to make vows to plain, ugly Brienne. She looked into his eyes, and saw that they were filled with pure love. And desire. And longing. She saw the corner of his lip tremble as he awaited her answer. She then realized that he was unsure of her response, which made her heart quake even more. He loved her. That was plain; he showed it with his actions and words, and in all the little, unnamable things that he did for her. He loved her.

“Yes, Jaime. Of course I will marry you.” She blushed.

Jaime’s face broke into the brightest grin she’d ever seen on his face. He was beaming, and crying, and he lunged at her and pulled her to him and suddenly lifted her off her feet and twirled her in his arms. She felt tears run down her face now too, and they kissed, over and over, and he kissed her tears away and she kissed his tears away. Soon, they were laughing because nothing else in the world could ever be bad ever again.

“You’ve made me the happiest man, wench,” he said, taking the ring out from its box and sliding it on her ring finger. He lifted her hand and kissed it.

“Oh, Jaime. It’s beautiful. It’s a perfect fit.” She kissed him hard.

“Hmmm. I’m glad I got your measurements right,” He murmured kissing her neck.

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Jaime had been to many highborn weddings in his life, and one was as dull as the next. There were always terrible toasts, worse speeches, and relatives who stood up to speak under the inane delusion that they were funny and witty, which was never, ever true. Seeing Renly in his Baratheon finery, he had the distinct memory of Robert and Cersei’s wedding about twenty years ago, when his sister was still fresh and beautiful and had the illusion of innocence. Jaime had been miserable of course, jealous and sullen, and had drank himself into oblivion, only to have Tyrion throw a jug of water on him to wake him up when he passed out in the middle of a stone hallway.
Weddings were always terrible.

He looked at Brienne, and as always, a sense of well-being blew away his cloudy thoughts. He was filled with a feeling of being entirely too lucky, too unworthy for his wench. He didn’t know which of the Seven gods shone upon him but he felt he had been blessed everyday with the love of Brienne. She was his angel, his warrior, his maiden. He looked at her now and she smiled back at him, still shy despite being newly betrothed. They would have a wedding of their own, one day, hopefully soon, he thought. He didn’t care much for the reception or the party or even the people, but he just wanted to say the words in front of the gods and to Brienne. He just wanted to be finally married to his wench; it honestly felt he’d been waiting for centuries, thought they had been courting barely two months.

His wife-to-be sat to his right, so she could discreetly help him with his food if he could not manage cutting up meat or spearing a particularly stubborn vegetable with his injured right hand. Of course, for the wedding, he’d kept his gloves on – it wasn’t unusual, and he did not want to subject fancy wedding guests with the horror of his hand. The only thing that was making this wedding tolerable, he thought, was Brienne. Gods bless her. He could barely tolerate the people he was sitting with as is, though surprisingly the wench seemed to like all of them and made easy conversation. There was the nervous Samwell Tarly, recently made quite rich by the moon pill invention with Jon Snow, and pretty brown-haired Gilly, the nurse who surprisingly was his betrothed. Both of them kept giving Jaime suspicious but polite looks; he grinned at them periodically to make them quake. Jon Snow loyalists, Jaime grumbled. Then there was Oberyn Martell, who looked resplendent in a while silk tunic embroidered with white silk roses, accented with sapphire blue stitching on the edges of the garment. Jaime had to hand it to him; the man looked magnificent, although he was still a handful of years older than Jaime. The man sat himself far too close to his wench, Jaime thought irritably, and spoke in such a low voice that Jaime could barely hear what he was saying to her. Rounding the table, thank the gods, was his brother Tyrion, who was already deep in his cups, who was not entirely helping ease his mind.

“Brienne, you must be excited to go to Dorne,” Samwell asked Brienne, glancing suspiciously at Jaime.

She nodded, smiling kindly at the rotund man. “Indeed I am, Sam.” She paused. “Although I’m very sorry to miss your upcoming nuptials. I so want to see you two get married.”

Gilly smiled warmly at her. “It’s not a problem. Our wedding is going to be small, and nothing near as fancy as this one.” She looked adoringly at Sam. “I just want us to be married.”

Jaime opened his mouth to speak, when he felt the wench grip this knee tight. She gave him a warning look. He nodded. He supposed this wasn’t the best time to announce their engagement to the world, although Jaime desperately wanted to. The news might liven the place up.

“Things will be very exciting for Brienne in Dorne,” Oberyn declared in his smooth, buttery voice. “She will experience all sorts of new things, things she’s never experienced before, things she’s never seen.” He looked fondly at her. “It will be my privilege to be her guide to everything unfamiliar and new.” The wench looked at the man gratefully. Jaime felt a twinge of annoyance; the very handsome man acted like he was entitled to her somehow.

Jaime leaned forward. “The thing with Brienne, Oberyn,” said Jaime, smiling at the dark-haired man, “Is that she’s very independent. I doubt that she’ll need much of your help to navigate Sunspear.” The wench regarded him curiously.

Oberyn’s black eyes positively twinkled at Jaime. “I don’t doubt that. I have already witnessed how capable she is, both in and out of the operating theatre.” He smiled seductively at the wench and
winked. “It will be a privilege to get to know you better as a person, Brienne, now that we’re out of the strange resident-surgeon relationship. I would like us to become very good friends,” Oberyn said to Jaime’s future wife. She nodded and smiled brightly at him. The wench appeared to have no clue that the man was attempting to seduce her. Clueless wench.

Oberyn looked her up and down, a soft smile on his lips. “Isn’t strange, Brienne, how we seem to instantly match outfits on these grand occasions, at the Lannister ball, the engagement party, and now the wedding. We both appear to be wearing the same colour today.” He tilted his head. “You, of course, look ravishing, might I add. You put the other little girls wearing the same dress to shame.” Brienne blushed. Jaime’s fingers twitched. Tyrion looked exceedingly amused and winked at Jaime. Why is everyone so annoying, thought Jaime darkly.

“You are much too kind,” Brienne said to Oberyn, her cheeks a rosy pink.

Jaime felt a flash of impatience. “Ellaria must be very excited to have you back after such a long absence, Oberyn.” Jaime declared. “And of course your seven – or is it eight? – daughters?”

The man turned to Jaime with a dashing smile. “Of course, I’m thrilled to be with my paramour and eight lively, lovely daughters. A man’s place is with his children, wouldn’t you agree, Jaime?” He looked over to Brienne. “Our Sunspear estate is large and lush, and beautiful. Ellaria is as equally excited as I am to have you in our home, Brienne. I guarantee she will do the utmost to make you feel welcome.”

“And Pod,” Jaime feebly added. His irritation was definitely increasing; he had the impulse to punch the very handsome man in the face, at least a little.

Oberyn nodded. “Of course, young Podrick. How could I forget? He will be a great addition to the household. I’m sure he will make a wonderful friend for my younger daughters.” Brienne looked entirely too pleased with the conversation. Jaime reached over and squeezed her knee and she gave him a little sensual smile that made him feel immediately better.

Oberyn caught Tyrion’s eye. “Tyrion, my friend. How goes the new novel?”

“Ah, you’re the first person who has asked me about it in weeks,” Tyrion said, looking pointedly at Jaime. He turned his attention to Oberyn, “I’m quite thrilled about it. An epic of sorts called The Blue Heart. It’s at the printers and should be out in a month’s time.”

Oberyn clapped his hands in jubilation. “Fantastic. I can’t wait.”

“You must send me and Oberyn a copy in Dorne,” Brienne said, beaming at Tyrion. Jaime scowled at the way the wench verbally coupled herself with Oberyn. Jaime looked around at the other tables. Gods, this wedding was tedious. Will the torture never end?

“A shadow crossed their table. A portly man dressed in a very finely tailored silk suit turned around and greeted their table. “Why, isn’t this a lovely coincidence!” exclaimed Varys, smiling broadly, his pale bald head glistening. His eyes were positively gleaming at them.

“Varys!” Tyrion greeted him loudly, “My favorite journalist. How goes the rag trade?”

The man giggled, looking delighted. “Well, business is booming, as they say.” He looked at Tyrion, then to Jaime and Brienne. “A large part of that has to do with your family, Tyrion. Such
terrible news around the Lannisters this year. Just shocking!” He seemed to remember himself and
suddenly turned serious. “By the way, I am awfully sorry about Joffrey – such a young man to fall
so far, so difficult when someone so young perishes – and of course your sister, Cersei,” he said,
looking at Jaime, with an expression of sympathy. Jaime smirked. Varys was always up to his old
tricks.

“Perhaps you should send us a portion of your profits, if that is the case.” Tyrion said wryly.

Varys laughed. “How I do miss being around that Lannister wit.” He stared curiously at Jaime and
Brienne. “Jaime and Dr. Tarth, may I just say what tremendous fans of you I and my readers are.
Just tremendous. We all find your story so compelling!”

Brienne blushed and nodded awkwardly. Jaime raised a skeptical eyebrow. Varys looked the
wench up and down and examined her carefully, his eyes landing on her left hand. His tongue
darted to lick his lips.

Varys suddenly brightened, as if suddenly run through with electricity. “Oh! Are congratulations in
order? I hadn’t heard! This is wonderful news.” All eyes turned to Brienne and the small sapphire
ring on her left finger.

“It is rather…modest looking for a Lannister engagement ring. Is it a family heirloom?” Varys
asked with interest, his eyes wide and innocent.

Brienne seemed to be caught unawares, and heeded Jaime’s light squeeze on her knee a little too
late. “It was my mother’s engagement ring,” said Brienne hesitantly. Jaime cleared his throat.

Varys beamed. “Just delightful!” Jaime turned to give her a sharp look.

“Please excuse me, I must go.” Varys said, bowing. He sent the entire table a huge, bright smile.
And with that, he disappeared as quickly as he appeared.

Jaime groaned. “Wench, if you wanted to keep the news quiet, that was the wrong thing to say.”
Tyrion raised his eyebrow at her. She blanched.

Gilly squealed. “Is it true? You’re engaged?” She burst into a bright grin. Sam smiled at her.
Oberyn tilted his head and nodded to both of them, looking amused.

“But, let’s not talk about this,” Brienne said, looking around, slightly panicked. “It’s Margaery’s
day and I don’t want to take any attention away from them. Damn.”

“I wouldn’t worry about it, Brienne,” Tyrion grinned reassuringly. “I doubt anyone can divert
attention from either the Tyrells or Renly today, since they tend to naturally make themselves the
centre of orbit at all times. My hearty congratulations to you both. It’s both a long time coming in
the case of my brother, and a delightful and unexpected surprise with regards to you.” He nodded
to Brienne. “I lost an evil sister, but gained a much better – and taller – one,” he said cheekily.

Tyrion raised his glass to them, and was joined by the rest of their table. Brienne looked both
mortified and pleased. Jaime was filled with a warmth, and reach out to hold her hand. Of course,
Jaime was thrilled at the unexpected announcement of their betrothal. And now that Varys got his
perfumed hands on the news, the whole of Westeros will soon know. He looked at her with a proud
expression, his heart light. He brought her hand up to his lips for a kiss.

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Margaery, Renly and Loras looked extremely pleased and self-satisfied at how the events had gone; they stood next to the enormous white cake decorated with delicate sugar flowers, accepting their guests’ well-wishes.

“Brienne!” Margaery exclaimed, giving her a warm hug. She smelled of roses. The bride was radiant and otherworldly beautiful.

“Margaery! Renly! Congratulations,” Brienne said warmly, and smiled at Loras, who grinned at her. She gave Renly and Margaery an appreciative glance. “You look lovely and the ceremony was wonderful. Truly.”

“Thank you Brienne,” Renly said, kissing her on the cheek. “I guess I’m as happy as any groom could be,” he added, looking at Loras and smiling. Brienne was glad that the three of them seemed to have worked out an arrangement, even though she imagined that it would be difficult for Margaery, but the young woman did not seem to mind and looked entirely unfazed and perfectly thrilled.

Margaery smirked at Renly and turned to Brienne. She looked her up and down, at last zeroing in on her left hand. “Now, is what I’ve heard true? It can’t be!” She exclaimed, giving a glance to the men.

“Hmmm. Lannister works fast,” Loras observed, hugging Brienne in congratulations.

Brienne coloured, and felt embarrassed. “I’m so sorry,” Brienne said, looking at them apologetically. “I didn’t want the news to come out, but Varys came by our table….”

“Oh hush,” Renly said, dismissing her concerns with a wave of his hand. “It’s a specialty of Varys to ferret out the juiciest information and disseminate it to the world.”

“That’s why we invited him, Brienne. For the press.” Margaery said matter-of-factly. She gave Brienne a sly glance. “But Jaime is smart to settle things before you go off to Dorne with Oberyn Martell,” she continued. “Who knows what other handsome and fascinating men you’ll meet over there?”

“He was probably worried some Dornish man would steal your heart away,” Loras said, laughing.

“He definitely did a smart thing,” Renly agreed. “No one in their right mind would ever let a jewel like Brienne go.”

“No one indeed,” said Jaime, coming up to her and putting his arm casually around her waist. The men shook hands and Jaime gave Margaery a quick peck on the cheek.

“Congratulations, you two,” Jaime said, smiling at the three of them.

“Congratulations are in order for you two as well,” Renly said, giving Jaime an assessing look. Jaime looked like a satisfied golden lion. Brienne could not help but grin at him; Jaime looked back at her and smiled, looking deliriously happy. He even gave her a soft kiss on the cheek, making her blush fiercely. She was glad now that everyone seemed to know; she was also relieved that no one seemed to think that it was odd or comical that someone like Jaime would end up with a beast such as her. She was also very grateful that Varys seemed to be on their side.

“Awwww,” Margaery said, her brown eyes huge. “Look at you two.” She leaned toward them and spoke in a low voice, “I must admit I was rooting for Jon with Brienne, but seeing you two together
just makes my heart melt.” She sighed.

Brienne and Jaime exchanged amused glances, and he pulled her a little closer to him.

Chapter End Notes

I would love to hear your thoughts on the wedding and whether you had a good time. Send me your comments please, I love reading them, short or long.

Thanks for the kudos! I love you readers, so I sincerely thank you for your kind attention.

Reminder of erratic updates in the next while due to holiday time ;-)
A Ship to Dorne

Chapter Summary

Brienne sails to Dorne.

Chapter Notes

Happy New Year, everybody! Wishing you all luck, love, and peace in 2020. Thanks for the wonderful comments on the engagement chapter. I'm glad you enjoyed it.

This chapter, our lovers separate.

Also, you may notice that I've added the final chapter count to this story (this is subject to change, mind you), so the end is in sight. I really want the end to be great so I'm going to take my time writing and crafting a satisfying ending to the story. Consequently, the update schedule won't be daily any more. I'm thinking every two or three days now. The chapters may be longer than usual. I just want a really strong conclusion for you all, and as I'm learning, endings are particularly hard.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Jaime! Jaime!” Brienne wailed, her back arching and her hips bucking wildly to meet his; he felt her squeeze and clench all around his hard length, her whole body shuddering over and over in powerful waves. A deep pink flush washed over her chest and her face was contorted with passion. The effect she had on him was overwhelming; the sight and feel of her climax quickly overtook Jaime and pushed him much closer to the edge.

“Brienne,” cried Jaime. “Look at me, look at me,” he gasped, as he thrust erratically into her, wanting to take all of her and give everything he had of himself. He met her eyes, those astonishing blue eyes, those beacons of light, and suddenly, his body gave way, wholly surrendering himself into her as he erupted inside her, spurting his seed, spasming and vibrating with delirious intensity. Brienne reached up to him and pulled him down to her, hugging him fiercely; he squeezed just as tightly, as they both held each other as they descended from their heights. He let out a contented sigh. He felt his cock slip out of her and he rolled off to the side. He kissed her and they hugged again, feeling sated and exhausted.

“I love you, Jaime,” Brienne said, the light of her eyes filling him up. He thought he would always remember the colour of them, the shape of them, how they twinkled and glimmered, how they always reminded him both of the clear summer skies and the warm ocean. He wanted to keep this moment and all the moments with her within himself.

“I love you, Brienne. Future wife.” She laughed her lilting, musical laugh. Gods, he wanted to
devour her. He kissed her instead.

“I’ll miss you.” She said, her eyes sad, her hand riffling through his hair like a soft breeze. Jaime closed his eyes; his heart hurt. The wench was leaving tomorrow morning, bound on a ship with Pod and Oberyn. It was too soon and happening all too suddenly.

“And I shall miss you more, wench. At least you’ll be busy with your work.” Jaime said, a tiny edge of resentment in his voice. In the past weeks, he had watched her organize and pack her things, reducing her presence in her flat and in his life. At least he convinced her to leave behind the things she wouldn’t immediately need, like the novels she read in her spare time, her heavy coats, the little decorative knick-knacks she picked up to decorate the place. They weren’t going to let out the place to anyone else, he’d said to her; this place would still be hers upon her return. Jaime at once wanted to keep it just as it was, like an exhibit in a museum, or more accurately, a bookmark for her to return to.

Brienne looked at him with a gentle admonishment, smiling at him tenderly. “And you will be busy doing your hand exercises and trying to rehabilitate your hand, right?”

Jaime smiled crookedly. “If you say so, wench. I promise to do your exercises and practice with my right hand.” He looked at her with amusement. “Perhaps you’ll be surprised at how much I can do the next time I see you.” He wagged his eyebrows suggestively. Brienne laughed, nuzzling into his neck. She looked at him.

“You will take care of yourself, won’t you, Jaime?” She said with a worried expression.

“Don’t worry about me, wench. I’ll keep busy with the children and who knows? Maybe I’ll find a new vocation while you’re away.” He flexed his hand. “But it seems my days of killing at an official capacity for the military is over.”

“What will you do, Jaime?” Brienne asked, curious, nudging her body closer to his.

Jaime shrugged. “I can’t say I’ll miss being a soldier, though I was good enough at commanding troops.” He frowned in thought. “There’s a limit to how much war, violence and destruction one can see and inflict I suppose. After all, I ran off to join the military to avoid getting married so I could be with Cersei, but I don’t think I ever really thought about a specific vocation for myself.”

