Gold is their Crowns and Gold is their Shrouds

by JoannaBaratheon

Summary

Her parents were twins, her grandparents were cousins, so it almost seemed like fate that Joanna Baratheon would fall in love with her twin brother Joffrey. They agreed to be together forever but as Joffrey becomes more powerful and demanding Joanna begins to doubt both herself and her brothers right to the throne.

Notes

I've finished this story on fanfiction.net and I'm posting it here as well
Chapter 1

Joanna

Gleaming sunlight shone through the crimson curtains and decorated the room with light. The sunlight reflected off the numerous gold objects and cast an ethereal glow across the occupants of the large bed.

A golden mane was strewn across the pillows, blonde curls the same colour as the other occupants. The growing light stirred her from her sleep.

The young girl lifted her head slightly before letting it fall back down in the crook of the neck of the other sleeping figure. A hand emerged from beneath the covers and stroked a lock of hair from Joanna's face.

"Must we awaken?" She mumbled, sitting up, resting her head against the headboard.

"So what do you plan on telling father when we're not ready to leave?" The boy chuckled and interlocked his fingers with hers.

"I'll tell him that I have no wish to travel a thousand miles north to visit a dreary Lord who he hasn't seen for years." Joanna laughed, rising from the bed and making her way to the door. "Well if we must go then I must return to my chambers."

"No!" Her twin jumped from the bed and grabbed her arm. "Stay please, we're not doing anything wrong."

Removing his hand she took a step back. "I know that. But that does not mean I want to give the servants anything else to whisper about. They dare not say anything in front of us."

"When I'm King I will behead anyone who accuses us of anything inappropriate and-"

"As long as nothing occurs due to our affection then we have nothing to worry about." Joanna interrupted, "besides this...thing... we have isn't going to progress beyond sharing a bed. We wouldn't want to insult the Gods."

The young Baratheon opened the door and stepped into the hallway.

"I love you Joanna." The golden boy called out.

"I love you too Joffrey."

Cersei

Cersei quickly dressed herself as she prepared to leave her brothers chambers. She knew it would be the last time she could be intimate with her twin until the King decided they could return from the frozen wasteland his best friend called home.

"I hear Robert's planning to marry one of the Stark children to one of yours." Jaime queried, passing Cersei her dress.

"Our children. Not mine, ours. Our four beautiful children that don't deserve to be raised by my disgrace of a husband."
Jaime chuckled, "well if her decides to marry Joanna to the Stark heir then it'll be only 3 to look after."

"No," She snapped, "I will not let him send my eldest daughter to live in that cold wasteland. She deserves to be happy, to be a Queen. I haven't pretended to be faithful to Robert for all these years just so he can have a Baratheon and Stark marry. I won't let him live his tragic love story through a child that isn't even his!" The anger practically glowed in her emerald eyes, her mouth curving into a sneer.

"Would you rather Joffrey marry one of the Stark daughters? A feeble naive girl won't last long married to him. Joanna is the only person who keeps his attention long enough that he forgets he likes causing pain." Jaime wrapped his arm round his twin and lover.

"You shouldn't speak ill of your son. He has a good heart."

"I just want you to be happy."

Catelyn

"Jon . . . " he said. "Is this news certain?"

"It was the king's seal, and the letter is in Robert's own hand. I saved it for you. He said Lord Arryn was taken quickly. Even Maester Pycelle was helpless, but he brought the milk of the poppy, so Jon did not linger long in pain."

"That is some small mercy, I suppose," he said. She could see the grief on his face, but even then he thought first of her. "Your sister," he said. "And Jon's boy. What word of them?"

"The message said only that they were well, and had returned to the Eyrie," Catelyn said. "I wish they had gone to Riverrun instead. The Eyrie is high and lonely, and it was ever her husband's place, not hers. Lord Jon's memory will haunt each stone. I know my sister. She needs the comfort of family and friends around her."

"Your uncle waits in the Vale, does he not? Jon named him Knight of the Gate, I'd heard."

Catelyn nodded. "Brynden will do what he can for her, and for the boy. That is some comfort, but still . . . "

"Go to her," Ned urged. "Take the children. Fill her halls with noise and shouts and laughter. That boy of hers needs other children about him, and Lysa should not be alone in her grief."