“Then I suppose you’ll have a bit of time to think about it without me distracting you,” Brienne said, smiling coyly, kissing his cheek.

“Wench, being distracted by you happens to be my favourite thing in the world,” Jaime said, squeezing her and tickling her. Brienne laughed uncontrollably, kicking her legs and braying like a donkey. He ended up laughing with her, unable to resist the infectious sounds that she made.

“Oh Jaime, who will make me laugh like this now that we’ll be parted?” she said, out of breath from all the laughing.

“No one, wench. I forbid it,” Jaime smiled, and stroked her hair.

She kissed him tenderly, and settled on her back. He arranged himself on his side, his naked body pressed against her, his arm beneath her neck and another across her chest. His mouth was at her ear.

“You should sleep, Brienne. Big day tomorrow.” Jaime murmured into the pale shell of her ear.

“But I’m not sleepy. My thoughts are going a mile a minute.” Brienne whined softly.
“Shhhh,” Jaime said, “Close your eyes wench.” She closed her eyes.

“Let me tell you about what I love about you,” Jaime whispered.

“I love your eyes, the way they stare straight into my heart and how they see the goodness that’s hidden deep inside….” He kissed her cheek.

“I love your hair that’s been dipped in starlight, so blond and pale…your crooked nose, that gives your face a perfect imperfection…your big, soft lips, that are so good to kiss and that feel so good wrapped around my cock…the muscles of your shoulders…your strong arms and the way they hold me….”

And he continued until he heard her breathing slow and become even; he chuckled when she didn’t even react to the mouth around his cock comment. But Jaime meant every word of what he whispered to her. He closed his own eyes, getting sleepy himself, feeling her warmth, the solidity of her in his arms, her calming breaths. He didn’t know what he was going to do without her, but he wouldn’t think about that for now. For now, he just wanted to be here. With her.

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Brienne had never thought leaving would be so hard, as she stood at the stern of the large passenger ship bound for Dorne, looking back at the docks. In the past, the act of leaving had always been the act of moving forward to a new future, a better life, a way forward; it was certainly the case when she left Tarth for the Citadel and when she left the Citadel for King’s Landing. But today, leaving King’s Landing was all too painful; her heart felt it was creaking and threatening to break, and her spirit felt as heavy as ocean water before her. She stood there staring, as the figures of Jaime, the children, Tywin and Tyrion receded into the distance and grew smaller and smaller. She regretted it then, asking Jaime to remain in King’s Landing; she felt she was torturing them both. A long sigh escaped her lips.

Oberyn approached her and put his arm around her in a gesture of comfort. “Separation is difficult. I’m sorry you have to be away from your love, Brienne.” He looked at her, his dark eyes kind. “But you’ll see: you’ll be seeing so many new things, meeting new people, and keeping busy with the project that the time will pass quickly.”

Brienne nodded, smiling gratefully at him. “I never thought I’d miss him so much all ready,” she said softly.

Oberyn rubbed her shoulders back and forth, comforting her. “This is the hard part. But I know that if your love is true, it will grow with distance. I speak from experience.”

She looked at him, concerned, her face pink. “Oh, I’m sorry, I never thought. You must have to go through this all the time with Ellaria. How insensitive of me.”

He waved away his hand in a gesture of dismissal. “Ellaria and I have been together so long that the separation is much easier, and sometimes even welcome. But to separate in the first flush of true love is something especially painful.” He paused, and looked at her with a sympathetic expression. “But time and distraction will make things easier.”

They stood there in silence for a few moments.
“Come, let’s go below decks.” Oberyn said. “I’m afraid dear Pod is fighting a bit with the sea. His complexion is turning an unbecoming shade of green.”

“Oh!” Brienne had forgotten in the midst of her own selfish thoughts. She reached into her small medical bag where she kept the priceless scalpels Jaime gave her, and pulled out a brown glass vial. “Sam gave me this tincture to give to Pod – apparently it’s one of the things he sells on the side – it’s supposed to help with the seasickness.”

Oberyn smiled. “Then let us relieve the poor boy’s suffering.” He put an arm around her waist and led her away. Brienne ventured a look back; Jaime was almost a mere speck now, a golden dot in the distance.

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The ship was a large one, and there were about fifty-odd passengers including the three of them; it appeared to Brienne to be quite luxurious, with each of them having a small but well-appointed cabin with a sea view. There was a restaurant, as well as a number of lounge areas and a couple of bars. There was even a gym and swimming pool if one were so inclined; but what drew her was the small library, curated with excellent books of all genres, including, Brienne saw, most of Tyrion’s page-turners. It would be a long, four-day voyage, and the crew seemed to have done their best to keep the passengers entertained. But that evening Brienne turned in early, forgoing the drinks in the lounge that Oberyn invited her to; she checked in quickly on Pod in his cabin, and was pleased to find that Sam’s remedy appeared to have worked, as the young man was sitting up and looking very steady. Then, she headed to her cabin.

Tucked under the covers in her bed, her thoughts strayed to the night before, how she and Jaime had made love and slept. Then Brienne had woken up in the middle of the night, to find that he was hard against her buttocks and was kissing her neck and shoulders. He whispered sweet words in her ear, bent her knees and entered her from behind. They made love leisurely, rocking back and forth until their release, and fell asleep afterwards with him still inside her. The next morning, some wild thing possessed her and she climbed on his lap, straddling him as she sat down on his rigid cock; face to face, he desperately bucked up against her and she rode him in a frenzy until they found simultaneous release, panting and exhausted. After, they had said sweet, tender words; words of sadness, words of comfort. In the end, they had shed all their tears in that room.

At the port, they just looked at one another and held each other for what felt like hours but was really mere minutes. They promised to write; Jaime said he’d visit in two or three months. She barely remembered the goodbyes with the rest of the Lannisters. There were tears from the sweet children, a hug from Tyrion, and surprising kisses on both cheeks from Tywin. But all that stood out in her mind was Jaime’s pained face, and how he valiantly tried to hide his sadness with a row of smiles which grew even more dazzling as they approached the final goodbye. He gave her a long farewell kiss in front of his family, making her cheeks turn crimson.

She drew her blankets closer to her body and closed her eyes. She thought that if Jaime were here, he would be pressed right against her, not just because the cabin bed was so narrow, but because he liked to be close to her in bed. He would whisper in her ear and start to caress her, making her insides grow warm and she would feel him grow hard against her back. And she would want him in return and open her legs and welcome him inside her. She sighed and tried to wish away those useless thoughts.
She had never thought that she would ever need a person so much in her life; even with Jon, she still maintained her independence, although they had loved each other. She was always her own person with her own thoughts, ambitions, and desires. But falling in love with Jaime had been scary; she had ignored the warning signs for months, but when she actually allowed herself to finally fall for him and let him into her heart, it was at once both blissful and frightening. She understood then, how one could be consumed by love, obsessed with another person, and live every day, every minute, every second just wanting only to be with them. That was how Jaime had loved Cersei, she thought, and a part of her resisted at all-encompassing, obsessive love. However, she let herself be open and vulnerable with Jaime. She barely understood what was going on inside herself, and did not know what strange alchemy occurred when she and Jaime were together. Suddenly it seemed perfectly natural to accept his marriage proposal after only courting for two months; suddenly she found herself fantasizing about marrying him and having his children, which were all the things she thought she would never get to experience in life because of her freakish looks. She had a chance to do all those things now with Jaime; yet she still wanted to become the kind of surgeon she’d always wanted; she wondered if it were at all possible to do both.

She closed her eyes, feeling the back and forth movement of the ship rocking on the seas like a lullaby, and allowed herself to envision the beautiful golden face of Jaime: his laugh, his soft expression, even his sarcastic smirk. Slowly, slowly, she let herself fall into the ocean of sleep.

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Jaime tossed back and forth on the bed; their bed, that still smelled of Brienne, her delicious cunt, and their fucking from the night before. They had been so hungry for each other; every time they woke up, all he wanted to do was be inside her. It seemed they couldn’t get close enough to each other. Jaime had never been so happy or so sad at the same time. He wanted to remember the feel of her body under his, over his, how it felt to kiss her, what she felt like inside, how it felt to come inside her and become undone. How her lips tasted, her skin, how her cunt tasted before and after he fucked her. Being alone in this bed they shared for the two months previous was torture, but it was a torture he needed. It was the only way he could be with Brienne while he was without her. He could only imagine how he would feel as her smell faded over time, how her presence in her rooms would slowly vanish; he did not think he could bear it.

It was like this morning, when he saw her figure on the deck of the boat, and how she faded into the distance, ever so slowly. It was like seeing the sun set, but knowing it would not return the next morning, knowing that night and darkness would be perpetual. He groaned into the pillow. He was pathetic. His wench would laugh and poke fun at him if she were here. She would want him to sleep, and wake up tomorrow and face the day energetically. Tomorrow, yes, he would start tomorrow. He would do his hand exercises, spend time with the children, try to figure out what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. Tomorrow.

But tonight though, he wanted to wallow in Brienne’s smell, he wanted to be miserable without her, he wanted to miss her with all his heart and cry as much as he wanted to. He wanted to wet her pillow with his tears and fall asleep exhausted.
Chapter End Notes

Let me know your thoughts on this chapter in your comments! I love reading all of your reactions and value them so much.

Thanks for the kudos.

And 1000x thanks for reading and sticking by this story.
Dear Wench,

You have been gone far too long; at least it feels that way, although my calendar says it’s only been three days. Things are terrible here in King’s Landing without you. Gloomy, cloudy, rainy. Did you take the sun with you when you left, Brienne? It feels like it. Tyrion looks at me pityingly. I have been staying in your apartments, wench; I moved all my things over there, since your rooms are much better than mine, although this is something I’m sure you’ll deny. But wench, I’m used to sleeping there, and being here reminds me of you. I’m glad you left a few things of yours, including the photograph of yourself that you took that last time you went out with Jon. I suppose you have the other photographs with you, the one with yourself and Jon, and of Jon himself. That was probably a good move because I am likely to accidentally put photographs of Jon into the fire, since there are really so many papers about. I jest, wench. I would never burn any photograph of yours. But I’m glad I have some image of you here to look at. You look like you could conquer the world in that picture, which I suppose is what you are doing.

Of course, I don’t need a photograph to remember what you look like. Your face and body are imprinted in my brain, and it will be my death before I can forget those beautiful blue eyes of yours. Of course, I can imagine all the freckles on your body, and I do often imagine you naked, Brienne, and what I often did to that delectable naked body of yours. I miss you, Brienne. I miss holding you, kissing you, tasting you, fucking you. I could go on, but I don’t want you to faint while reading this letter. (Although if you really want to know exactly what I’m thinking about you at night, when I’m missing you, do let me know. I think it would be exciting to send you the product of my dirty, unfiltered mind. Perhaps I will send these thoughts to you anyway, in case you were curious.)

You might be interested, wench, about how I’m managing to write you this letter. As you can
guess, I’ve acquired a state of the art typewriter. (Actually Tyrion procured it for me from his publisher, after my lengthy complaining.) Apparently these machines are all the rage in modern offices in King’s Landing, and you’ll be pleased to hear that many young women use them in their jobs in these very offices! Women are surely and slowly taking over the world, methinks. I’m sure Lady Olenna would be very happy about that. In any case, instead of subjecting you to my atrocious writing with my injured right hand or the scrawls of my left hand, I’ve taken to pecking out letters on the typewriter. Apparently one can learn to type without even looking at the keys, like how one would play the piano. I think I’ll aim for that. Perhaps I shall find a job amongst the working girls in the modern offices? I am looking for employment in any case.

Before you ask, yes, wench, I am doing my hand exercises twice daily, though I am unable to do some of my favourite hand exercises which involve you and your delicious body; no more about that though, although I can tell you that I am getting particular practice at a certain solo hand exercise that a man does in private (I hope you know what I mean). I have been too long without you. My body (and my cock) misses you terribly. As a medical professional, perhaps you can let me know if one can die from not being able to make love with one’s almost wife? It feels like I can die from it, sometimes.

I miss you, wench. Write to me. No one ever wrote to me when I was away on my military campaigns, save Tyrion, who writes like he breathes (meaning a lot).

I really can’t bear to be away from you for so long.

I love you, Brienne. I love you.

Your future (and always) devoted husband,

Jaime

p.s. I have enclosed photographs that I took yesterday. As you can see, the children begged to come along, so there are pictures of them too. They turned out well, I think. Tommen wanted to bring his cats, but I convinced him that they would not sit still. Anyway, I wanted you to have this portrait of your future husband, to help you remember how beautiful and handsome he is. I believe I thought of you naked when he took this photograph; can you tell by my eyes? Before the children decided to tag along I also wanted to take some risqué pictures to send to you, but perhaps another time. I miss you, wench.

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Dear Jaime,

I am writing this while still on the ship bound for Dorne. I feel a little silly writing to you when we’ve only been separated for three days, but the sea is endless and the journey is tedious and the hours are terribly long. I confess I’m lonely without you and miss you terribly. I think about how amusing you would be telling your terrible jokes in my ear and criticizing everything from the clothing of fellow passengers to the food, to the particular sea birds that fly by.

There have been moments when I regretted you not coming with me. How foolish I was to believe that I wouldn’t be so affected by your absence! I’m afraid I’ve been terrible company to both Pod and Oberyn, although both of them try their best to entertain me and make me smile. The evenings
are lovely here on the ship. The three of us go up on the deck and watch the sun disappear into the sea, when the skies turn all sort of vivid oranges, reds, and purples. It makes me think of our recent trip to Tarth and the sunsets we saw there. Anyway, in the evenings, there is music, as there are a few musicians on board who love to play the old songs. Sometimes we sing along, sometimes we dance (Oberyn is a good dancing partner, Pod – not so much). Sometimes I find a book in the library and try to read. It is the nights when I particularly miss you, Jaime. I miss being in our arms and kissing you and all the other things we used to do (can you imagine me blushing as I write this? I’m sure you can).

You’ll be pleased to hear that the tincture I got from Samwell for Pod’s seasickness worked a charm. After a few drops of it, he felt a lot better, and now he’s even got his sea legs. It also helps that the ship is so much larger than the one we took to Tarth. The ship feels a lot more substantial, like a big, moving island.

I hope you are taking care of yourself, Jaime. Remember to do your hand exercises as you promised. Give my love to the children and tell them I miss them. Send my love to your father and brother as well; tell them I will try to write to them from time to time.

The clock ticks and it is nearly midnight. I must get to bed and try to sleep. It is difficult to sleep without you here beside me, Jaime. I miss you and think a lot about our wonderful last night together. Meanwhile, I shall try to pretend you are beside me while I try to rest.

I shall mail this letter when we land in Dorne tomorrow or the next day.

Remember I love you and miss you and think about you always.

Yours,

Brienne

p.s. We have landed in Dorne, and I will mail this letter soon, but I wanted to let you know that I received your letter and the wonderful photographs of the children and of you. Thank you for them. I am grateful to have this reminder of your face, though I think I can never forget it from my mind. But gods, you are handsome, Jaime. Seeing you in photographs make me miss you less and also miss you more, strange and contradictory as it may seem. I won’t take up too much more of this letter, as I have nearly run out of room on the paper, but I just wanted to say how much I loved reading your words (typed! amazing!), even though some of the things you said made me blush profusely. I miss you too. I do feel less alone now that I know we miss each other terribly. (And no, of course you can’t die from not making love, which I’m sure you already know, because you asked the question just to annoy me.)

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Dearest Wench-Wife,

I cannot wait until I get to call you that in person, when we are married (which I hope will be soon). While I understand that it will annoy you exceedingly, you’ll forever be my wench-wife to me. Thank you for your letter, and I was secretly glad to read that you miss me as much as I miss you, and that you regret not asking me to come with you. I surely would have made your journey much more tolerable, and I would have saved you from the clutches of that Oberyn Martell (I jest!...
I know you like and respect him, though I remain suspicious that he plans to lure you into his bed.) It is good Pod survived the journey without the seasickness we witnessed on the journey to and from Tarth; that was truly disgusting to witness, and the poor wretch was miserable. If I do see Samwell Tarly, I will let him know his remedy worked a charm so he can sell it and become even richer.

In case you’re asking, I have not missed you any less. But I have tried to occupy my time. Aside from the exercises you’re making me do, even all the way from Dorne, I have been visiting the children. They both think I’m miserable, by the way. Tommen says I’m no longer fun without you, and Myrcella has made fast friends with some of the Lannister cousins who are visiting from Casterly Rock, and is spending much of her time engaging in mischief with them instead of her dear old uncle. Also, I’m afraid Jon Snow has been replaced by Loras Tyrell as the girl’s one true love; apparently she glimpsed him at the wedding and that was it, her heart was immediately won. You will convey that to Jon, won’t you, if you’re in touch with him? (Are you in touch with him, wench?)

I have hired an assistant called Peck, a very proper young man, who’s very conscientious. With Tywin preparing to go off Casterly Rock, it’s up to me to oversee Petyr Baelish’s work as his new role as head of the Lannister Industries. My father did not want a repeat of the Cersei disaster and I think has asked me to report to him about Littlefinger, and Littlefinger to report to him about my own work. Anyway, Littlefinger seems very good at making money and making the factories successful once again; according to him, demand is high, especially with summer around the corner, and cottons being most popular during hot weather throughout the realm. We are rebuilding the factory that was in the fire. I have taken on as my project to make sure the workers are being treated not just fairly, but generously, and that safety conditions are paramount. With the advances in modern technology, did you know we could easily reduce the cotton particles in the air which lead to lung disease in the workers? And of course, this would significantly reduce the fire risk. I remember how awful you felt when you talked about treating these people with permanent lung disease. As Littlefinger says, healthy and happy workers lead to massive worker loyalty and record company profits. So far, we are working well with each other. He has a clever wit that is well hidden by a curtain of obsequious politeness, but I have the skill to scrape under all that and find his dry sense of humour. I also like to get him quite drunk, especially at the private club that Tywin belongs to and where he desperately wants to be invited as a member.

I have also taken up to assisting Tyrion in the bookshop, now that you have taken Pod from him. (By the way, he says he will eventually forgive you for that, but you will need to send him plenty of Dornish wine to expedite the process.) It’s shocking what a disorganized disaster the bookshop is! The moment I organize a shelf, the next moment Tyrion is messing it up again. And did you know that he discourages customers and refuses to sell books? I believe he is merely using the bookshop as a glorified office. However, you’ll be glad to know that I have sold a number of volumes when we do get customers. What can I say, no one can resist my charms. Surely you can attest to that, right, wench?

You did not say much about my offer to send you the very diverse thoughts I have about you nightly, before I go to bed and do my ‘solo hand exercises’. You’ll be glad to hear that my hand has undergone much improvement in this respect, I suspect due to frequency of use in this particular regard. I miss you, Brienne, and I very much miss you in our bed. Did I tell you that I refused to wash our sheets from our joint use of it on our last night together? It had all your smells, and the smell of us fucking. It was glorious for a time, to just lay there and wallow in your scent. I helped me miss you a little less and miss you a lot more as well. But then eventually the sheets started to stink and I had the poor housekeeper take them to a laundry to be professionally cleaned.

Have I told you how much I think about our last night, when we made love three times that night?
I don’t know if you know how proud of myself I was for that performance, but I really was. I think of us often, how wonderful it was to lay with you and kiss you and fuck you. How glorious you are naked, with your pale, freckled skin and your strength and your long legs which I dream about both in my waking and sleeping life. I’ve never seen anyone with legs as long as yours, wench. It is absolutely heaven to be in between your legs, to have them wrap around my back or waist or hips, or have them over my shoulders whenever I’m plunging my cock into you. Just writing about it has made me incredibly hard; you make me want you so much, wench. When I can see you again so I can slide myself inside your warm, soft, tight, depths? Oh gods, thinking about this is driving me crazy. I shall have to presently stop and practice the solo hand exercises that I mentioned earlier….

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Well, wench, I’m back and very much relieved. If you want me to write to you in detail what I thought about – what we were doing in my fantasies – please let me know. I think I would like that. Also, I’m sure they have plenty of photography studios in Dorne, do they not? I would like more pictures of you, wench. I want to see how you are and I want to see more of your face. Send me pictures and I promise to do the same.

Write to me, wench. Tell me how you are getting on in Sunspear, with your work and everything. I eagerly and anxiously await your response.

With love from your almost husband,
Jaime

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Dear Jaime,

Greetings from Sunspear! I’m in my chambers in Oberyn’s very large and incredibly beautiful estate, writing this note on a desk carved with wild animals; the doors and windows are wide open, allowing the cooling breeze to run through my apartments. Pod and I live on one wing of the estate, while Oberyn and Ellaria live in another, with their four youngest daughters, who are all under twelve years of age. Oberyn’s four older daughters live away on their own; the oldest, Obara, is near thirty. In fact, all of his daughters are extremely impressive: accomplished in both arts and war, decisive, fierce in character, and the older ones openly have lovers (of both sexes). They are all incredible and I feel I could gain much from just being around them.

It is magnificent here, Jaime. It’s so warm, and all the buildings here are painted and tiled with intricate patterns, and there are trees everywhere; the people here smile easily, and have a lot more relaxed attitude than in King’s Landing; they are very easy with their affections, touching and kissing each other out in the open. Poor Pod seemed completely shocked when he saw men and women, men and men, and women and women opening kissing, sensually touching out in public. They have also been open and kind to me, the people of Dorne. They exclaim and are impressed when they find out I’m a surgeon; I feel extremely welcome as a doctor here. And they don’t look at me like I was an ugly freak at all here; in fact, the looks I get are admiring. However, one thing different is that I’ve had to change my wardrobe entirely – my light wool or heavy linen suits won’t do. It’s so hot here that I’ve taken to wearing Dornish garb: loose, flowing silks, sheer dresses, long tunics and light breeches. Surprisingly, I don’t look too ridiculous in them, and they come in all
sorts of pretty colours.

Work goes well so far; Oberyn’s laboratory is amazingly modern and filled with competent scientists. He has given me a small lab adjoining his, so I can do independent research if I need to. But the work continues to be intensely interesting. We are modifying the design of the delicate stent which we hope to use to stop any aortic tear or hemorrhage. We were already close in King’s Landing but I think soon we will start operating on human patients to hopefully help save their lives. You asked in your letter if I’ve been keeping in touch with Jon – and yes, I have, partly due to the research, which he was very much our partner in. Jon has given us feedback on our work, which has been useful. He seems happy to be back in the North; I have passed along the news that he is no longer the object of Myrcella’s love, as you insisted. I think he was amused.

Pod is doing well, studying with the same tutor as the girls, and also helping us in the laboratory. He is a smart young man, even though he seems a little bashful in the beginning; once he is taught to do something, he does it correctly the rest of the time, which is a wonderful thing. I think if he continues this way, he will be ready to study at the Citadel when he is old enough in a couple of years. Oberyn has taken to calling him my little squire as he follows me around like a shadow.

You will see that I have enclosed a couple of photographs of myself, as you requested, in Dornish garb, no less. The dress I am wearing is a little scandalous, it goes in a low ‘v’ on my chest and the materials are sheer (though the dress is in layers so I am obviously completely covered up). You’ll be pleased to know that Ellaria is an amateur photographer and has her own studio on the estate. She is lovely, of course, and is thrilled to have me and Pod as new subjects. So you will have many photos of me, I suppose. Right now, she likes to set up stories with her photographs: we dress in costume and pose for scenes from classical stories: myths, romances, battles, and the like. I have played roles such as the damsel and the knight opposite Oberyn. It’s all quite amusing and fun, although the love scenes we have to enact can be a little uncomfortable for me, since it takes me a while to get rid of my awkwardness, and I can never imagine myself as a heroine in any story.

Speaking of shocking things, I am appalled sometimes at the things you write, Jaime! They are positively indecent! Though I’m glad to hear that you are getting plenty of exercise with your injured hand. Sections of your letter have made me blush profusely and I have to make sure to read them in the privacy of my rooms. That being said, they do make me…feel things and make me warm and very much want you. While I abstractly object to the indecency of the contents of your letters at times, I do admit I enjoy reading your thoughts about me and what we do. I miss you so much, in so many ways, Jaime. I wish you were here. The days are busy, so the nights are hardest. I also sometimes need to relieve my own longing with my hand while thinking of you. They are so open here with their desires that I wish even more that you were with me.

I must end now – I hear Ellaria calling for me. She is going to dress me up her costumes and make me pose for her photographs. It’s great fun and a very good distraction from missing you.

Give my love to the children and the rest of your family.

I love you.

Yours,

Brienne.
My Dearest Wench-Wife,

You sound happy and very busy in your letter, which I was actually very glad to read. Dorne is indeed a very beautiful place, although my travels there related more to battles and wars, so my own memories of the place are not of the picturesque variety. However, I hope to replace those particular memories with new ones with you one day soon. I’m glad to read that young Pod is flourishing – he’s a brave lad to suddenly leave a place he’s known all his life and pursue a new future. If only we were all as courageous (though of course you are). I’m glad your work is still stimulating and that the Martells are treating you well. I’ll be curious indeed to meet Oberyn’s daughters; I’m surprised to hear that at least one of them is older than you (the man must have gotten started early). By the way, have you introduced the moon pill to Dorne yet, wench? Just a thought.

I was extremely thrilled to see new photographs of you, in Dornish dress no less. I can seriously confess that they impacted me immediately, the sight of you in such transparent (though with enough layers not to reveal anything – is this sorcery?), teasing, flowing garbs. I can only imagine how ravishing you look in person. In fact, the sight of you in your dress, and of course your face and (dare I say it) seductive expression had me running to swiftly relieve myself in a most delicious bout of solo exercise, where I imagined I sucked your teats over all that transparent fabric and opened the deep neckline of your dress to reveal a berry pink nipple, and then I lay you on a colourful woven carpet, and lifted up the sheer floating fabric of your skirts, pulled down your small clothes and feasted upon your warm, wet depths of your cunt.

That is to say I enjoyed those photographs, so please send some more; I would especially love it if you sent me pictures of you in some state of undress. I’m not asking for a picture of your naked body, wench, although if you were so inspired I would be entirely grateful and it would certainly make me much less lonely, but perhaps a picture with just a little more skin? I mean, it’s just a thought, really. It is good that Ellaria is the photographer, and not Oberyn, as I would get a tiny bit jealous if I imagined he was looking at you in that way. Still, you did you say that you reenact love scenes for the photographs with him? Do they, by any chance, involve kissing? If so, I would strongly encourage you to reenact battle or murder scenes instead.

I am doing tolerably well here. I’m keeping busy with overseeing the changes to the Lannister factories in terms of bettering the working conditions. I’m proud to say that the workers seem a lot happier; they have also chosen amongst themselves representatives for the workers to speak to Littlefinger and other management about any worker concerns they may have. It doesn’t seem that my presence is needed too much longer. Littlefinger is a shrewd man, with not much of a soft heart, but he is logical enough to realize that a happy workforce is better for the company reputation and profits. I’m also spending a lot more time at the bookshop with Peck (my assistant that I mentioned to you). I have set up a shelf that Tyrion can put his books when he’s done with them instead of disturbing the order to the shelves I’ve imposed. So far, he is being cooperative, as he is figuring out that it’s easier to find certain books he needs when they are organized. Peck has proven to be good with figures and has taken over much of the bookkeeping.

Oh, with regards to Tyrion, some news that you may not have heard. One, he is seeing Shae now, the girl who works at Chataya’s who came to the bookshop to tell Tyrion and me about the Bloody Mummer attack those many months ago. Of course, before he had been seeing her as a customer, but this has grown to real affection on both sides and is now a real relationship. I think they bonded after the whole attack. Tyrion seems happier than I’ve seen him in years. While I don’t doubt Tywin would disapprove, I’m sure things will work out somehow.
The other interesting news about Tyrion, which you will doubtless see in *The Westerosi Times* when it reaches you, is that Tyrion has now been revealed to be the famous author Lyon Grumpkin, and the whole realm is afire with the news. This exposé, is of course, coincidentally timed with the new release of his latest novel. The good news is that Tyrion is quite happy at the notoriety, as it surely would lead to more book sales, and Tywin is happy as well, as it changes the narrative about the horrible murdering Lannisters. It seems at last, my little brother has found approval of a very limited variety from our father. Better to be known as a family that breeds novelists than murderers, I suppose. Good for Tyrion, at least. Tywin seems to have been truly humbled by the Joffrey and Cersei incidents; I feel slightly sorry for him, though I’m glad that he’s more accepting of us. I suppose his turn to mildness has much to do with you as well, wench. Your kindness and just you being you have made an impression on us all.

I think I also mentioned that Tywin is preparing to retreat back to Casterly Rock to resume his duties as the Lord there and also continue with his medical research (I have no details about this, he has never spoken to me about what in the world he’s researching). There isn’t much to hold him to King’s Landing any longer, now that he’s been kicked off the board of the King’s Landing Hospital due to Joffrey being a convicted murderer and all. The children are planning to move there with him, which may surprise you, wench. The thing is, we have plenty of family there at Casterly and the nearby city of Lannisport. The children already get along with the cousins who had visited in the last couple of weeks, and there, they will be taken care of not only by Tywin, but there’s Aunt Gemma (who practically raised me) and her family, and also Uncle Kevan and his family. Aunt Gemma will provide the children with a much needed motherly figure, I think, as two bachelors and a widower don’t particularly have that special maternal touch. Myrcella and Tommen will be surrounded with children their own age. And of course their Septa and nanny will be coming along. Myrcella is thrilled to be with the cousins, and Tommen is amenable as long as Sir Pounce, Lady Whiskers, and Boots come along with him. All in all, I think it a good plan for the children, even though it means I won’t be seeing them as often; however, they know me as their uncle, and will always know me as such, so my absence has less of an impact, I suppose. Now, don’t go feeling sorry for me, wench. I deserve everything I get, I think, after the mess I made in two and a half decades of my life.

After the children and Tywin move to Casterly, I’m thinking about visiting you, wench. It has been almost two months and I miss you terribly, more than I ever convey in this letter. Let me know what you think.

In the meantime, I will continue to exercise my hand and now I have your new pictures to keep me company. I have also been practicing typing and have taken up again some piano, which I used to play as a youth. Aren’t you pleased for me? I hope so, wench. I mean to please you every day.

You are constantly in my thoughts. My days and nights are miserable without you, Brienne, though I am trying.

All my love,

Jaime

P.S. I have enclosed a few new pictures of myself, so you won’t forget how magnificent I look. Don’t you miss me, wench? I have made friends with the photographer and he has agreed to take these pictures of me, shirtless. Feast your eyes, wench, and tell me in great detail what you will do to yourself when you look at these images.
Dearest Jaime,

I was thrilled to receive your photographs, though I have to shake my head at how cheeky you are. But seeing your face – and half-naked body – in black and white, made my heart skip a beat. You can imagine how red my whole body got, because seeing you just made me remember all the private, pleasurable things we did since Tarth. I miss having you here so much, Jaime. I miss your touch and I miss touching you. I miss feeling you against my lips, I miss your taste, I miss how you feel inside me. I think of you every night and can’t help but reach under my smallclothes and touch myself there just to feel the echo of the pleasure that you bring me.

Thank you for all your news. But I can’t help but sense a little melancholy in your last letter, Jaime. Are you truly okay? I know that the children moving to Casterly Rock must be hard on you, since it is not an easy distance from King’s Landing, but it sounds like they will be amongst family and children their own age. It is likely the best place for them right now. Also I was happy to read about the news about Tyron, that he has found a woman at last (Shae, as I remember her, is a smart, kind person), and he has been revealed as the famous Lyon Grumpkin. Knowing Tyron, I’m sure he’s pleased at his newfound notoriety. And I’m glad that Tywin has been accepting of the news, and it’s good that he is returning to Casterly Rock to work on his research.

I am quite well here, but still getting used to how different society is here. People are so much more straightforward about their wishes and desires, and not just in aspects of love, but in really everything. I’m astounded at the important role that women play here – women can go into politics, they can teach and become leaders. They can inherit lands and money and titles. And of course, there is no judgement about sex or having children outside of marriage. You asked about if I introduced the moon pill to Dorne – Oberyn had expressed early interest in it, and had already arranged for distributors here even before I arrived, and I’m excited to report that it’s been tremendously successful. Oberon’s daughters especially have talked to me about the importance of it. They absurdly seem to think I helped invent it, which is very flattering. I tried to set them straight, but they still treat me like a pharmaceutical genius. Of course, I myself have been taking the moon pill, and am happy to report that it really does work, which is great, considering how active we’ve been in those last two months together.

I also wanted to report amazing news around our work; we successfully placed the stainless steel stent in a human subject – a man whose aorta was damaged by alcohol and who had maybe a few weeks to live. He did not die on the operating table, thank the gods. And not only did he not die, but he recovered fully from the operation. Now it is a waiting game to see how well he does with the new stent. If this works, it will be the first successful stent implant for aorta repair in the world. A few more successes and we can start writing the paper for publication. It’s exceptionally thrilling – if this works, Oberyn will be much more of a legend in surgery than he already is. And I will have been a part of history. Still, there is much more work to be done, but I can’t help but feel that things will be much easier from here on in, since most of the hard work will have already been done. Both Oberyn and I are thrilled, of course, although we are still cautiously optimistic and are trying to anticipate all the things that could go wrong in the meantime.

All in all, the days are busy with work – and I find myself surrounded by friends. The Martells have been kind, though I must admit their air of seduction can sometimes be both unsettling and flattering. Pod continues to flourish and he seems to have developed a crush on all of the Martell daughters who are older than him. It’s rather sweet.

This letter has gone far too long – I am expected at a dinner engagement soon, and need to dress and prepare. Jaime – you write of visiting; if you can manage it and if it’s okay with your family,
Please do. I have gone too long without seeing your face and feeling you in my arms.

With all my love,

Brienne

P.S. I have enclosed two photographs that Ellaria took ‘in character’ – me in armour as the Warrior Maid, and a quite shocking one, the Warrior Maid coming out of the bath. The last one was a little awkward – she captured me with my back turned, coming out of a bath tub, and told me to hold the pose. I suppose I’m grateful that only my bare back is exposed as I’m coming out of the tub. In any case, it occurred to me that you may enjoy it. I know I don’t need to say this, but please don’t show this to anybody, including your brother or Bronn?

Chapter End Notes

How did the format work for you in this chapter? What are your thoughts around what’s been happening in our characters’ lives? Please send me your thoughts and comments! Reading them is a true delight.

For the kudos, THANK YOU.

Happy 2020, dear readers. Thank you for reading this.
With her stethoscope, Brienne listened to the heartbeat of Mr. Forel, a small, middle-aged man, looking for any irregularities in rhythm, any tell-tale whooshing noise which would indicate a hole in the vessels of the heart. Since the surgery, the man’s colour had returned, and he seemed much more energetic. She looked at Oberyn and smiled.

“Your heart has perfect rhythm, Mr. Forel,” Brienne announced to the man, as he began to button up his shirt.

“Your blood pressure is also quite good,” added Oberyn, looking up from the sphygmomanometer. “Much improved from prior to the procedure.”

“I feel wonderful, doctors,” the man said, grinning. “I have so much more energy and zest for life. I think soon I will be able to return to teaching.” He hopped down lightly from the examination table, and stood up with a flourish.

Brienne laughed, and Oberyn grinned. They said their goodbyes to the man, and turned to one another. Oberyn gave her a self-satisfied look. “Another happy customer,” he said wryly.

“Oberyn, this is incredible,” Brienne said excitedly, her voice rising, “Three patients with the stent, all doing well weeks later. I think you’ve really done it!” She felt ready to burst with excitement, and impulsively pulled him into a hug.