"Would that I could," Catelyn said. "The letter had other tidings. The king is riding to Winterfell to seek you out."

It took Ned a moment to comprehend her words, but when the understanding came, the darkness left his eyes. "Robert is coming here?" When she nodded, a smile broke across his face.

Catelyn wished she could share his joy. But she had heard the talk in the yards; a direwolf dead in the snow, a broken antler in its throat. Dread coiled within her like a snake, but she forced herself to smile at this man she loved, this man who put no faith in signs. "I knew that would please you," she said. "We should send word to your brother on the Wall."

"Yes, of course," he agreed. "Ben will want to be here. I shall tell Maester Luwin to send his swiftest bird." Ned rose and pulled her to her feet. "Damnation, how many years has it been? And he gives us no more notice than this? How many in his party, did the message say?"
"I should think a hundred knights, at the least, with all their retainers, and half again as many freeriders. Cersei and the children travel with them."

"Robert will keep an easy pace for their sakes," he said. "It is just as well. That will give us more time to prepare."

"The queen's brothers are also in the party," she told him.

Ned grimaced at that. There was small love between him and the queen's family, Catelyn knew. The Lannisters of Casterly Rock had come late to Robert's cause, when victory was all but certain, and he had never forgiven them. "Well, if the price for Robert's company is an infestation of Lannisters, so be it. It sounds as though Robert is bringing half his court."

"Where the king goes, the realm follows," she said.

"It will be good to see the children. The youngest was still sucking at the Lannister woman's teat the last time I saw him. He must be, what, five by now?"

"Prince Tommen is seven," she told him. "The same age as Bran. Please, Ned, guard your tongue. The Lannister woman is our queen, and her pride is said to grow with every passing year. Prince Joffrey and his sister are said to be as close as siblings can be. When we last saw them he wouldn't let anyone near the princess. When Robb tried to kiss her hand I thought the prince was going to challenge him to a duel right then and there."

Ned squeezed her hand. "There must be a feast, of course, with singers, and Robert will want to hunt. I shall send Jory south with an honor guard to meet them on the kingsroad and escort them back. Gods, how are we going to feed them all? On his way already, you said? Damn the man. Damn his royal hide."
Chapter 2

Joanna

The month long ride was taking its toll on Joanna both mentally and physically. She considered herself quite a resilient and determined person but watching the familiar hot environment transition into bleak wasteland was unsettling to the young princess. The furthest she had ever been from Kings Landing was Casterley Rock, where the Queen would often bring her children when they were younger.

Joanna had fond memories of disregarding her septa's concerns as she would leap from the cliffs into the sapphire waters below. This had been one of the few times when she had ever argued with her twin. Joffrey hated it whenever she would do anything remotely dangerous and once he discovered her favourite activity he ordered her never to do it again. Of course, being the strong-willed girl she was she completely ignored him and proceeded to go behind his back.

It made her feel free, jumping from the cliffs, as if she could forget every responsibility that a Princess has and she could just be herself. In those brief moments she wasn't Princess Joanna Baratheon of House Baratheon and House Lannister, she was just Joanna. She remembered sitting there, dangling her feet off the edge. Her crimson gown replaced with breeches and her feet bare, staring off into the horizon. The sun was just rising and the dark sky was beginning to be illuminated.

That was the first time she every truly bonded with her uncle. Her mother's twin had requested to accompany their family to the Westerlands and had barely left his twin's side.

"I used to come here when I was your age." Her uncle had said, sitting beside her. "Your mother hated me jumping as much as Joffrey hates you doing it. However, like me, you ignore it."

For the rest of the visit it became tradition for them to sit and talk as the sun rose and before anyone noticed their absence. It made Joanna realise how similar she in fact was to her uncle, both in appearance and personality. She had inherited the traditional Lannister looks, golden locks and emerald eyes but it was more than that. Her strong jawline and almond-shaped eyes resembled Jaime much more than they did her mother. Not suspecting anything Joanna just counted it on him and mother being twins.

They perhaps had such a connection was because they truly understood each other. They both were extremely sarcastic people who in public hid behind a façade of pride and arrogance. Behind closed doors, however, they shared an open and loving heart and a wish for freedom. This friendship of sorts remained when they returned to Kings Landing and by the time of the journey Joanna cared for Jaime more than anyone else except for maybe Joffrey and Cersei.

Despite her cunning and intelligence Joanna Baratheon never once suspected that their connection was anything more than uncle and niece.

Cersei

The wheelhouse trundled along the Kings Road and Cersei glanced around at her family. Her eldest son was riding at the front of the party as expected whilst her oldest daughter was disregarding her formalities and had joined her brother on horseback. Her younger two sat giggling at Tommen's kitten as Ser Pounce was trying to swat Myrcella's hair.
Their naivety and childish innocence both made her smile and frown at the same time. Whilst she was happy their lives where luxurious and without hardship she was a mother and a mother always worried about her children. She knew that summer would end soon, and her babies would be forced to grow up much faster than they should.

Opening the window Cersei glanced out at the other travellers. Just in front of the carriage was her daughter and brother. Her child's fascination with her true father disturbed her and was something to be encouraged. Whilst she was glad the King wasn't the only paternal influence Joanna had she was also worried about others reading too much into the relationship. Cersei knew that out of all her children Joanna resembled her true father the most and any close analysis of her features hinted at the truth that Jon Arryn had died for.

A laughter escaped Joanna's lips and she slowed her horse to have better control.

"Concentrate Joanna." She warned, noticing the unevenness of the road and her daughters distracted mind.

"Of course mother" was the reply.

Cersei's twin turned to her, "I was just reminding Joanna of the time she disguised as a boy and spent hours exploring Flea Bottom. You were about to send the Kingsguard to look for her when she returned. She was covered in dirt and ran up to you; throwing her arms round you. Do you remember what she said?"

Scowling, she replied. "You shouldn't encourage her, Jaime."

"Lighten up dear sister." He laughed, "Joanna here isn't nearly as serious as you were at her age. She's a princess and is therefore allowed to relax every once in a while."

"When I was her age I was just a Lords daughter. It was my duty to act properly so that I could find a suitable husband. I am the Queen, remember, so I must have done something correctly."
The visitors poured through the castle gates in a river of gold and silver and polished steel, three hundred strong, a pride of bannermen and knights, of sworn swords and freeriders. Over their heads a dozen golden banners whipped back and forth in the northern wind, emblazoned with the crowned stag of Baratheon.

Ned knew many of the riders. There came Ser Jaime Lannister with hair as bright as beaten gold, and there Sandor Clegane with his terrible burned face. Riding between them was a golden girl who looked as if she couldn't be less at home in the North. The tall boy beside her could only be the crown prince and the girls twin, and that stunted little man behind them was surely the Imp, Tyrion Lannister.

Yet the huge man at the head of the column, flanked by two knights in the snow-white cloaks of the Kingsguard, seemed almost a stranger to Ned . . . until he vaulted off the back of his warhorse with a familiar roar, and crushed him in a bone-crunching hug. "Ned! Ah, but it is good to see that frozen face of yours." The king looked him over top to bottom, and laughed. "You have not changed at all."

Would that Ned had been able to say the same. Fifteen years past, when they had ridden forth to win a throne, the Lord of Storm's End had been clean-shaven, clear-eyed, and muscled like a maiden's fantasy. Six and a half feet tall, he towered over lesser men, and when he donned his armor and the great antlered helmet of his House, he became a veritable giant. He'd had a giant's strength too, his weapon of choice a spiked iron warhammer that Ned could scarcely lift. In those days, the smell of leather and blood had clung to him like perfume.

Now it was perfume that clung to him like perfume, and he had a girth to match his height. Ned had last seen the king nine years before during Balon Greyjoy's rebellion, when the stag and the direwolf had joined to end the pretensions of the self-proclaimed King of the Iron Islands. Since the night they had stood side by side in Greyjoy's fallen stronghold, where Robert had accepted the rebel lord's surrender and Ned had taken his son Theon as hostage and ward, the king had gained at least eight stone. A beard as coarse and black as iron wire covered his jaw to hide his double chin and the sag of the royal jowls, but nothing could hide his stomach or the dark circles under his eyes.

Yet Robert was Ned's king now, and not just a friend, so he said only, "Your Grace. Winterfell is yours."