He squeezed her in return, laughing, and drew his arms even tighter around her. They stepped back, and he caressed her scarred cheek. “We have done it, Brienne.” He said, looking at her with serious
eyes. “I truly could not have done this without you by my side.”

Brienne looked down and shook her head. “You give me far too much credit, Oberyn. This is your project. I’ve just been lucky enough to be here with you.” She gave him a grateful look. “You have taught me so much, Oberyn. Thank you.”

He made a clicking noise with his mouth and gave her a dubious glance. “Brienne. You are brilliant, even more promising than I was when I was your age.” He tilted his head and stared at her. “But take credit for what you have done. In this field, people are as likely to take credit from you than give you credit. Be proud.”

Brienne lifted her head, straightened her spine, and nodded. “Thank you, Oberyn.” She smiled at him. “I need that reminder.”

“Good,” he said, drawing his arm around her waist. “Now let’s talk about our next steps.” He led her back to his office, where they sat down at the work table.

“We’ll need to do more surgeries, but do them in King’s Landing, since we’ll have a different patient pool over there. And frankly, we’ll get more attention if the surgeries take place in the city.” He leaned back in his chair and looked at her with an expression of wonder. “I must admit that our success has taken me by surprise; I wasn’t expecting to be at this stage so soon. I had assumed we’d have more failure. I can only assume that this has only happened with your crucial help.”

Brienne’s instinct was to deflect credit and blush and deny her involvement, but heeding the words he just spoke to her, she merely nodded in agreement. Oberyn smirked. It was true, the pace they were going, they would not be in Dorne for much longer, especially if the next steps were to perform surgeries in King’s Landing. Of course the research paper could be written in either place, as long as they had the information at hand.

They heard steps at the door, and they turned to see the figure of Pod, holding out a big package in his hands and grinning.

“Doctors!” Pod said excitedly. “A delivery from King’s Landing.”

Brienne took the package from the young man, placed it on the table in front of them, and unwrapped it. Inside were three copies of the same book: *The Blue Heart*, by Tyrion Lannister.

“Oh, he has his real name on it,” remarked Pod with barely concealed delight, touching the red cover with gold-embossed lettering. Brienne felt a growing excitement at the sight of the books; Tyrion was always mysterious about his plots, so it was satisfying to get to read what he’d been working on in the last year.

“There’s a note,” said Brienne, opening up the small, handwritten letter. She started reading out loud: “Dearest doctors and doctor to be – I guess he means you, Pod – enclosed are three copies of my book for each of you. I have generously signed it so it might actually be worth something one day. I especially hope you like this latest offering from the late Lyon Grumpkin, now reborn like a phoenix as yours truly. I feel it is my best effort to date, due to its singular heroine and hero. Let me know your thoughts.” She paused in her reading, looking at the two men and blushing. She cleared her throat and continued. “Oh, and Brienne – please send for my brother and put him out of his misery. He is trying very hard, but he is lost without his wench. Love and regards, Tyrion.”

Oberyn smiled at her gently, and Pod blushed. Brienne was mortified at the last bit in the note, but nonetheless, she couldn’t help but feel a longing for Jaime.
“Excellent,” said Oberyn, eagerly grabbing a copy of the book, and apparently abandoning their earlier conversation about the study. “I shall spend the afternoon reading this, and I shall see you both at dinner?”

Brienne and Pod nodded, grabbing their own copies, and walked back to their chambers.

As she strolled across the estate and through the lush and vibrant water gardens, she couldn’t help but turn her mind to Jaime. She missed him as fiercely as the very first day they had separated. True, she had kept busy with her work and her life was full of pleasant activities, but she could not help the feeling of profound loneliness that was at the core of her life here. She desperately wanted him here, with her. And to add insult to injury, she had not heard from him since the last letter that she sent over three weeks ago. She wondered if he was alright; or perhaps his typewriter got broken. In the last letter, she had asked him to visit, but she wondered if the account she wrote of her life made him sad or seem not to care. She sighed, and looked at Tyrion’s book.

In her rooms, she sat down on her divan and opened it, thinking it would be a distraction from her very melancholy thoughts.

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She devoured the novel tensely, hundreds upon hundreds of pages, in one single afternoon. Frankly, she was appalled but could not put it down. A fierce anger shot through her, but she was compelled to read until the final emotional pages. What Tyrion had done burned her; she rarely wished violence on any one, but she wished he were here so she could punch him in the nose. Hard. Because his latest novel, The Blue Heart, was a very thinly veiled account of her own life. The book was about the first female doctor in fictional Europa, and the main character was a tall, unattractive, blond woman from a remote island called Barthes, who falls in love with a handsome, arrogant blond surgeon who had previously been under the thrall of a beautiful but wicked married woman for a decade. Tyrion had made up a tragic backstory for the main character, and made her a penniless orphan who was taken in by an evil, money-grubbing industrialist who unexpectedly cared for her as a real father would. The woman first has an antagonistic relationship with the surgeon, but they work together in the battlefields of a harsh civil war and end up saving each other’s lives. They fall in love, but tragically, they are separated, and the male hero dies in a horrible fire, in an attempt to save a schoolhouse full of children. The heroine is then left all alone, a spinster doctor who lives with three cats and takes care of the unfortunate.

She was poor company and sat fuming throughout the dinner with Oberyn, Ellaria, and Pod; thankfully the children were spared from observing her fury, as they were staying at their Uncle Doran’s magnificent estate for a fortnight.

Pod looked at her with concern, but appeared too nervous to say anything. He opened his mouth to say something and closed it immediately several times.

“I take it you did not know that you were the subject of Tyrion’s latest novel?” Oberyn asked, his eyes lit up with amusement.

“Yes?” Ellaria sat up, curious. “How fascinating!”

Oberyn caressed his paramour’s shoulder. “Indeed. The book is about the first female doctor, blond, tall, unconventional looks…”
“You mean ugly…” scowled Brienne.

Oberyn cocked his head. “Not ugly. Other characters may consider her as such, but the author definitely sees beauty in her.” He paused.

“I agree,” said Pod, in a small voice, looking timidly at Brienne. “She’s a wonderful heroine. So unique. I’m half in love with her myself,” said Pod, blushing.

“I believe all of Westeros is meant to fall in love with her,” Oberyn observed dryly.

Brienne gave him a sharp look, but remained silent. She brooded.

“The hero was also all right. He made me angry though.” Pod added.

“Indeed! He is a very complex character,” Oberon said brightly. “Tortured, chained to this past love and unable to get away from the woman that he’s allegedly loved for years. But tragic because the woman he’s in love with is incapable of loving him back.”

“Is that supposed to be Jaime?” Ellaria asked, one eyebrow raised.

“I believe so….” Oberyn looked at each of them. “I’m sure we have all heard rumors about Jaime and why he’s remained a bachelor all these long years. Of course, Brienne would know the whole story, being currently betrothed to him.”

“No comment,” glowered Brienne. Honestly, Oberyn’s apparent enthusiasm for the book was irritating.

He turned to her. “Brienne, I understand why you’d be angry, as he’s used you and your life as a model for his main character.” He paused to refill her wine glass. “But it really is an astonishing piece of fiction, and the heroine is unique and wonderful, just like the original inspiration, I might add.”

“It sounds like a compliment to me,” Ellaria drawled, smiling at her. “Why are you so upset, Brienne?”

She looked at them, frowning, trying to find the words to explain what she was feeling. “You all don’t understand. It’s not flattering. Tyrion…he’s mocking me. Making fun of my life, as if my decisions and feelings are a source of entertainment. Calling attention to my unattractiveness.”

Pod went a little pale. “Surely not, Doctor Brienne. Tyrion admires and loves you, he’s told me so many times.”

Brienne shook her head, suddenly feeling her throat tighten, much to her shame. “I’m already so hideous and freakish....”

Oberyn got up and sat next to her, pulling her into a gentle embrace. “Dear girl, you’re afraid of drawing attention to yourself, I understand now.” He stroked her hair. “But remember what I said to you this morning? You must be confident and take what life offers you, for there are many more people who would want to insult you and tear you down, as I’m sure you’ve experienced in your life.”

“Yes, darling,” Ellaria said, perching on the other side of her and taking her hand and stroking it. “So what if people have insulted you in the past? You are an incandescent, celestial being. And as Tyrion believes, as we all do, definitely worthy of having books written about.”
Pod nodded eagerly. “You really are, Doctor Brienne. You are the best, kindest, bravest person I’ve ever known.”

Brienne felt tears come now, flowing freely, and she was entirely disbelieving but grateful all the same for their strange faith in her, their idealized view of her that she did not quite understand. But at least she understood that she was loved and at least in their eyes, she was not the ugly insignificant thing that people have told her she was all her life. She supposed that it was possible that Tyrion wrote the novel not to hurt or insult her, but just to show how interesting a person like her could be. All this made her generally very confused. She was still angry at Tyrion for not telling her about his novel – how he must have observed her every character quirk and actions, just to write it down in his book! – but the rage had since dimmed into a dull feeling. She did not think that Tyrion was being malicious, but still, the book put a spotlight on her that she did not ask for.

Pod offered her his handkerchief which she gratefully accepted, and she sniffed, wiping her nose and face.

“I’m just very…confused. But I think I understand that Tyrion wasn’t trying to hurt me.” Brienne said, her voice hoarse from crying.

“He really isn’t,” Oberyn said confidently. “I think he admires you a great deal and saw the opportunity to tell this incredible story about a unique, wonderful woman who is unconventional in many ways.”

“It’s hard to have attention drawn to all my flaws. I know I’m ugly and awkward….” Brienne tried to explain.

“But just imagine,” Ellaria said, her dark eyes wide, “All the young women who are different and who will read this and become inspired. Such stories are rare in Westerosi society, as I understand it.”

Ellaria’s words made her pause in thought. “I certainly never had any stories about someone like me in the stories I read as a child. All the damsels were beautiful, feminine and gracious,” Brienne agreed, remembering her own longing to be smaller, shorter, and more pretty.

“I’m inspired by you, Doctor Brienne. I wish I could become just like you one day,” Pod said, smiling shyly.

“Thank you, Pod, all of you.” Brienne sniffed, grateful that her tears had dried up. “I feel better about the book.”

She turned to them, a thought suddenly entering her mind. “But what do you think about the main character ending up alone with three cats named Ser Pounce, Lady Whiskers, and Boots?”

Oberyn and Pod laughed.

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Jaime paced up and down the hallway of his luxurious rooms, his embroidered slippers treading on the intricately patterned woven carpet. Everything here in Dorne was lovely and artistic and beautiful to look at, although he had no patience to appreciate much of anything at the moment. He had arrived the day before, utterly wrecked in body with exhaustion. He had Peck rent out these
rooms close to Oberyn’s estate, and had arranged for a renowned tailor to provide him with a selection of Dornish inspired clothes. He thanked the gods for Peck, who could do everything Jaime asked; he dealt with organizing and planning, and all the things that gave Jaime a headache. He wondered how he could have done without an assistant his entire life. Of course, Peck was now in King’s Landing handling his affairs over there, and he was under strict instructions to send an urgent telegram to Jaime if there was an emergency of any kind.

He was anxious, very anxious to see his wench. He wanted to rush to her the moment he set foot on Dornish soil but he counseled himself to be patient and get himself ready and somewhat settled before running over there like an impulsive, love-sick fool. He had telegraphed Oberyn to let him know of his arrival, as he wanted to surprise Brienne, and the man told him the wench’s schedule, and indicated that today would be the best day, as she had the day off. Of course, the last thing Jaime wanted to do was interrupt their work, so he was grateful for the intelligence; at least it gave him enough time to adjust to the time difference and the climate.

It had been a tumultuous three weeks. He said goodbye to the children and Tywin, and accompanied them to Casterly Rock, staying only a week. He got reacquainted with his extended family, who has been thrilled to see him again. They certainly had a lot of questions about Brienne, of course, and everyone from Aunt Gemma to Uncle Kevan, to the chambermaids were asking him when the wedding was to be, and if it was to be held in Casterly Rock. It was irritating. The children however, settled in quite well, in Jaime and Cersei’s old rooms, which he strongly recommended that they redecorate. (Jaime blanched at the memories of his…activities with Cersei in those very rooms.) The children also encouraged him to reunite with Brienne, as they saw plainly that he was a miserable, grumpy old wretch without her.

By the time he returned to King’s Landing, he was completely worn down from the long days of train travel with only a brief respite in between trips. When he returned, he found the wench’s letter and enclosed photographs waiting for him, and one look at the photograph of the naked back of his wench made him rush up to his rooms, lock the door and take himself in hand, frantically stroking himself until he spilled with a strangled cry. When he finally got around to reading the letter, he stopped breathing when he read her plea for him to come to Dorne. It was what he’d been waiting for; he’d resisted the impulse every day since she left to buy himself a ticket and simply join her. Instead, he tried to work, do some good at the factories, and learn how to run a proper bookshop (without Tyrion’s help, of course). He genuinely tried to keep himself busy, but he still missed his wench. He missed her so much that it actually hurt his heart; he felt his body was missing a piece of itself.

He ran to the hallway and called Peck on the telephone and asked him to make arrangements. It was too late to write back to the wench, since the letter had arrived weeks ago while he was away at Casterly Rock. And he had a vague notion of surprising the wench, so he sent a telegram to Oberyn instead, who promised to keep his arrival a surprise. Of course, what she or Oberyn did not know was that Jaime was not merely planning a visit, he was going to stay there as long as the wench would have him; he intended to live there with her for the duration of her stay. Jaime hoped this particular development would be a welcome one. He rationalized that the children were safe and well taken care of, and plus, they were strongly encouraging him to go to Dorne. He sighed. He hoped Brienne would understand.

There was one last thing he needed to do before he left, which was exactly the last thing on earth he wanted to do. He walked into the sparse visiting room, with a table and two chairs opposite each other. There was a guard standing against the wall, intent on observing them. Another guard led Cersei into the room. His sister looked different. Either she or the prison had shorn her golden hair, so it clumped in waves just a little past her ears. She wore a simple grey prison dress; however, she looked healthy, a little plumper even, and still very beautiful.
She sat down on the chair opposite him and smirked.

“Brother. What a surprise to get a visit from you. I was told by father that you weren’t ever going
to visit,” she said, looking at him intently.

“Cersei. You look well.” Jaime felt uncomfortable, and had a strong desire to get out of the room. He was regretting coming to visit her as soon as she walked into the room and he saw those brittle green eyes that were so full of malice.

“Your hand is still hideous, I see,” she observed coolly, immediately sensing his reserve.

“They are treating you well?” Jaime asked, his voice tentative.

Cersei glared at him and rolled her eyes. “What are you doing here, Jaime? I know it’s not to declare your undying love and devotion to me,” she said.

Jaime glanced sharply at the guard and she laughed.

“Did you come all this way to tell me that you and that monstrous freak of yours are engaged?” She narrowed her eyes. “I already know. In fact, I read it in the newspaper, and everyone who read it told me personally about you and her. As you can imagine, it was such a delightful day,” she said, her voice mocking.

Jaime nodded. He looked at his sister, examined her face, and found no love there: not just her love for him, which he had doubted had ever been there, but he found no love within him for her. What he felt for her was long dead, and the memories of what they had once been made him internally squirm. She was a damaged, angry, bitter being, living on her own hate and frustrated ambition. He knew that she would always be this way, and there was no redemption for his sister, so once beloved by him.

“I figured you already knew about our engagement, Cersei. But I’m here to tell you more news, out of respect for what we once had. I’m leaving to join Brienne in Dorne soon, and plan on staying there for as long as she’s there.” He looked at her evenly.

Her face twisted as if someone had slapped her. She was angry. “How predictable of you, to follow your beast around like a fool. Have you no self-respect?”

He ignored her comment and ploughed on. “The children are being well taken care of at Casterly Rock. Tywin, Gemma, and Kevan are there, along with young cousins Tommen and Myrcella can play with.”

He got up to leave. She looked at him with her piercing green eyes. “You know, I could have had you and kept you if I wanted to. You were so easy to persuade, Jaime. All I needed to do was…. she looked over at the guard. “Well, I could have had you forever, Jaime. Only you got so tiresome, and boring, and so predictable.”

“Good bye, Cersei,” Jaime said, heading out the door. She did not reply, and did not even look at him. He left.

The visit to Cersei at the women’s penitentiary had agitated him; he saw all his flaws within himself, and saw all of the mistakes he’d made in his life laid out in front of him like a disjointed puzzle. He felt he wasted his youth on his sister, going after an impossible, stupid, idiotic love. He was upset that he deluded himself with his own vision of his sister and her feelings for him. He wondered if there was ever love there; at the time, he had been completely convinced of it. Looking back, he was alarmed at the passionate intensity of his belief in his sister and their love.
He stopped pacing, and stepped in front of the mirror to examine himself. He had on a long, golden tunic that was embroidered with leaves, and wore loose breeches of a deeper gold shade. The outfit was cooling and much more appropriate to the hot climate. His hair had grown since he was discharged from the military; his golden locks now fell almost to the nape of his neck, the hair falling artfully around his face. That morning he had himself shaved and had a Dornish skin treatment, so he looked appropriately well rested. He was ready to meet Brienne. Despite being anxious and eager to see her, he was suddenly filled with dread and fear when the time came to leave for Oberyn’s. He wondered, perhaps for the hundredth time, if the wench would be truly happy to see him.

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Brienne stood face to face with Oberyn, their swords crossing in front of their faces, staring at each other with intensity, but not intensely enough to contort their features. Ellaria kept coaching her to “look angry, but like you’re in love with him” and Brienne didn’t know exactly what that meant. She dropped her sword and looked at the voluptuous brunette blankly. The metal amour she was put in was uncomfortable and heavy; she had no idea how people wore this in battle hundreds of years ago. It clanked and creaked every time she moved. She was sure it made her look all the more manly, but Ellaria insisted that it made her look majestic and fierce, like the warrior maiden that she was supposed to embody. Ellaria peeked her head from the camera and smiled encouragingly to Brienne.