By then the others were dismounting as well, and grooms were coming forward for their mounts. Robert's queen, Cersei Lannister, entered on foot with her younger children. The wheelhouse in which they had ridden, a huge double-decked carriage of oiled oak and gilded metal pulled by forty heavy draft horses, was too wide to pass through the castle gate. Ned knelt in the snow to kiss the queen's ring, while Robert embraced Catelyn like a long-lost sister.

"This is my heir and eldest, Joffrey and his twin, Joanna. You would barely know they're mine, would you Ned. Especially her. I feel sorry for whoever has to marry her." Robert scoffed, pushing Joanna forward.

Rolling her eyes at her father's drunken attitude she curtsied. "Lord Stark."
"Your highness."

Joanna hurried back to her mother and uncle as quickly as possible. Jaime placed a hand on her shoulder. "Are you alright Joanna?"

"I think so," She nodded, "I was just embarrassed in front of the future Hand of the King."

No sooner had those formalities of greeting been completed than the king had said to his host, "Take me down to your crypt, Eddard. I would pay my respects."

Ned loved him for that, for remembering her still after all these years. He called for a lantern. No other words were needed. The queen had begun to protest. They had been riding since dawn, everyone was tired and cold, and surely they should refresh themselves first. The dead would wait. She had said no more than that; Robert had looked at her and her twin brother Jaime had taken her quietly by the arm, and she had said no more. All four blonde children followed their mother out of the courtyard.

Robb

The first time he saw the princess he thought he was looking at an angel. Her angelic features and forest eyes were framed by a mane of blonde curls that cascaded like a golden waterfall. The harsh Baratheon colours would have diluted her beauty so luckily she was wearing Lannister colours.

He couldn't help but do nothing but stare open-mouthed at the Princess, hopefully not looking too simple-minded.

When the King pushed her forwards he could see the calm and elegant exterior falter momentarily and a flash of anger appeared in her eyes. Robb's eyes met Joanna's for a split second and he tried to give her a sympathetic smile. Unfortunately the princess was less than impressed and she gave him a cold glare.

Surprised he couldn't take his eyes off of her even when she returned to her mother and uncle, who gave her a reassuring look. Robb couldn't help but notice the strong resemblance between Joanna and the King Slayer however a quick glance to the side shocked his soul. The crown prince was giving him a stare that burned with hatred and made Robb wonder what he had done to upset Joffrey.

As the Royal family left the courtyard Jon and Theon approached him.

"Did you see the princess? Think about all the southern boys who get to see that body every day." Theon laughed.

"That's if the prince lets anyone near her. Don't let him catch you staring or you'll get the death stare that Robb just received." Jon said, smirking at his half-brother. "But she looks too much like a Lannister for me. I doubt she could last long up North."
Joffrey

"Stay away from the Stark boy." He grabbed his twins arm, pulling her to the into an alcove aggressively.

Shaking his arm off she smiled, "which one? The little boy the same age as Tommen? Or the bastard who looks like Lord Stark? Or could you possibly be referring to the one Myrcella was looking at? Really brother, what do you think of me." Sarcasm practically dripped from her words as she kissed her twins cheek.

Joffrey grabbed Joann's waist and pulled her so that their faces were almost touching. "You know exactly which one I mean. Robb Stark was about to rip your clothes off right there."

"Don't be paranoid Joffrey, it doesn't suit you. Besides, father is beginning to sort out suitors for me anyway. Don't you want me to have a husband who actually is attracted to me? Do you want me cursed to have the same loveless marriage our parents have?"

His hand slipped beneath her dress as he whispered in her ear. "When I am King I won't let you ever leave my sight."

"Now I see," she laughed, "you're jealous."

He spun Joanna round and pushed her against the wall, his slight height advantage allowed him to tower possessively over her. "I am not jealous. You are mine and one Lordling's affections isn't going to change that."

Joanna pushed him away, "I'm not going to marry you Joff. Our love isn't going to have a happy ending. Father will make me marry and I will have my husband's children. You know that if I had the choice I wouldn't marry anyone but you but unlike you I am a princess and my future has been decided. I'm not going to marry you or have your children despite everything I want. The sooner you accept this the better. Besides, when you are King, what will you do? Make me divorce my husband and make me leave my new family and drag me back to Kings Landing. You know how easily rumours spread, doing this will be like telling everyone in Westeros that you want to f**k your sister."

This was the angriest Joanna had ever seen Joffrey, his body was literally shaking with anger; he looked ready to explode. His mouth was unable to form words.

"What are you going to do? Hit me? You lay one finger on me and you'll have turned into father."

"I am not our father!" He spat menacingly, tracing her figure with his hand, slowly moving downwards, "Our father doesn't want to f**k mother. I most certainly want to do it to you. This situation isn't easy for me as well. Father is probably arranging me to marry the oldest Stark bitch right now. I'll have to marry her and have children with a girl I am not capable of loving."

Joffrey grabbed her face and kissed her aggressively. Forcing his tongue into her mouth and resistance immediately disappeared and he deepened the kiss. A moan escaped Joanna's lips as she wrapped her arms round his neck. One of his hands left her head and rested on her chest. Any sounds of pleasure were muffled as they didn't stop to breathe.

Approaching footsteps made them immediately separate and within seconds they had returned to
the collected and proper façade. Their uncle Jaime passed by and saw his niece and nephew standing into the alcove discussing their first impressions of Winterfell. Seemingly unsuspecting he smiled.

"I am to be guarding your room tonight, Joanna. Should I escort you there now?"

The twins shared a quick glance before Joanna took her uncles arm and nodded, "Of course Uncle. Lets finish our discussion later, Joff."

The pair left and Joffrey scowled at the interruption. He didn't understand his sisters connection to their uncle. Apart from himself Jaime was the only person who could truly make Joanna laugh. Their mother paid Joffrey the most attention but everyone else never seemed to show him the love that he desired. Everyone, except their father, adored Joanna and even when Cersei criticised her Jaime would stand up for Joanna and the fault would be forgotten almost immediately. Joffrey had to love Joanna the most and if that meant isolating her from everyone else she loved he would do that.

The most rational part of his brain told him that this love could never end happily. In an ideal world he would marry Joanna and together they would be surrounded by blonde, green-eyed children who looked just like his beloved. Unfortunately, they were not Targaryens, the world would never accept their love and dismiss it as monstrous despite the previous rulers marrying brothers to sisters for centuries.

The less rational, more dominant part of him insisted that they were nothing like the Targaryens, that madness would never touch any children they had and if he had to force the seven Kingdoms to bow before the sibling rulers he would. He would destroy cities and kill whoever it took so that he could have his sister by his side. The thought of his sister sitting beside him on the Iron Throne wearing a golden crown stirred something within him that would not die down.

Until he could see Joanna next he would have to entertain himself so he went to find the oldest Stark girl who wouldn't stop smiling at him. She wasn't as pretty as Joanna or as funny but she would have to serve as a distraction.
Chapter 5

Joanna

Feasts were nothing strange to Joanna, her father held one weekly in honour of someone or something unimportant just so he had an excuse to drink and pig in large quantities. The worst aspect was probably the Kings lecherous attitude to the serving girls as her mother sat next to him watching him grope various women.

Lord Stark's oldest son, Robb, had escorted her to the feast and spent the entire time staring at her like a young boy on his nameday. It didn't help that Joffrey was glaring daggers at the poor boy when he wasn't making idle conversation with the Stark girl.

Whereas feast in Kings Landing were entirely formal, in Winterfell the atmosphere was much more light-hearted. Everyone was laughing and stuffing themselves with food, with some of the common folk resorting to using their hands to pick up their food.

"I-Is Winterfell to y-your liking, your highness?" Robb stuttered like a fool, smiling at her.

"No." Joanna curtly answered, downing yet another goblet of wine. She knew that she would need more than usual to suffer through the evening. She didn't often indulge in alcohol but when she did she found that she was gradually drinking more, requiring larger quantities to block out her fathers embarrassing comments and on this occasions Robb's awkward conversational skills.

"Well, I could give you a tour tomorrow if you would-"

"Robb.." She interrupted, bored.

He flushed red. "Yes, Joa-Your highness."