Oberyn, dressed in black leather, stepped toward her, took her hand and kissed it, giving her a playful smile. “Just follow my lead, Brienne,” Oberyn said, holding up his sword. Suddenly, he swung it toward her, and she instinctively blocked it with her own sword. He attacked her with gusto then, bringing a fluid quickness to his moves, and Brienne parried and attacked back. He moved closer now and gracefully assumed their original pose, face to face, with their swords crossed between them. Brienne’s blood was up, she was excited and filled with fight. He stared at her in arrogant challenge. They held the pose.

“Yes! Yes, wonderful. That is just perfect.” Ellaria cried, her voice elated behind the camera. “It’s just what I wanted.”

They heard sudden clapping, and all of them turned their heads. Brienne nearly dropped her sword in shock and felt her hand fall and become limp. She let go of her sword and it fell to the carpet with a dull thud. Ellaria let out a shrill exclamation of surprise, and Oberyn stepped back, grinning at Brienne’s shocked face. She could feel her mouth go slack and her eyes widen; she couldn’t believe what she was seeing, for what she saw was a golden vision, a god in Dornish garb. Jaime. Beautiful, resplendent, Jaime. He stared intently at her with his glittering green gaze, his eyes traveling slowly up and down her body, and stopping when he locked eyes with her. The heat of his gaze nearly burned her and almost made her step back. Beside him stood a grinning Pod, who had obviously led him into the photography studio. Jaime strode slowly toward her, his eyes never leaving her face; he almost stalked her with his deliberate steps and predatory look. Brienne felt frozen in place.

“Brienne,” he breathed, his voice suddenly unsure, as he stood close enough to touch. He looked at her as if she were from a dream, his face suddenly disbelieving and full of wanting, his arms limp at his sides, hesitant to reach out for her.

Brienne reached out a hand and stroked his face. “Jaime,” she said softly, “Are you real?” She felt
his smooth, golden skin, and ran her hands through his golden hair, which had grown much longer than when she last saw it. He closed his eyes and leaned into her touch. She felt that he almost
*purred.*

“Brienne,” he murmured, taking her hands in his and bringing them to his lips, kissing them one by one. She wanted to kiss him and embrace him and fall into his arms. But she was aware of the others in the room, and the fact that she was wearing awkward metal armour. She looked at Oberyn, who was looking at them with a sensuous expression in his dark eyes.

“You knew he was coming?” she asked.

Oberyn nodded, smiling widely. “He sent a telegram. And wanted to surprise you.” He stepped toward her, gesturing at her armour. “May I?”

She mutely nodded, and Oberyn started unstrapping the buckles and fastenings on the metal plates. Jaime stepped up, and started undoing her other side. “Allow me to help, my lady knight,” Jaime said, smiling, his eyes still intent on her. “You’ll notice how better my hand is,” he said, as he slowly but surely unbuckled the leather and unclasped fastenings. With the two men at work on either side of her, she was soon stripped of her armour and was left in a thin linen tunic and breeches. Ellaria approached her then, and led her away to the screened changing area. Jaime almost made a move to follow her, but he seemed to stop himself in time.

Brienne quickly changed back into her flowing light blue Dornish dress, suddenly nervous to have Jaime see her in her new garb. She felt anxious and worried about how they would be together, after such a long absence. In fact, she hadn’t heard from him at all in over three and a half weeks, and he felt strange and distant.

She stepped out from the screen and was surprised to find Jaime close by, waiting for her. His eyebrows raised in astonishment at the sight of her and his eyes took on an almost feral look as he slowly took in her body in the dress. She looked around and was even more surprised to discover that Oberyn, Ellaria and Pod had left the studio, leaving the two of them all alone.

Jaime stepped close to her, his eyes roaming her face. “Wench, you look beautiful. I’ve dreamed of seeing you in such a dress.”

Brienne felt heat flood her cheeks. “How I’ve missed those blushes,” Jaime continued, staring at her.

She felt an overwhelming tide of love and affection for this gorgeous, sweet man in front of her. She flung herself in his arms, still speechless and unable to articulate what she was feeling. He felt strong as she sensed his arms wrap around her back in a tight embrace. She felt his broadness, his muscles, his solidity against her.

“Oh Brienne,” he declared into her neck, “I missed you so much.” His hands started to roam up and down her shoulders and down to the curve of her ass. She pressed her hips close to his, noticing again how well they aligned, and felt his growing hardness poking her hip.

“Jaime,” she said, kissing his neck and all the way up to meet his lips. His mouth was familiar and warm, as he licked and nibbled at her bottom lip, making her moan, and she opened her mouth and their tongues touched as they tasted each other for the first time in months. It was exactly as she remembered it, and a liquid heat of pure want suffused her whole body and she felt light-headed. They broke off the kiss, both of them fighting for breath. Jaime’s gaze was dark with desire.

He got down on his knees before her and pushed up the silky material of her dress, and started to
plant wet, soft little kisses on her inner thighs, “So soft,” Jaime murmured to himself, as if lost in her skin. With a hand, he pulled down her smallclothes, which were soaked with her arousal. Jaime gave a small groan. He looked up at her now, kneeling before her, his eyes wet with emotion, as if he was a supplicant to one of the gods. The maiden. The warrior. The mother. All she could do was look at him, her body electrified with a hunger for him.

“I’ve thought about doing this every single day, Brienne,” he said, as he put his mouth on her wet, hot core. She gasped, feeling his tongue trace the private folds of her skin, dip and swirl inside her, and touched the sensitive nub of her, making her melt even more. She let out an urgent moan as he increased the pressure of his mouth and tongue on her swollen pink bud, as he moved his hot mouth back and forth until she felt her legs weaken, until she couldn’t stand it anymore, until she felt a burst of lightning break through her and she cried out, “Jaime! Yes!” in her intense release. Her legs buckled and he lowered her to the floor. He moved away from her overly sensitive nub now, and put his tongue inside her, his mouth at her opening as he licked and drank the wetness of her release. She felt stunned, her cunt still pulsing in the aftershocks of her orgasm. She felt she was floating amongst the clouds. He moved up to join her, the lower half of his face soaked with her arousal. She smiled at him, and wiped his face with a handkerchief she kept in the folds of her dress. She kissed him, tasting herself on him.

“Jaime…I don’t know how you can make me feel this way,” she said, between kisses. “I missed you so much,” she continued, giving him her tongue in a kiss. He moaned and rubbed his hips against hers, desperate for friction. He was incredibly hard. She opened his tunic, unbuttoned his shirt, and ran her hands all along his chest, amazed at how gorgeous he was; she kissed his neck, his exposed chest, sucked at his nipples and quickly unfastened his breeches, running a hand over the large bulge of his manhood as she did so. He groaned loudly. He lifted his hips to help her lower his breeches. His cock sprang out, pink and engorged and enormous.

He stared at her with lust and urgency, his eyes going wide and dark as he saw her lick her lips and lower her head. “Brienne,” he gasped. She swirled her tongue around the head of his cock, making him cry out; she licked the drops of wetness at the tip, and all the way down to the base of his cock. She licked his balls and sucked them.

He cried even louder, begging, “Brienne, please, please…I can’t stand it,” aching for release. She took him into his mouth now, feeling the heaviness and fullness of his cock against her tongue, as she moved her plump mouth up and down his hard shaft, relaxing her throat and changing the angle of her head so she could take all of his length into her mouth, until her lips surrounded the base of his cock. He was writhing now, clutching at the carpets, subtly bucking up his hips, moaning and moving his head from side to side. Normally she would add her hands but Jaime reached his peak in no time at all, as his groans grew louder and more obscene and he thrust up into her mouth a few times and she felt him spill his seed strongly into her mouth: thick, rich and plentiful. She held him in her mouth until he started to wilt.

“Oh gods,” Jaime gasped, still moaning. “That was beyond my imagination…Brienne,” he said, pulling her on top of him and giving her an open-mouthed kiss. She continued to lay on top of him, feeling his heartbeat start to slow against her own chest.

“I can’t believe you’re here,” Brienne said, looking up and stroking his cheek and the sharp angle of his jaw.

“Believe it, wench.” Jaime said, looking at her with amusement. His expression was lazy and relaxed, ever the golden lion.

“How long…?” Brienne asked hesitantly, not exactly wanting to know how much time they had
before they had to part again.

Jaime gave her an odd, tentative smile. “I’m here for as long as you’ll have me, Brienne.”

She looked at him with surprise. “You plan on staying here?”

Jaime looked at her pleadingly and nuzzled his face into her neck. “I’ve taken rooms nearby, wench. I can’t stand to be apart from you any more, Brienne. I can’t live parted from you. Please.” He sucked at her neck, making her moan.

She took his face into her hands and looked at him, her face full of love. She felt an immense relief. “I’m glad, Jaime. I can’t bear to be parted from you any longer either.” She looked down. “I don’t know why I ever thought our being apart was a good idea.”

Jaime gave her a brilliant, pure smile. “You’ve made me so happy, wench.” He kissed her. “But I think us being apart for a while did some good. I did some work with the Lannister company and made sure Littlefinger was doing his job, saw the children settled in Casterly Rock, and realized that I needed to spend every single day of my remaining life with you.”

They held each other, and kissed tenderly. After a few moments, Brienne said, “I think we’d better rearrange ourselves and join the others. I think they may be waiting for us for dinner.” She blushed. She got up and started to fuss with her hair.

“I’m very sure that they expect us to be late or not show up at all, wench,” Jaime said, fastening his breeches, his right hand still slow and deliberate in its movements. He drew her in for a kiss, his face still smelling of her. “Come on, wench,” he said, taking her arm, “Lead the way.”

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Oberyn smirked as they walked into the room, observing Brienne’s red and swollen lips, the red marks on her neck, and Jaime’s relaxed and happy expression. The two hadn’t been gone long – in fact, the servants had just laid out the food in front of their low table, but it was obvious from Brienne’s red cheeks and embarrassed look that much had happened in the photography studio when they were left alone. Ellaria observed them with a heated stare, which he knew well. The young Pod beamed at them, simply happy that his two favorite people had reunited.

“Come in,” Oberyn called out brightly, gesturing to the low table, cushions and pillows on the floor. “We opted for a dinner in the Dornish style today, hence informal seating and finger foods.”

The couple eased themselves on to the floor, with Jaime sitting indecently close to Brienne. Ellaria poured them goblets of wine and handed it to them.

“Should I make up a room for you, Jaime?” Ellaria asked, her voice melodious and light. “Or will you be staying with Brienne?” She gave him a slow, knowing smile, passing them a plate of fruits and cheese.

Brienne, ever shy, blushed a very pretty shade of pink which went down to the bottom of her neckline. Oberyn felt a twinge of disappointment as he realized that he would not be seeing how far down her blush went, now that Jaime was here; not that he was all that serious about getting Brienne into his bed. He supposed he had a half-notion that her being with him in Dorne would provide him with the opportunity of getting to know the talented doctor better; they had definitely
gotten closer during the past months, with working day after day with each other and sharing frequent hugs and caresses. He had, after all, been fascinated with the tall, strong, blond goddess the moment he saw her in the operating theatre at the Citadel. She was brilliant, good, loyal, and above all, had that simmering sexual energy that Oberyn had a sixth sense for. It was a lethal combination, and he had bided his time, seeing her with the handsome Jon (Oberyn also had the sixth sense for Jon, and hoped for a time that the two of them would join him in his bed), then quickly seeing Jaime swoop in Jon’s place without even a pause for breath.

Ellaria would be disappointed; she liked to share lovers with him, and she had been equally lusty for Brienne and Jon. However, as he observed Jaime around Brienne, he knew this particular dream of seeing Brienne in all her naked glory, being pleasured by him, was gone. Oberyn could tell that Jaime was the possessive type, jealous and very much unwilling to share his so-called ‘wench’. The way he looked at Brienne so adoringly spoke of a man lost in love – or rather, a man who’s found himself in love. The way his hands and body hovered over hers, as if he could kiss her or fuck her at a moment’s notice; it was inspiring, romantic even. Oberyn admired them, and was glad that they both had found each other. But he was personally disappointed at his own thwarted desires; he had very much wanted to see the wildness that he was sure lay behind Brienne’s innocent blushes.

“That won’t be necessary,” Jaime answered Ellaria, taking a bite of a ripe fig. “I’ve taken rooms nearby.” He gave Brienne a smug look.

Oberyn smiled. “You are welcome to spend the night here, if you end up deciding the short distance is too far,” he said smugly. “We don’t care much about propriety here in this household,” he added.

Pod spoke up. “How long are you staying, Captain Jaime?”

“I’m staying as long as Brienne is,” Jaime replied happily. Brienne lowered her eyes and nodded, taking a hold of his hand. He leaned into her, offering her a spicy olive and nuzzling into her hair.

Oberyn exchanged glances with Ellaria. He had a feeling all of them would be retiring to bed early that night, and none of them would be getting much sleep, especially Brienne and Jaime, judging from the pure glances of longing that they continually exchanged with each other.

He examined Brienne’s flushed face, her bright, laughing eyes, the still modest set of her mouth; she was happy, he noticed. As carefree and as bright as she’s ever been these past months. He was glad for her; she deserved, out of anybody, to be happy. He poured her another glass of Dornish red.

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After their dinner, Brienne led him through the gardens which were dark and fragrant with night blooms. “It’s a shortcut,” she said, looking back at him and grinning. Jaime did not manage to pay attention to where she was leading him, which paths they were traveling on, as all he saw was his wench, her dress blowing behind her like waves of the sea; he felt like he was a sailor lured by the call of sirens into an unknown place, yet he couldn’t be happier to just follow her. He would follow her to the ends of the earth if she’d let him.

She opened a glass paneled door, and ushered him in. Her rooms were much more spacious than
the apartment in King’s Landing. The bed was large and covered with shimmering silk covers of blue and gold. In one corner was a desk on top of which scattered many papers and pens. In the middle of the room was a sitting area of cushions and low tables, similar to the fashion they had eaten at that evening. One door led to a large bathroom with a stone tub that could easily fit two people.

“Impressive, wench. And comfortable,” Jaime said, feeling the bedspread between his fingers. He looked at her archly. “But you’ll have to see the rooms I rented, they are really quite spectacular.”


“Ah, but Brienne, I wanted to have my own place here. I want us to have our own place.” Jaime walked toward her. “But perhaps I’ll stay here tonight, if you’ll permit me?” He looked at her with lowered eyes. He noticed that she seemed nervous again, and he was filled with affection for the wench. She was so sweet, so adorable, so lovely. Her eyes were shining pools, reflecting the light of the lamps around the room. The dinner was an exquisite torture, being close to the wench but needing to make pleasant conversation with Oberyn and Ellaria, who were gracious and entertaining of course, but all Jaime wanted to do was stare at Brienne and kiss her and make love to her.

Brienne smiled a sweet little smile that made his heart beat faster and she stepped close to him and stroked his hair. “Your hair’s gotten longer,” she said.

“As has yours, wench,” Jaime said, pulling apart the braids that piled on the back of her head. He slowly unraveled the braids, combing it with his fingers, making a golden curly nest around her head. She looked beatific, an angel come back to earth after a long absence.

Brienne caught his right hand in both her hands and turned them toward the light, and kissed it. “Your movements are much better. You can perform delicate actions now pretty well,” she observed, smiling.

Jaime grinned proudly. “I’ve been practicing, wench. I still don’t have the same sensation as I used to, and my fingers are stiff and awkward, but I can do most things with practice now, though I’m a lot slower than most people.”

She kissed him hard in jubilation. “I’m so proud of you, Jaime.” He responded eagerly to her kiss, urged by the rush of elation that went through him at her words. He peppered her neck and shoulders with kisses then, paying particular attention to the spot under her ear that made her moan. Her body practically melted into his, and he opened the neckline of her dress to reveal more of her torso, taking out a pert breast whose pink nipple already stood to attention. He licked and sucked her breast, while his other hand reached inside her dress (and here he blessed the very open neckline of Dornish dresses) squeezed her other breast. She arched into him, whimpering and mewling. His half-hard cock quickly became fully erect; it was incredibly how instantaneous his cock reacted to his wench. They broke apart. She looked at him hungrily, the blue of her eyes a black sea. He started pulling off his tunic and shirt, and swiftly unbuttoned his breeches and slid them off, until he was fully naked before her, his erection bobbing with every beat of his heart.

Brienne looked him up and down, and bit her lip; the heat from her languid eyes warmed him to his very core. He felt every thud of his heart calling out to her. She carefully ran her hands up and down his chest, then across his back, over his ass; his body shivered and his breath hitched at her gentle touch. “Jaime,” she said, “how beautiful you are.” She paused, licking her lips. “Are you really mine?”
“All yours, wench.” Jaime said, reaching for the sash of her dress. She undid the knot, and unhooked some secret fastenings on her dress, and slid the dress off her shoulders, allowing it to fall on the floor and pool at the feet. She looked like she was emerging from a wave of ocean. The sight of her broad, strong body, the small curve of her breasts, the perfect flat muscles of her stomach, and the very feminine curve of her lips and ass did very naughty things to Jaime. His cock got impossibly harder, jutting out in front of him like a beacon seeking a target. His mouth watered at the glistening blond hairs at the juncture of her full, muscular thighs. He wanted to taste her once more.

He reached for her, but she stopped his hand. “Show me, Jaime,” Brienne leaned toward him and whispered in his ear. “Show me how you’ve been exercising your hand. Show me the progress you’ve made.” She kissed and sucked on his neck, then stepped back.

Jaime was astonished at her boldness, the utterly wicked way she was looking at him. “All right, wench,” he replied, smirking as he reached down to touch his cock with his right hand, starting with slow, gradual strokes. He looked into her eyes, and saw the arousal writ plain on her face. She was watching him touch in cock intently. He groaned at his own touch, but more so from watching her watch him touch himself. With his left hand, he reached for her, palming her breasts, pinching her nipple. She moaned, her mouth open, but still she watched him. His hand was moving faster now, harder, as he felt himself begin to get lost in sensation.

She moved toward him now, her naked body touching his, practically rubbing against him, and his hand faltered. She pushed him toward the bed now, and both of them were on the bed, kissing. She sucked at his earlobe, and said quietly into his ear, “Fuck me, Jaime.” Her words were like a lightning bolt to him, as he pushed her back onto the bed, and lowered himself on top of her. He felt like he was coming home to her in the cradle of her thighs. She spread those perfect thighs for him and he felt her slickness against his cock. He couldn’t take it anymore; he gripped her hips with both his hands and immediately slid his painfully hard cock inside her, needing desperately to satiate his want. She gasped at the sudden feeling of him filling her. Gods, she was incredibly wet and tight around him, gripping him with her heat. He let out a loud moan. She wrapped her long legs around him and he slipped even deeper into her and he was completely helpless. He wished he could stay inside her like this forever, it felt so good, but something bigger as building inside him, and he felt compelled to move, as he began to pump in cock into her, harder and harder, and she started to buck her hips to meet his thrusts and he heard himself grunt like an animal with every powerful thrust. She moved under him, wildly reacting to the sliding of his cock in and out of her.

He reached between them and rubbed her nub with his awkward right hand, and she moaned even more, writhing under him now, getting wetter and wetter as their hips collided over and over, until, with a scream of his name, she came, her whole body shuddering and her cunt pulsing violently around his cock. The intensity was unbearable, fucking her felt so good, it felt like the world, and he felt himself soar as a wild rapture overtook his whole body, and he felt his cock empty inside her, felt himself pour into her, as an intense pleasure shook his entire being. For a moment he didn’t know where he was or when he was; for a moment he didn’t know who he was – all he knew was Brienne, and her body, as he collapsed his full weight on her, panting heavily. He had to close his eyes for a moment, and all of a sudden, everything went black.

The next thing he knew he was on the bed, wrapped in Brienne’s arms, her eyes impossibly blue and looking at him with amusement.

“What happened?” Jaime asked, embarrassed.

“You passed out…from your orgasm?” Brienne said looking at him with an odd expression.
“Did I? It just felt like I had the most intense orgasm of my life, then everything went black.” Jaime furrowed his brow. “That’s never happened before.”

Brienne kissed him, smiling. “I didn’t know that it could happen.”

“Everything can happen with you, wench,” Jaime said, wrapping his arms around her. He felt incredibly relaxed and completely happy. His body felt pleasantly wrung out and wobbly.

They were face to face, and he looked deeply into her eyes. *Brienne.* He loved her with every fibre of his being, there was no doubt. He kissed her.

“Marry me,” he said.

She looked at him, confused. “You’ve already asked me that. We’re engaged, Jaime.”

Jaime chuckled. “No, I mean marry me now. Today. Tomorrow. Here, in Dorne.”

Brienne’s eyes widened in shock. “What? Jaime?”

He gave her a long, lingering kiss. “I love you. I can’t live without you. Marry me soon, Brienne. I can’t stand it.”

“But Jaime, I still have to continue my work, it’s not finished.” The wench was adorably flabbergasted.

“You’ll continue to do your work, wench. I’ll leave you unmolested in the day, but I want you as my wife regardless. But you’re all mine at night, Brienne.”

“But your family, my father…” Brienne said, her eyes bright and shining, a lilt of eagerness entering her tone.

“We can have a reception or even another ceremony in King’s Landing or Casterly Rock or Tarth, Brienne. I just want to be yours forever from now on.” Jaime bit his lip and looked at her. She looked back at him for a long time.

“All right,” she said, a broad grin taking over her flushed face. “Let’s get married here.”

He kissed her passionately and pulled her tight against him. With the long length of her naked body against his, he felt a familiar stirring of his cock.

“I love you, Jaime,” she cried, tears filling her eyes. He kissed her eyelids, and her cheeks, then finally her lips, ever so softly.

“And I love you, Brienne. Wife.” Jaime replied, drawing her naked body even closer to him, his hands starting to roam once more.

Chapter End Notes

*Whew! You made it through this chapter. There was the research study! Tyrion's*
novel! Cersei! Jaime! Oberyn! Smut! Let me know your thoughts and give me your feedback in the comments....

Thanks for the kudos. Thanks for continuing to read this story. I very much appreciate it.
Union

Chapter Summary

Brienne and Jaime get married.

Chapter Notes

I'm amazed by the amount of support this story has gotten, and I particularly want to thank you for the kind and thoughtful comments on the last chapter. I'm so glad you enjoyed their reunion.

Penultimate chapter! Things get official for your lovely couple in Dorne. Happy reading!

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See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Are you sure you want to get married?” Ellaria asked, her dark eyebrows raised, her face grimacing in distaste. “It’s so…traditional. Why not just live together in love as we do in Dorne?” They were sitting together at breakfast at a low table amongst pillows, and neither Oberyn nor Ellaria were surprised when self-satisfied Jaime trailed into the room after Brienne, looking like the cat that got the cream. Pod smiled distractedly in their direction and continued shoving pastries into his mouth.

“Are you saying people don’t get married in Dorne?” Brienne asked, curious. She knew that her and Oberyn had been together for nearly two decades, but never got married. She assumed that it had been more Oberyn’s decision than a Dornish stance against matrimony.

Ellaria took a sip of orange juice. “Of course they do, because they have to, or because of money or property, or to unite families…but for us, who have a choice, who have our own wealth, why even do it?”

Oberyn gave them a mollified glace. “That has been our perspective on it, my love, but Brienne and Jaime are from mainland Westeros after all. And since they plan on returning there and living there, societal expectations and propriety must be met.” Oberyn said evenly, rubbing his paramour’s shoulders. “They are a little strict and nonsensical about such things, my love.”

“You seem to discount that we’re in love and actually want to get married,” Jaime interjected, a little irritably, a frown on his face.

“But you’ll be stuck with each other for the rest of your lives,” Ellaria declared, a touch appalled, looking at them back and forth. “And if you tire of each other?”
“Tire of Brienne? No. I couldn’t imagine anything better than to be with Brienne for the rest of my days,” Jaime said wistfully, drawing his arm around her waist and looking deeply into her eyes in a way that made her go all pink.

“Oh Jaime,” Brienne sighed. She felt a surge of affection for this besotted, silly man next to her. She couldn’t resist giving his knee an affectionate rub.

Oberyn regarded them with amusement, and turned to Ellaria. “You see, my love? For them it’s hopeless. They are too deeply in love to consider our arguments against matrimony.” He gave Brienne a kind smile. “In any case, I suspect these two will end up dying of very old age in each other’s arms.”

Jaime grinned at Oberyn and gave Brienne’s waist an unexpected squeeze, making her squeak.

“I think it’s a great idea that you two are getting married,” Pod exclaimed happily. “I’ve never seen two people so thrilled to be in each other’s company. Ever since Tarth, now that I think about it.”

the young man added.

“Thank you, Pod!” declared Jaime, glad to have an additional voice of support. He winked at the boy.

“But why so soon? Don’t you want Tommen and Myrcella, and your fathers, and Tyrion to be there?” Pod asked innocently, frowning.

“Tyrion,” Brienne grumbled, annoyance rising in her.

“What is it, my love?” Jaime asked, looking at her quizzically.

“The book,” Oberon said, amused at her reaction.

“Ah,” said Jaime, an understanding dawning on him.

Brienne turned to him, suddenly incensed again. “Don’t you mind, Jaime? Your brother took from your life almost as much as he took from mine…it’s a little…maddening.”

Jaime shrugged. “I don’t know, wench. Isn’t it kind flattering? Imagine, our love will be immortalized within the pages for posterity.”

“But Jaime…there’s no happy ending for us. You die in the end?” Brienne looked at him sternly.

“Do I?” Jaime said, cocking his head. “I haven’t read that far yet. Thanks for spoiling the book for me, wench,” he teased.

She rolled her eyes. Ridiculous. The man was ridiculous.

Oberyn looked at them. “To return to the subject at hand,” he said, “Don’t you want to get married amongst your family? We would love to be there for you when you get married, but isn’t it a little sudden?”

Brienne bit her lip. It was her sole hesitation as well. She wondered how disappointed her father would be not to witness her marriage to Jaime. But it if it were only up to her, she would probably prefer getting married away from all the pomp and ceremony. She did not especially want something on the scale of Renly and Margaery’s wedding, and she was afraid that their families would surely insist on something just as large.
“I simply need to make Brienne my wife. Today.” Jaime declared to Oberyn then turned his head to look at her, determination on his unbelievably handsome face.

“It is my wish too,” Brienne said quietly, smiling at Jaime.

Ellaria stared at them with her wide, dark eyes, a playful smile on her lips. She shrugged. “Well, I suppose we’ll need to make very quick arrangements. There’s a beautiful sept nearby, and you’ll need outfits...rings....”

“I have our rings,” Jaime said, a little self-consciously, “And I already have a wedding outfit.” Brienne gave him a curious look.

Oberyn laughed. “Why do I feel like this marriage plan isn’t as spontaneous as it’s been made out to be?”

Jaime blushed. “Well, I had to come prepared, just in case,” he replied a little defensively. Brienne gave him an odd look.

“It is all rather romantic,” sighed Ellaria, seemingly now on board with the matrimonial plot. “I shall take care of Brienne, while you men can arrange things with Jaime. We can meet at the sept half hour before sunset.” She put some eggs on their plates. “Now eat, I don’t want your stomachs empty the rest of the day.”

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The sept itself was unexpectedly grand, though small, having been meticulously built by visionary artisans nearly five hundred years ago. They were surrounded by carved stone flowers and leaves, dramatic archways, a white domed ceiling and ornate wooden pews. As relatives to the hereditary prince of Dorne, Oberyn was able to acquire the location and the septon at very short notice. Numerous candles illuminated the altar, giving the space a romantic, soft glow. The sept, and the few people in it, were bathed in a warm, yellow light.

Jaime admitted to himself that Oberyn had been a great help throughout the day, despite the fact that the dashingly handsome man definitely had short and long-term intentions to seduce his wench. He took Jaime to a very fancy Dornish bath, where he was beset with skin treatments, steam baths, and a massage by a very scantily clad young man, all of which took away any inkling of anxiety Jaime might have had. He and Pod also helped Jaime dress in his wedding garb, which was a tailored white Dornish tunic of silk with exquisite blue embroidery of leaves and flowers, plain white breeches, and soft slip-on shoes made of buttery golden leather. A hairdresser was brought in to treat Jaime’s hair and to give it a little trim. Brienne seemed to like him with longer hair, Jaime noticed, remembering last night’s events with a fond smile.

Jaime had never been so relaxed, so primped, and so brilliant and shining in all his life. And so he stood at the front of the sept, standing next to Pod on one side, and the grey-haired Septon with a kindly face in front of him. Ellaria stood opposite them, looking fetching in a sleeveless long burgundy silk gown which emphasized her dark-haired beauty. Her eyes had been rimmed in dark kohl, and her lips were painted a deep red. Exotic and sophisticated, but really not his type, Jaime idly mused.

He waited for what seemed like an age; he thought he heard the faint melody of an organ, playing
distantly in the background. Suddenly the door opened and he saw her, arm in arm with Oberyn. He held his breath as she filled his vision. She was dressed in a flowing, Dornish style dress, similar to the one she wore the day before, but this one was the colour of the sapphire blue of her eyes, all layers of fine silk that moved as if an invisible wind were flowing through her with every step she took. The dress was low-cut, a deep ‘v’ that went just above her belly button, emphasizing her long neck and the lean length of her torso; the dress showed off the angles of her muscular arms. Her hair was loose, but held back in place with a crown made of silver leaves and sapphire and jade flowers, which Jaime had commissioned for the wench in King’s Landing, much to Brienne’s surprise. As she came closer, he noticed that Ellaria had lightly lined Brienne’s eyes with black, giving her eyes a near feral look, and making the blue of her eyes even more astonishing. Her cheeks were pink, and her lips shiny and soft looking with balm.

Jaime thought he had never seen a more beautiful woman in all his life. Her height, her size, and her bearing made her seem from another world, and seeing her in all her glory made his head spin and his heart expand in ways he never thought possible. He had to pinch himself. He could not believe his magnificent, wild, gorgeous creature would be his in just a few moments. Oberyn too, looked proud to have her on his arm; he wore a Donish tunic and breeches in the exact same colour as the wench, matching the blue of her dress. Jaime tempered the slight twinge of annoyance that he felt for the Dornishman matching his future wife so perfectly.

But he could not help grinning as Brienne stood in front of him. She smiled and blushed a pretty pink as she looked up and down his form, her eyes widening in approval. He stood even taller, if that were possible. His whole body tingled as he gazed into the wench’s deep blue eyes. The rest of the ceremony went by in a flash, and soon he found himself saying the words:

“I, Jaime Lannister, take you, Brienne Tarth, to be my wife and take you under my protection, in the sight of all the Seven gods, and in front of the men and women before me. May the light within me nourish the light in yours. I promise to love you, cherish you, be true to you on this day and for all the rest of my days.”

As Brienne echoed those words to him, he felt an invisible force between them, whether it was love or the feeling of moment that their souls joined, he did not know. All he knew when he looked at Brienne’s warm, liquid eyes so filled with love as she said the vows to him, was that his world, at that moment, was perfect.

They exchanged simple gold rings, engraved with the words, "I am yours. You are mine." that Jaime had commissioned back in King’s Landing. They clasped their hands together as the septon wound a blue and gold braided ribbon around their joined hands as a symbol of their union.

“With this kiss, I pledge my love,” they said in unison, their joint voices filling the quiet space of the sept. They stared at one another, for a moment disbelieving, and soon Jaime was kissing her as if it were the most natural thing in the world. She felt warm and tasted sweet and he felt her leaning into him, and then his arms were around her, and hers around his and they were kissing in earnest now, mouths moving against each other, mouths opening, tongues touching, until Brienne abruptly broke off, leaving both of them panting. Brienne, his wife, looked embarrassed as she snuck a glance at the astonished expression on the septon’s face. The rest of their small party – Oberyn, Ellaria, and Pod – didn’t look quite as shocked, but they all had their eyebrows raised in expressions of surprise. Oberon was smirking.

The septon cleared his throat. “Then by the power invested in me by the Seven, I declare you one flesh, one heart, one soul. You are now husband and wife!”

Suddenly Jaime’s face was very wet, and he couldn’t do much about it. He looked at his wench-
wife and his heart spilled over with love and all he wanted to do was look at her and touch her. She grinned jubilantly – gods, he was glad she looked so happy – and reached into her pocket for a handkerchief and dabbed the tears from his eyes. And of course he had to pull her into his arms, hugging her tightly, and swung her off her feet in a twirl, much to her squealing and laughing protests. He must admit, the sept likely wasn’t the best venue to swing wives, but he felt like doing it at the time, so he did.

Oberyn, Ellaria and Pod were embracing them now, and Jaime noticed with annoyance that Oberyn gave his wench-wife the triple Dornish cheek kiss and a brief kiss on the lips, and he was about to protest, when the man turned to him and kissed him the same way. Before he had even time to think about that, Ellaria was kissing his cheek, and Pod was giving him a tight hug.

They walked out into the cooling late summer air, the sky still colourful as remnants of the red and purple sunset faded into night. Palm trees lined their paths, while night roses and jasmine flowers unfurled their scent enticingly toward the strolling group. Ellaria and Oberyn walked arm in arm, each leaning toward each other, and he and Brienne walked slowly, their arms around each other, their hips and sides touching. Pod, walking behind them, began to sing then, his voice a strong, pure baritone that plucked at all of their heartstrings. He sang a ballad about a pair of lovers, separated for a time, then reunited at the eve of a great battle. They listened to him sing, walked, and watched the moon rise.

Ellaria led them to the photography studio, and he glanced at Brienne, who had gone all red, Jaime was sure, from remembering all the sexy, naughty things they did the day before. Ellaria had insisted, and Jaime agreed, that they needed to take pictures to commemorate the occasion. The wench was posed, looking like a sea goddess in one pose and the moon maid in another, and Jaime joined her and they took all sorts of pictures from formal to silly. Jaime, after watching Ellaria at work, volunteered to switch places with Ellaria so she too could be in the pictures. He asked Ellaria if he could help develop the pictures and she readily agreed.

They went to the main house now, and sat at the formal dining table, set with the finest and most delicate china and shiny cutlery. Pod looked at the setting in front of him nervously. Jaime also felt apprehension as he hoped that his scarred hand would do his bidding and not accidentally break a glass or plate. Course after course of the most delicious, wonderfully spiced fowl, meats, along with buttery vegetables followed. Near the end of the feast, Ellaria and Pod carried in a glorious wedding cake covered with white meringue and fruit. They accompanied the meal with bottles and bottles of fine Dornish red and white wines.

“To Jaime and Brienne!” They all raised their glasses and toasted. Jaime hadn’t felt this full – physically, emotionally, spiritually – in years. His new wife practically glowed with happiness.

Soon after, Oberyn bundled them into his carriage to drop them off at Jaime’s rented home, which was within walking distance but in their wine-soaked state might have been difficult to navigate on foot. Brienne leaned against him for the duration of the short ride, and all was right with the world.

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“Welcome to our temporary home, wife,” Jaime said, pulling her by the hand inside and drawing her body close to him from behind, as he reached over to kiss her neck.

“Hmmm,” Brienne said, giggling as she pried herself from his arms to look around at the golden
walls, arched doorways, carved wooden furniture, intricate blue and gold floor tiles, the large windows that overlooked a courtyard garden, doors that led to a bathroom with a large bathtub, a kitchen, and finally the bedroom, which was dominated by an immense bed, covered with rich white and blue coverings.

“It’s beautiful,” she said, awed. She couldn’t process how he had said this was our home; she still couldn’t believe that she would be living with Jaime from now on, that they were married. It didn’t feel real. Her head felt like it was far away and her feet felt far off the ground.

“Jaime,” she said, walking toward him and taking a hold of his hands. “Are we really married?” She looked at him with an awestruck expression, her eyes large and disbelieving. He clasped her hands together and kissed them.