"I do not like the north. I never have and I never will. Just as you wouldn't suit the south. It is nothing personal but I would prefer to drink until I can forget how my father is groping that servant. Most feasts end that way so you shouldn't be surprised that I don't want to hold a conversation" Joanna sighed before filling her goblet once more.

She didn't mean to reveal that much of her feelings but the wine was beginning to settle in her mind and it was loosening her lips. Robb wasn't usually as awkward, that much she could tell, but it seemed like a feast that a beautiful girl could melt someone as frigid as a Stark.

"I feel sorry for you then Joanna." She was too drunk to tell him to not refer to her by her name.

"I'm a princess, my brother will one day be King. What could Robb Stark have which I don't?"

Robb tilted his head towards the King. "I expected the King to be this noble warrior who could win battles and capture hearts. The kind of man that songs were written about and legends told."

"Yet all you see is a drunken fool who is whoring and drinking himself to an early grave. A man who prefers the company of whores to his own wife and regrets the existence of his children. A man who has more bastards than trueborn children. What could you possibly sympathise about?" Joanna scowled, glaring at the back of her fathers head as he shoved a chicken leg into his gaping mouth.

"My father isn't perfect either. No father is." Robb commented, surprised by the princesses honesty
concerning her father.

"Ah yes. You have a bastard brother as well, something Snow, isn't it?" Joanna asked, scanning the hall in search of a boy who was supposed to look the most like their father.

"Jon. My mother thought it would be an insult to the King if he was seated with us. He's my best friend." Robb explained, pointing to his half-brother, watching as he fed his direwolf a chicken under the table.

"My brother is my best friend too. We do everything together, we have done ever since we were infants."

"The brother who doesn't seem to like me?"

Joanna hummed in agreement, turning to look at her twin who had one eye on Sansa Stark and the other on her. Joffrey gave her a warning glance and she knew what it meant. He didn't want her becoming too close to the Stark boy. Joanna knew that the boy was infatuated with her but decided not to inform him that to form even a friendship would be unlikely. A stranger to Joanna would perhaps assume that this was because she was too kind to disappoint him and upset his heart. However, she wasn't this kind. She loved teasing Joffrey, make him watch as she paid attention to others. It was like an inside joke. Joffrey was too serious and refused to accept how far she intended their relationship to go. Yes she loved him as more than a brother but at the same time she wasn't planning on marrying a man of the correct status then her innocence was required.

This pointless smalltalk continued until Joanna requested to be excused from the feast. The numerous goblets of wine were taking their toll and if she didn't get some fresh air then she would surely faint and if there was anything Joanna hated more than it was appearing weak in front of others.

She made her way out of the hall into the courtyard and saw her second favourite uncle talking to the Stark bastard.

"Ah, dear niece, join us why don't you. I was just talking to Ned Starks bastard." Tyrion announced, looking silly beside the tall, dark haired boy who in Joanna's opinion was better looking than his trueborn brother.

"Your highness." Jon Snow bowed. "I apologise for my presence."

Joanna laughed, "I am no stranger to the concept of a bastard. My father has many and despite my mother's best attempts to pretend they don't exist I couldn't be more aware."

"Dear Joanna, you must be very drunk if you are risking the wrath of your brother by talking to both me and this bastard." Tyrion smirked, it seemed that his niece liked drinking as much as her parents.

"You may be a bastard, Jon Snow, but it seems our families have something in common. Both you and my father's bastards resemble their fathers much more than their true children. Not that I'm complaining, my mother is known as the most beautiful woman in Westeros."

Tyrion watched this exchange carefully, a few summers ago Joanna would never talk to a bastard, Joffrey made sure of that. However it seemed that as his nephew's actions became more erratic and violent, his twin disobeyed him more. He was reminded of his siblings' relationship. Jaime mostly did whatever Cersei said without question, but on occasion Jaime had to refuse and try to regain
some of his dignity.

"If you don't mind me saying, Princess Joanna, but you are far more beautiful." Jon Snow commented.
Chapter 6

JOFFREY

"I don't know whether the boy falling is a blessing or a curse, dear sister." Joffrey mused, blowing a golden curl into Joanna's face, watching as she scowled.

"Stop that, if Lord Stark hears then Sansa may no longer see you as Prince Perfect." Joanna hissed, leaning in to Joffrey as the trotted along.