“Yes, wench. We’re married. We’re really married.” Jaime replied, drawing her close. “Come, let me show you. You’ve seen most of it just now.” His arms around her, he led her to a cabinet. “Your favourite, a Victrola.” He put on a record, and a swirling, romantic waltz filled the air. She smiled into his shoulder, touched that he even remembered this little detail.

He led her to the bedroom and opened up the wardrobe. Inside, she found a few dresses, made from a very light cotton and reminiscent of the Dornish style, but still retaining the masculine tailoring she preferred. “Dresses, Jaime?” Brienne looked at him in surprise.

“I had your favourite seamstress in King’s Landing create some light, flowing garments for you. Oh, and there are breeches and tunics, and of course, nightgowns for you. Though you’ll not need them tonight.” Jaime said playfully, eagerly looking at her for a response.

She lightly touched the delicate silks and thin cottons. “They’re beautiful.” It occurred to her now how much effort Jaime had gone through to prepare all this for her, the wedding, and arranging his life so he could come to Dorne to be with her. “Jaime,” she said, drawing her arms around his neck and looking into his eyes, “All this, all this you’ve done for me…it’s so much, you’ve given up so much....” She buried her face into his neck, her chest tight and her throat constricted; she felt tears dampen his neck.

He held her close to him, and drew back to look at her face, his expression serious. “Brienne, it’s not too much. Nothing is too much for you, wench,” Jaime said, holding her face and rubbing his thumb back and forth on her scarred cheek. “You don’t know how happy you made me when you asked me to come to Dorne in your letter. And how deliriously pleased I was when you agreed to get married right away.” He leaned close and kissed the tracks made by her tears on her cheeks. “And I’ve given up nothing, because I’ve gained you. My wife.” In his green eyes, she could see meadows and trees; his eyes were alive and warm and welcoming and she felt entirely loved. Her Jaime.

“Let’s dance, my love, my wench-wife,” he murmured into her ear, his breath sending shivers down her skin.

“Jaime! Wench-wife?” She looked at him disapprovingly, but allowing herself to be bundled in his arms.

“Didn’t I promise to call you that in my letters, wench-wife?” Jaime smiled mischievously. He drew her close and grabbed her hand, twirling them back into the living room, where the music was louder, soaring and lovely. Her senses were magnified; the poignant and piercing strings of the music filtered through her and suddenly she was its vessel, moving together with Jaime as though they were one with it. She was aware of being held by the strong arms of Jaime, how their bodies were perfectly aligned, how she felt the heat radiating off his skin. And she was swaying and
moving and twirling and she felt bursting with life, drunk on wine and drunk on love. She rested her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes, trusting him to lead her in the dance.

“Husband,” she said softly into his neck. He stopped their dancing and tightened his arms around her. He buried his face into her neck, making her insides flutter.

“Say it again,” said Jaime, looking at her now, his eyes wide.


“Forever and always,” Jaime responded in kind, leaning closer until their lips met in an echo of their kiss in the sept. His lips and tongue against hers felt dizzying, as they opened their mouths to each other, and she felt the warmth and wanting pool below her abdomen. She pressed her body closer against his so she felt every muscle of his body; she felt his growing need for her pressed hard into the juncture of her thighs. She rubbed her hips against his and he gave a long moan.

He led her to the bedroom and slowly undressed her, carefully removing the silver crown from her hair, then unhooking her dress, which fell from her like a waterfall. “Thank gods for Dornish dresses,” Jaime murmured to himself, much to Brienne’s amusement. She was entirely naked under the dress, and Jaime swallowed. “No smallclothes, wife?” his eyes darkened with lust.

“Ellaria said it would ruin the line of the dress,” Brienne said, a blush spreading on her cheeks. She made a move to start undressing him, but Jaime stepped back and started unbuttoning his tunic and taking it off. He pulled down his breeches with an impatient flourish, flinging it into the corner of the room. She widened her eyes at the sight of him, all golden and muscular and firm... everywhere, especially his cock which was fully hard for her. She felt her blush travel down her neck and to her chest.

“Wench, I love it when you blush for me,” Jaime said, as he started to kiss her neck and down her chest, and she gasped, feeling a swell of desire run through her. She felt every touch and it seemed like Jaime’s hands were everywhere, at the curves of her breasts, her pebbled nipples, the roundness of her hips, the circle of her ass; she felt every scorching inch of his skin against her, their bodies rubbing each other. She made a keening noise and simply melted on to the bed. He pulled her legs closer to the edge of the bed and knelt in between her legs.

The moment his lips touched her cunt she started quivering. His lips and tongue were at first gentle, teasing with small kisses and languorous licks along her slit and the lips of her cunt, barely circling her nub. She felt her arousal building and knew she was getting even more wet. “Oh, Jaime,” she said, moaning softly. He took his time, and she was in half-agony, half-ecstasy at his pace, and she could feel her body getting looser as his tongue lashed her, and gradually Jaime increased the pressure of his kisses and began to suck at her nub and she arched her body in response; her breathing became harder, and her pleasure began to escalate, and he pushed two fingers inside her now, and she cried out in surprise at the sudden sensation inside her, and he moved his fingers in and out of her, and she could tell she was drenched, and he sucked at her bud earnestly now, creating sharp jolts of sensation and his fingers pushed harder, deeper, faster and she felt entirely out of control, like she was just sensation and pleasure and suddenly she shattered with a loud cry of his name, her whole body shuddering.

And Jaime continued with his kisses and licks and sucks, and the thrusting movement of his fingers, and she almost couldn’t stand it, but soon after another wave of pleasure, even bigger than the first, broke over her again and she cried out incoherently, and still he continued with his mouth and fingers, his fingers pushing at that sensitive spot right inside her and she fully screamed this time, her head thrown back and her hips bucking wildly and she felt like she was transported to the
moon and stars as all the blood seemed to have gone from her head. She felt here and not here, sunk into some depths of bliss, her body completely limp.

She lay there, motionless, recovering, and he urged her up on the bed and lay beside her, kissing her cheek and ear, whispering sweet words of love that she couldn’t, in her addled state, comprehend. After a few moments, her breaths returned to normal and she came back to herself.

She gave him a disbelieving look. “Dear gods, that was incredible, Jaime.” He smiled smugly, and kissed her deeply, his tongue delving into her mouth. She felt him impossibly hard against her. She reached down and wrapped her hand around his cock and squeezed. He moaned, rutting into her hand. She gave him a few rough strokes and he made an almost pained groan. His reactions to her touches made her want again, and she felt an emptiness inside her that needed to urgently be filled.

She pushed him onto his back, and he looked up at her, his eyes wide and filled with lust, a smile just at the corner of his lips. Gods, he was beautiful, seeing how the lamplight sculpted the contours of his chest, the firm muscles of his abdomen. She ran her hands up and down his chest; his engorged cock swelled and bobbed even higher. She straddled him now; she could feel her wetness of her arousal run down her thighs. She grabbed the base of his cock and rubbed its head up and down her slit. Jaime gasped at the sensation. “Please, Brienne, oh…” he begged. Slowly she eased herself down on his erection, and felt him slowly fill her until he was fully inside her; she felt stretched and incredibly full. Jaime eyes rolled back into his head and he let out a long groan.

With her hands on his chest, she started moving now, up and down at first slowly then faster as she found her rhythm. She ground into him each time she came down, creating friction against her nub. Jaime had his hands on her waist now, and squeezed her breasts and nipples, and she increased her pace, riding him faster and faster, wanting that release, and Jaime was lost, moaning incoherently, moving his head from side to side, bucking up with her, increasing the pressure on her nub every time she ground into him, and soon she was riding him wildly and with a loud cry she shattered open as pleasure shook her entire being, and she felt her cunt squeezing, pulsing around his cock, and grabbing her hips, Jaime cried out too, his hips thrusting up forcefully a few times as he shot his spend deep inside her, his body shuddering and arching. She lay down on top of him, exhausted. She felt his heart beat rapidly against her chest, as her heart thudded too, until she couldn’t tell whose heartbeats she was actually feeling in her own body. He softened inside her and she felt the wetness of their union running down her thighs as she moved to the side and lay down next to him.

“Wife,” Jaime said, giving her a slow, lazy kiss.

“Husband,” Brienne returned, nestling herself against him. She felt completely at ease, and every muscle in her body felt relaxed. She closed her eyes. He reached over to turn off the lamp, and arranged his body to spoon her, his arm across her waist.

Good night, she wanted to say to him, but she suddenly felt herself dropping off to sleep before those words could even leave her lips. The last memory that she had before sleep took her was Jaime’s arms tightening around her and his lips simply resting at the nape of her neck.
Please send me thoughts and comments you might have on the chapter! Oberyn and Ellaria were skeptical of them getting married, but in the end they were a great help, lol.

Thanks so much for the kudos!

I love all of you readers. Thank you.
The Return

Chapter Summary

Jaime and Brienne return to Kings Landing. The end.

Chapter Notes

A beginning note to say thank you for the most lovely and wonderful comments about the last chapter. I loved each and every one of them. Thank you so much. [Side note: I'm glad some of you noticed the Oberyn and Jaime kiss. That was important to me, lol.]

In this chapter, the end.

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See the end of the chapter for more notes

She didn’t dream of drowning anymore. She no longer woke up haunted by dark water, panting and in a cold sweat, disoriented and wondering where she was. Instead, Brienne fell asleep in the arms of someone she loved, and woke up holding someone who loved her with all his being. She still remembered Galladon, her eight-year-old big brother who would never grow up; the dream of who he was destined to become had haunted her all her life – how disappointing it had been that she was the one left on shore, alive, while he was lost forever. Here, from the bow of the ship, she gazed out at the ocean and could not see its end; she loved the sea – it resided in her soul, but the sea had taken away from her as much as it nourished her.

It wasn’t love that cured her, she thought. Meeting Jaime, falling in love with him, and being with him didn’t change her life or who she was in that fundamental sense. Even though Jaime often credited her for saving him, she knew that he saved himself as she had saved herself. It had been a long journey for both of them to end up here, together on a ship sailing in the Narrow Sea. But no one could have done this alone. She thought of Jon, who had been at her side for years, supporting her, loving her in so many ways; Tywin and Oberyn, who had to remind her to believe in herself and be strong; Margaery and Gilly, who brought girlish companionship into her life and always took her side; Tyrion, who reminded her through his book that she was someone worth knowing; Renly, who made her remember the idealistic, romantic fourteen-year-old-girl that still lived within her. Then there was Jaime, who ultimately convinced her that she was worth loving, kissing, and building a life with, who told her, over and over, that she was worthy of love and building a family with. He had told her until she believed him.

Although he would be the last person to admit that he was a good person and would cite the more than twenty years of disregard for others, selfishness, and repeated sins with his twin sister, it was Jaime who revealed to her how much love she had within her, and how much love she had to give to others. Prior to him, there had been walls around her heart and she had never let anyone truly in,
not even Jon, the sole person who had been closest to breaching those walls. But Jaime was
courageous in revealing to her his own heart, bruises and all, and she saw how openly he showed
her this living, bleeding, bruised thing in his chest and she was compelled to show hers in turn, the
tight, walled thing that it was. Brienne was happy to see that Jaime’s heart had since been repaired,
and how it beat so steadily beneath her hands. Somehow, their hearts spoke to one another. He had
chosen her, and she had chosen him.

“Wench-wife,” Jaime said, emerging from the doorway and walking toward her on the deck of the
ship. With the sea wind riffling through his golden hair, he looked like a fanciful princely vision
from a storybook. “It’s cold! What are you doing out here?” He drew his heavy cloak around them
and wrapped his body around hers to warm her up.

She looked at him, smiling, loving the feel of him against her back. “Look, Jaime,” she said,
pointing to the large island they were passing. “It’s Tarth.” Even though it was winter, the island
still looked green and lush, its surrounding waters as blue as ever.

Jaime tilted his head gave her an appraising look. “You know, we could settle there if you want,
after you’ve finished your work in King’s Landing.” He propped his chin on her shoulder and held
her from behind, his cloak barely covering both of them, but his body and arms were warming her
well enough.

Brienne smiled and squeezed the strong arms that were surrounding her. “No, Jaime. We decided
don Casterly Rock, and I agree. It’s important to be near Tommen and Myrcella, I think.” She turned
around so they were face to face. “But I was just looking at Tarth, thinking of how far I’ve come.”

“How far we’ve both come, Brienne,” Jaime said softly, planting a gentle kiss on her. His lips
made her warm, and she turned around and drew her arms around him, enjoying how he smelled
and how broad and solid he was in her arms.

“I’m proud of you Jaime,” she said, kissing him back. “And I’m proud of both of us.” He opened
his mouth to her and deepened the kiss with his tongue, licking her lips and darting into her mouth.
She whimpered. She felt his hands roam around her back and start to explore the small swells of
her breasts.

“Jaime,” Brienne said, pulling slightly away. “We’re out in the open!” She gave him a frown.
Jaime laughed and pressed his hips against hers so she could feel how hard he was getting.

“Modest wench,” he said, eventually pulling away. He rested his hand gently at her hips, and
looked back out into the sea.

“While you discovered a surgical method to repair people’s heart vessels in Dorne, at least I found
a new vocation there,” Jaime remarked, smiling fully, revealing his irresistible dimples.

“That you have,” Brienne said, grinning at him. While Brienne and Oberyn had been busy
following up on their surgical stent patients and preparing for the next stage of their study in
King’s Landing, Jaime took an interest in Ellaria’s photography. The day after the wedding, while
Brienne worked with Oberyn, Jaime had assisted Ellaria in developing the wedding photographs,
and he became fascinated at how the images, soaked in chemical baths, appeared out of nowhere,
like a ghost coming back to life. She showed him what each of the solutions did, and the setup of
her darkroom and photographic studio. She even invited him to dismantle one of her cameras to see
the components and figure out how it worked.

After that, the photographic sessions became even more frequent, as Jaime dragged her out into the
studio where he posed her in costumes alone or with Ellaria, Pod, or Oberyn. He even pulled them
out into the gardens for some photographs *en plein air* and started to photograph many places around Sunspear, lugging an awkward, unwieldy camera under his arm. At last, he had found something he was intensely interested in, and it was something that didn’t need delicate or exact use of an injured right hand. Ellaria even said that Jaime had a good eye for people, and remarked how he made everyone at least *interesting* looking. Brienne smiled at that. Of course, Jaime, who was himself the ideal of beauty, would be someone who found every face fascinating; she had no explanation, after all, about how he thought *her* beautiful, as he often said to her with such apparent sincerity.

“Come, wench,” he said, his arm around her, “It’s freezing up here; let’s go inside. I think Oberyn and Pod are waiting for us in the dining room.”

Pod had decided to come back to King’s Landing with them, though he could have stayed and studied in Dorne quite easily; but the young man seemed to have grown attached to her and Jaime, and decided he could study while he continued to help Brienne in her work. She readily agreed, freely admitting to herself that she would have preferred not be parted from Pod for at least a couple more years, whom she had grown so fond.

They went inside and Jaime was about to lead them to the dining room when Brienne took his hand and led them back to their cabins instead.

“What is it, wench? Do you need to change for dinner?” Jaime asked, puzzled. Brienne closed the door to their cabin and twisted the lock. Comprehension and lust competed for room in Jaime’s face.

“My naughty wench-wife,” Jaime said, lunging at her and pulling her down on their rather small bed.

“Isn’t it a wife’s duty to relieve the discomfort of her husband?” Brienne asked innocently, as she cupped Jaime’s still hard cock. He moaned into her neck, his face awed at her boldness.

“Why yes, wife, it is. As it is a husband’s duty to make his wife scream with pleasure,” he said, eagerly kissing her neck, his hands lifting up her heavy skirts.

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Gods, Jaime thought, wedding receptions are always boring, even his own. His mind moved to the infinitely more pleasant memories of their actual wedding, how there were only three people present to witness, how delightful and brief the meal was, and how rapturous and satisfying their wedding night had been. It was perfect, small and intimate, and impossibly romantic; he would say it had likely been the best day of his life, but he has had so many fantastic, mind-blowing days and nights with his wench-wife ever since Tarth.

But this afternoon’s reception to which their families (mostly his family, he admitted) invited all of King’s Landing, was an all too fancy, ornate affair. Gods, Jaime cringed. They even invited Varys, who was impeccably dressed, as usual. Their friends were hardly better, for they all possessed a veneer of disappointment and hurt – they were all disappointed that they weren’t invited, how they wished they had been present, all of them implying how they had been ignored or abandoned. He saw that it was especially torturous for the wench every time a friend approached them with that *look*. Still, he thought, it had to be done, and their friends would soon get over it. And soon enough,
this afternoon would be over and he could make his wife feel better in all sorts of ways. He chuckled to himself. His thoughts often strayed to the lascivious when he looked at his wenchi. Today, she was magnificent in a yellow silk gown that was embroidered with silver stars. She looked like sunlight on this winter day, and like a sunflower, his gaze followed her everywhere she went. The back of her dress was cut indecently low; he longed to lick all the freckles on her skin there, slip his fingers under the neckline of her dress.

He wondered how long they had to stay at their own wedding reception. He sighed, spotting Tywin next to Littlefinger, looking stern. Out of all of his circle, his father was the most disappointed, although he noted with curiosity that Tywin was a lot less disappointed than Jaime thought he’d be.

“You’ve married.” Tywin’s voice had been icy and cutting, as they entered his father’s King’s Landing apartment when they arrived back to the city. “I had to hear from a newspaper account by Varys,” he continued, his face dark and disapproving.

“That was not our doing,” Jaime countered angrily.

“We – we didn’t know that it was in the papers,” Brienne stammered, looking at his father with a guilty expression on her face. “We’re not sure how Varys found out, and we wanted to tell you the news in person, you see.”

Tywin’s cold façade melted at little at Brienne’s sincere outburst. “Varys has his little birds everywhere,” he said stiffly. “You couldn’t have known, Brienne.”

His father stared at them. And stared at them. Jaime knew that his father had made the trip down from Casterly Rock just to receive them back into the city, and Jaime thought, to presumably lecture them. As he seemed set to do right then.