They rode next to each other near the front of the party, the King and Lord Stark a few yards in front of them and Joanna's favourite uncle not far behind. The twins were riding side by side, riding almost identical horses.

Joffrey rolled his eyes and ignored Joanna's warning. "I meant that we get to return home quicker. The sooner we are surrounded by civilised people the better. I didn't know how much longer I could stand around those savages."

"Not that I don't agree with everything you just said... how is it a curse, Joff?" She asked, confused. Joanna couldn't wait to be home, the sooner they were back in Kings Landing the sooner she and Joffrey could have some intimate time. Since their confrontation when they first arrived at Winterfell Joffrey hadn't been as rude however his hostile attitude hadn't completely waned.

Normally Joffrey was overly attentive, personal space was non-existent. However since Joffrey's engagement to Sansa Stark had been announced he had been spending less and less time with Joanna. She would never admit that she was at all jealous, her pride preventing her from acknowledging the hatred she would feel when Joffrey would laugh at a joke that she should be telling. Usually any pretty girl that caught Joffrey's attention would quickly and quietly vanish after a visit from Joanna. They wouldn't be hurt physically, but the same couldn't be said for the boys that paid attention to Joanna. Serving boys would leave the Red Keep with bruises and the knowledge that nobody was allowed to even look at Joanna without Joffrey's permission.

"It means we have less time until father starts to arrange a match for you. We will have some time as he gets over having his best friend back but as soon as lord stark settles in we can expect suitors coming from all over Westeros for your hand." Joffrey explained angrily, his eyes darkening at the thought of his Joanna being taken from him.

"You look handsome when you're jealous." Joanna giggled, staring into her brother's eyes.

"I am not jealous!" Joffrey snapped quietly, struggling to keep his voice unheard. "Besides, you always find me handsome."

"Which means you're always jealous, my dear Joffrey."

Joanna laughed at her twin's angry face and sped her horse to a canter so she could ride with Jaime.

JOANNA

Robert was slumped in Darry's high seat at the far end of the room, his face closed and sullen. Cersei Lannister and her son stood beside him. The queen had her hand on Joffrey's shoulder. Thick silken bandages still covered the boy's arm. Joanna stood right next to her brother, her hand tightly clasping Joffrey's uninjured arm.
Arya stood in the center of the room, alone but for Jory Cassel, every eye upon her. "Arya," Ned called loudly. He went to her, his boots ringing on the stone floor. When she saw him, she cried out and began to sob. Joanna couldn't help but glare at her, blaming the Stark wolf for the injury of her love.

Ned went to one knee and took Arya in his arms. She was shaking. "I'm sorry," she sobbed, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

"I know," he said. She felt so tiny in his arms, nothing but a scrawny little girl. It was hard to see how she had caused so much trouble. "Are you hurt?"

"No." Her face was dirty, and her tears left pink tracks down her cheeks. "Hungry some. I ate some berries, but there was nothing else."

"We'll feed you soon enough," Ned promised. He rose to face the king. "What is the meaning of this?" His eyes swept the room, searching for friendly faces. But for his own men, they were few enough. Ser Raymun Darry guarded his look well. Lord Renly wore a half smile that might mean anything, and old Ser Barristan was grave; the rest were Lannister men, and hostile. Their only good fortune was that both Jaime Lannister and Sandor Clegane were missing, leading searches north of the Trident. "Why was I not told that my daughter had been found?" Ned demanded, his voice ringing.

He spoke to Robert, but it was Cersei Lannister who answered. "How dare you speak to your king in that manner!"

At that, the king stirred. "Quiet, woman," he snapped. He straightened in his seat. "I am sorry, Ned. I never meant to frighten the girl. It seemed best to bring her here and get the business done with quickly."

"And what business is that?" Ned put ice in his voice.

The queen stepped forward. "You know full well, Stark. This girl of yours attacked my son. Her and her butcher's boy. That animal of hers tried to tear his arm off."

Shuddering at the thought Joanna clung to her brother as if the beast was still there, ready to attack Joffrey.

"That's not true," Arya said loudly. "She just bit him a little. He was hurting Mycah."

Joanna argued, "That's not what happened! Joff wouldn't do that."