Tywin tilted his head and regarded both of them coolly. “Still, I suppose congratulations are in order,” he man finally said, tilting his mouth into something resembling a smile. Jaime could feel Brienne relax beside him. Both Tywin and Brienne took a step toward each other and kissed each other on the cheek, and embraced in a gentle hug. Jaime was mystified at the affection that his father was showing; he had never seen his father hug or kiss anyone. Jaime himself stepped up and father and son awkwardly shared a firm handshake.

“Welcome to the family, Dr. Brienne Lannister,” Tywin said with a satisfied air, practically beaming at his wench. There was something resembling warmth in his father’s eyes. Jaime found it unbearably odd and couldn’t wait to tell Tyrion all about this whole confusing exchange.

Brienne looked down, struck again by guilt. Ah, thought Jaime. Another blow. “Tywin, I’ve… uh…kept my last name. I’m still Brienne Tarth.”

“What?” Tywin said, frowning. “How is that possible?”

“Well, we got married in Dorne, and it’s rather common for women to keep their maiden names over there, and I thought it was a good idea, especially since I’m the last of the Tarth line. And Jaime doesn’t mind.” Brienne said evenly, looking at his father calmly.

Tywin looked at her, considering, and nodded. “It makes sense, I suppose.” He paused. “For your career. And it’s good of you to think of your father and his position as Evenstar of Tarth.” Jaime could not believe it, but the wench seemingly could do no wrong in his father’s eyes.

“As long as your children are named Lannister, of course.” Tywin added, his eyebrows raised.

“Of course. I wouldn’t consider anything else for our children.” Brienne said, smiling shyly.
Jaime’s heart lifted at the assumption the wench just agreed to, which meant that she wanted to have children! With him! Jaime couldn’t help but grin broadly.

Jaime couldn’t help grinning now, as he saw Renly and Margaery fawn over Brienne. Thank the gods, at least they weren’t petty enough to hold grudges; after a few minutes of pouting, the couple returned to their overenthusiastic ways, and Loras seemed wholly accepting of their news from the very first. The trio seemed as happy as ever, he thought curiously.

“Enjoying your wedding party, dearest brother?” Tyrion said, offering him a flute of champagne.

Jaime sighed, accepting the delicate glass. “It had to be done, I suppose.”

“Yes, especially because you two ran off to Dorne to get married, in secret.” Tyrion said accusingly.

“Well, I suppose…we couldn’t help it,” Jaime said defensively.

“You mean you couldn’t help it, Jaime.” Tyrion said, an eyebrow raised. “My guess is that you insisted and Brienne, being the excellent, kind soul that she is, agreed?”

“If you must know,” Jaime said, annoyed at his nosy little brother, “Yes. I needed to marry her the day after I arrived, all right?”

Tyrion chuckled, shaking his head.

“Anyway,” Jaime said, looking at Tyrion peevishly. “Have you apologized to her?”

Tyrion belted out a laugh. “Yes, I definitely ate my fill of humble pie. How was I supposed to know your wife would be so upset about my book?”

Jaime gave him a stern look.

“Okay, fine. I suspected she might be upset, but I needed to tell the story! She is much too good of a character, if you will, to pass up. And I apologized. Profusely.” Tyrion said.

“I think she was equally upset that the two lovers didn’t end up together. You had her character living alone with three cats,” Jaime mused, smiling.

Tyrion gave him an exasperated look. “How was I supposed to know you two would end up married? I mean, Brienne is much too good for you, brother, as much as I love you.”

“I know,” Jaime said wistfully, looking fondly at his wench wife across the room.

“Anyway, as I explained to her – at that time, you weren’t together, were barely friends, and Jon was such a good match for her-”

“Tyrion,” Jaime scowled.

Tyrion chuckled. “Well, Jon Snow is the best of men, even you have to admit that. As equally as handsome as you, many would say. Not to mention much younger.” Tyrion smirked and rubbed his cheek in thought. “Now that I think about it, I should have written a romantic rival in my story between you two. That would have made it even better. The heroine could have ended up with him.”

Jaime’s jaw clenched. “This conversation is over.” Jaime said, glaring at his brother.
Tyrion raised his glass to Jaime in response, laughing as he walked away. Jaime looked after him, frowning.

"Jaime, why this thunderous face?" Brienne said, coming toward him and hooking her arm through his.

"Wench! Wife!" Jaime gave her a grateful kiss. "Am I ever so happy to see you."

Brienne laughed. "Did Tyrion get you upset?" She squeezed his arm. "He apologized very prettily to me about the book. Of course, I didn’t tell him that I’ve been well over my anger for weeks."

He shook his head and nuzzled against her neck. "It’s nothing, wench. Just being his usual annoying self."

"I see you’ve made an honest woman out of my Brienne," boomed a voice, startling him out of his romantic reverie. Alarmed, he turned to see the immense, extremely tall form of Selwyn Tarth. Jaime gulped.

Brienne beamed at both of them. His goodfather bundled Jaime up in arms and nearly squeezed the life out of him. Gods, he had never felt so small in all his life, he thought, as he was gently dropped to the ground.

"Selwyn!" Jaime grinned a charming smile as soon as he could catch his breath. "I’m so glad you could make it over here in King’s Landing. I know it must have been quite the journey."

The giant-like man nodded. "I had to get over my dislike of this city. But I had to do it for my dearest daughter." He paused. "Though King’s Landing is even more grey and smoky than I remember."

Jaime smiled. "It’s definitely not as lovely as Tarth."

Selwyn looked at him thoughtfully. "I’ve been talking to Brienne here," he said frankly, "And she seems most happy with you. I am very glad of that." The man stared at him. "Let’s keep it that way, hmm?"

Jaime smiled weakly, and was thankful when his father approached Selwyn and led him away for a conversation. Before they could walk off, however, Tywin turned back to them, holding a flower, and stood before Brienne. He proceeded to pin a stem of the midnight rose in his wench’s hair.

"Lovely," Tywin said, smiling at his wife. "You do so remind me of my Joanna," he said quietly. Brienne gave his father a kiss on his cheek and smiled shyly. Tywin nodded formally at Jaime, and rejoined Selwyn.

Jaime sought Tyrion’s gaze in the other corner of the room. Thankfully, Tyrion looked as astonished as he felt. They shrugged to each other.

"Jaime, don’t look so shocked," Brienne said to him. "Your father is a lovely man."

Jaime had no words.

"Come, let’s get some food," the wench said, leading him toward the food tables. There, they found Tommen and Myrcella, sampling the dessert. As soon as the children spotted them, both of them were attacked by hugs and kisses.

"Brienne! Uncle!" Myrcella said, smiling coyly. "Or should I say, Aunt?"
Jaime grinned. Brienne smiled, replying, “I am your aunt now, so you can call me aunt or by my own name. It’s up to you.”

“Why did you marry Uncle Jaime?” Tommen asked, curious.

“It’s ‘cause they love each other, dummy!” Myrcella said, glaring at her little brother.

“Yes, Tommen,” Jaime said tolerantly. “Brienne and I love each other very much. That’s why we got married.”

“Okay,” Tommen said, putting a chocolate truffle in his mouth. Brienne giggled.

The boy looked at them and smiled. “You two should go say hello to Ser Pounce, Lady Whiskers and Boots! They’re in my room. They’re big now.”

Brienne looked at him in surprise. “You brought your cats, Tommen?”

Myrcella rolled her eyes. “He wouldn’t leave without them.”

Tommens looked at his sister with annoyance. “They like traveling on the train – they get to explore their own train car, and look out the window! They’re very good cats, they use their box on the train and all. No accidents.”

Jaime smiled at the boy. “The cats are in your room, you said?”

Tommens nodded. “Say hello to them. I’m sure they’ll remember you.” The boy spotted a few children waving at them from the garden. He waved back.

“Come on, Tommen,” Myrcella said. “You’ve eaten enough. Let’s go play with our cousins!”

The children ran off laughing toward the gardens.

“Shall we, wench?” Jaime offered his arm to her, playful glint in his eye.

“To the kittens,” Brienne agreed.

He led her through a couple of flights of stairs and down a corridor, opened a door and ushered the wench in. They were in a small study, lined with shelves of books.

“What is this, Jaime?” Brienne asked, turning toward him. “This isn’t Tommen’s room.”

“No, wench, it isn’t.” Jaime stared at her and bit his bottom lip. He turned the lock on the door.

“Jaime!” said Brienne, shocked but hiding a smile. She took a step toward him.

He took her in his arms then, kissing her deeply, feeling the heat of her body over all that slippery yellow silk. She warmed him like the sun and he needed to be closer.

“Brienne,” he moaned, kissing her all along her neck and the tops of her chest. He caressed her breasts through her dress, feeling her nipples harden under his fingers. “I’ve been wanting to do this since this damn party began, wife.”

“Oh, Jaime,” she sighed, arching her body at his touch. Her hands touched him everywhere – his shoulders, chest, his flat abdomen, his ass. She traced the outline of his bulging manhood, which strained against his trousers. He let out a loud groan.
She quickly unbuttoned his pants and pulled out his hard, erect cock. He groaned, feeling so incredibly good in her hands. They walked together to the desk and she leaned against it. He lifted up her skirts and reached to cup her bare mound. He groaned when he discovered that she wasn’t wearing smallclothes, and groaned even louder when he felt how dripping wet she was. She whimpered at his touch. They kissed, and she looked at him seductively, deliberately turning her back to him, and bent over the desk, propping her elbows on the wood surface, all the while looking wantonly at him, her curvy bottom on full display. His cock throbbed and got even harder, if that were possible. In fact, his cock was so hard that it was painful.

“Please, Jaime,” Brienne said, lifting up her dress so her creamy round ass was exposed toward him. Her cunt was glistening for him, and only him. He wanted to dive in.

He grabbed the base of his cock and teased her warm opening and her swollen pink nub with the tip of his cock. She moaned, and wigged her adorable hips to invite him inside. “Please,” she said again, looking back at him. Jaime really couldn’t stand it any longer and slowly plunged his cock into her tight, hot depths. She gasped. He began to thrust in and out of her, pushing into her harder and harder, as he marveled at how her ass jigged each time he pumped into her. He groaned; she felt so unbelievably good. She pushed back into him with every thrust and made soft grunting noises, whimpered and moaned, sounds that went directly to his cock. Gods, she felt incredible, soft and warm and completely gripping him; he snapped his hips even harder, and he held on to her hips for even more leverage. He then snaked a hand to touch her hot little nub.

“Yes, yes, Jaime,” Brienne groaned, her voice becoming more urgent. He pushed harder and harder, and angled his hips just so and suddenly she gasped and cried out, and he couldn’t bear it any longer, his whole body shuddered, completely filled with wild pleasure as he felt her cunt forcefully clench around him, and he released violently inside her, shaking, as he continued this final thrusts. This was bliss, this was heaven. Gods, he was the luckiest man in the world. He fell on top of her back, trying to regain his breath.

They cleaned themselves up with their handkerchiefs and he helped his wife re-pin the rose in her hair, and she straightened his tie for him, all the while grinning and looking at each other. Gods, they were lovelorn fools, both of them. He couldn’t help but kiss her every few seconds. His wench-wife was the best, most desirable human being on earth.

“To the cats?” Brienne said, as soon as they were done rearranging themselves. She smirked. He felt warm all over from looking at her.

“To the cats, wench,” Jaime replied, pulling her close for another kiss.

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Brienne practically collapsed on the bed, she was so exhausted. Jaime sprawled lazily beside her, turning on his side when she joined him. It was good to be back in her old flat – well, their flat, now that Jaime had officially moved in – and all her familiar things. They had declined Tywin’s invitation to stay at the Red Keep, where he was staying with the children, or at Tywin’s apartments, where Tyrion was staying with Pod. Instead, they opted for these very modest rooms, for old time’s sake.

Familiar piano music was coming from the Victrola – it was the first record that Jaime played for her when she was recovering after the Bloody Mummers attack, and it was still her favourite. The
melody made her feel nostalgic and hopeful at the same time.

“We made it, wench.” Jaime drawled. “The most exhausting party in history.”

“Oh, it wasn’t that bad, Jaime,” Brienne said, smiling at him. “I enjoyed seeing Tommen’s cats.”

He grinned, moving in close for a kiss. “Seeing the cats was definitely the highlight of the afternoon.” They laughed, and kissed again.

“It’s strange being back here,” Brienne said, looking around. “So many things have changed. I’ve changed.”

“For the better.” Jaime said, bringing her hand to his lips to kiss.

“You thought I was an assassin, when you first saw me,” Brienne said, giggling.

“Wench, you were carrying a dagger!” Jaime declared defensively.

“And you were passed out drunk.” Brienne laughed.

“I was sober enough to realize I wanted you, assassin wench.” Jaime said, drawing her body close.

“Nonsense,” She quirked her brow at him, disbelieving. “You barely thought I was a woman. You called me a beast.”

“Oh, I wanted you, wench. I wanted you from the very first moments I saw you.” He planted kisses on her cheeks and neck, and looked into her eyes. “You were wearing a very…thin white nightgown. And the light was so that I could see the outline of your body underneath. Not to mention those nipples that stood so prominently to attention.” He sucked at her neck. “You were definitely all woman to me back then. Though I was a fool, of course.”

“An arrogant ass.” Brienne said, smiling.

“Guilty as charged.” Jaime said, giving her lips a soft kiss. He looked at her with a crooked smile on his lips. “When did you stop thinking I was an ass, wench?”

She drew her arms around his neck and moved her body closer. “Hmmm…I always thought you were the most beautiful man I’d ever seen,” she began.

Jaime grinned. “Also guilty as charged.”

She rolled her eyes. “Dear gods.”

He drew his arms around her waist. “Go on, wench.”

“I think I stopped thinking of you as a jerk that night at the beach, when you told me about Aerys and what you did to save those people.” Brienne looked at him with kind eyes. “And you were actually…kind to me, after I was so upset at seeing how badly Ros was hurt.” She stroked his cheek, roughened with gold and grey stubble. “That’s when I knew that you were a good man, hiding behind this off-putting, disdainful exterior. That you had so much hurt in your life that you didn’t know what to do with the goodness of your heart.”

Jaime pulled her into a tight embrace; he was warm and comforting. He nuzzled his face into her neck. “You’re the only one who saw that in me, Brienne,” Jaime murmured into her skin.

When they drew back, she saw that his eyes were shining.
“Jaime,” she said softly. “I love you.” She gave him a long, lingering kiss.

Slow tears rolled from his eyes. She kissed them away, tasting the salt of them. He looked at her with complete vulnerability and tenderness; her heart thudded and she felt the radiance of his love spread in her blood and throughout her entire body.

“And I love you, Brienne.” Jaime simply stated, looking at her with such exquisite happiness that she felt her own eyes fill with tears. She kissed him sweetly, licking his bottom up and opening her mouth to his.

They embraced, their arms around each other, their breaths slow and in unison. And Brienne was happy and incredulous to realize that she was no longer alone in the world, now that she had Jaime by her side. Their hearts would beat together. They would face trouble and hardship together and never turn from one another.

In their own lives prior to this, it felt like they already had their individual share of loneliness, violence, hurt, and despair, all of which they had both borne mostly by themselves. They had survived. And now that they found each other, and helped each other through the most painful, disturbing events, well, now it was their time to find peace in one other, to find out what love really was, to actually choose each other to love. And Brienne was amazed to find that it was all so natural, being together with Jaime, who would forever be hers, as she would forever be his.

She sighed happily into him, feeling the heat of his chest, feeling his heart beating fiercely through her skin. They looked at each other, eyes wide and trusting. His arms tightened around her. Their lips met and their mouths opened, and they leaned into each other, their kisses deepening. It was all so easy, Brienne thought. So easy to choose to love.

Chapter End Notes

That's it, readers! The end. No epilogue, because I want the characters to have the freedom to go off and do whatever they want, and I want you readers to imagine what their lives will be like after this chapter.

When I set out writing this story, I had wanted it to be just a normal Jaime/Brienne fic, but it ended up being so much more (a Brienne First (!) story; a Jon/Brienne crackship!) I had no idea that the story would end up being over 220k words. That is unbelievable to me, that the story got so long (it is certainly the longest thing I've ever written).

This world of Westeros in the early 1900's - early medicine, industrialization and capitalism, changes in sexual attitudes, women's rights - they all made an appearance here. I grew to love this world. And especially these characters! Brienne emerged in all her insecurities but was absolutely wonderful, good and strong. Then emerged flawed, witty, tortured Jaime, who was an absolutely delight to write. And Jon, lovely and sweet. That is to say, these characters demanded their time, their due, and did not want to be rushed. So I just followed them along in their journeys and tried not to impose myself too much into their story.
But the most important thing I want to say is thank you to you readers. Thank you for sticking to this story, reading chapter by chapter even when things got horrible. Thank you for accepting that this story deals with the Jaime/Cersei incest thing in a very direct (and explicit) way. Thank you for understanding that Brienne needs to find a love outside Jaime first in Jon. I hope it was worth it in the end, that the story paid off.

And the commenters! I love each and every one of you, I really do. There were commenters who gave me their feedback regularly (some with every chapter, which makes me cry when I think about it). There were commenters who wrote such thoughtful, insightful, kind, funny things about this story. I laughed, I cried, I was so very grateful to have such responsive and engaged readers. During the rough spots, your words really helped me continue writing. They validated the choices I made about the story. They made me so, so happy. You can't imagine how thrilled I was to see the comment notification in my email. THANK YOU from the top of my head, to the bottom of my heart.

At times, I thought I was stuck writing the story. At times, I had thought I had written myself into a corner that I couldn't get out of (especially after the garden episode, lol). There were times when I thought I made the wrong move or went too far. There were times I had NO IDEA what I was doing or how on earth I was going to finish this story.

But it was thanks to you readers that I got through these moments. Your belief in my work has been astonishing. Thank you!

Finally, I will be taking a break from writing J/B fanfiction, but I will return with more stories, when inspiration strikes. In the meantime, I will be out there, reading other authors' fics and commenting. I'm such a fan of this ship.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!