Arya glared at the Princess. "You weren't even there. How would you know?"

"Joff told us what happened," the queen said. "You and the butcher boy beat him with clubs while you set your wolf on him."

"That's not how it was," Arya said, close to tears again. Ned put a hand on her shoulder.

"Yes it is!" Prince Joffrey insisted. "They all attacked me, and she threw Lion's Tooth in the river!" Ned noticed that he did not as much as glance at Arya as he spoke but the icy look Princess Joanna was giving his youngest daughter more than made up for it.

"Liar!" Arya yelled.

"Shut up!" the prince yelled back, only his sisters grip stopping him from pouncing.
"Enough!" the king roared, rising from his seat, his voice thick with irritation. Silence fell. He glowered at Arya through his thick beard. "Now, child, you will tell me what happened. Tell it all, and tell it true. It is a great crime to lie to a king." Then he looked over at his son. "When she is done, you will have your turn. Until then, hold your tongue."

As Arya began her story, Ned heard the door open behind him. He glanced back and saw Vayon Poole enter with Sansa. They stood quietly at the back of the hall as Arya spoke. When she got to the part where she threw Joffrey's sword into the middle of the Trident, Renly Baratheon began to laugh. The king bristled. "Ser Barristan, escort my brother from the hall before he chokes."

"The girl probably took Joff by surprise; he didn't have time to defend himself. Otherwise Joffrey would have easily disarmed her. He."

"Quiet, child!" Robert snapped, silencing his daughter.

Prince Joffrey was pale as he began his very different version of events. When his son was done talking, the king rose heavily from his seat, looking like a man who wanted to be anywhere but here. "What in all the seven hells am I supposed to make of this? He says one thing, she says another."

"They were not the only ones present," Ned said. "Sansa, come here." Ned had heard her version of the story the night Arya had vanished. He knew the truth. "Tell us what happened."

His eldest daughter stepped forward hesitantly. She was dressed in blue velvets trimmed with white, a silver chain around her neck. Her thick auburn hair had been brushed until it shone. She blinked at her sister, then at the young prince. "I don't know," she said tearfully, looking as though she wanted to bolt. "I don't remember. Everything happened so fast, I didn't see . . . "A glare from Joanna immediately cutting her off.

"You rotten!" Arya shrieked. She flew at her sister like an arrow, knocking Sansa down to the ground, pummeling her. "Liar, liar, liar, liar."

"Arya, stop it!" Ned shouted. Jory pulled her off her sister, kicking. Sansa was pale and shaking as Ned lifted her back to her feet. "Are you hurt?" he asked, but she was staring at Arya, and she did not seem to hear.

"The girl is as wild as that filthy animal of hers, I don't want her around my children" Cersei Lannister said, putting one arm around each twin protectively. "Robert, I want her punished."

"Seven hells," Robert swore. "Cersei, look at her. She's a child. What would you have me do, whip her through the streets? Damn it, children fight. It's over. No lasting harm was done. At least she has a fighting spirit, unlikely these lion cubs you're raising."

The queen was furious. "Joff will carry those scars for the rest of his life."

Robert Baratheon looked at his eldest son. "So he will. Perhaps they will teach him a lesson. Ned, see that your daughter is disciplined. I will do the same with my son."

"Gladly, Your Grace," Ned said with vast relief.
Robert started to walk away, but the queen was not done. "And what of the direwolf?" she called after him. "What of the beast that savaged your son?"

The king stopped, turned back, frowned. "I'd forgotten about the damned wolf."

This earned a victorious smirk from Joanna, who didn't want anything else but justice for the savage attack on her other half.

Ned could see Arya tense in Jory's arms. Jory spoke up quickly. "We found no trace of the direwolf, Your Grace."

Robert did not look unhappy. "No? So be it."

The queen raised her voice. "A hundred golden dragons to the man who brings me its skin!"

"A costly pelt," Robert grumbled. "I want no part of this, woman. You can damn well buy your furs with Lannister gold."

The queen regarded him coolly. "I had not thought you so niggardly. The king I'd thought to wed would have laid a wolfskin across my bed before the sun went down."

Robert's face darkened with anger. "That would be a fine trick, without a wolf."

"We have a wolf," Cersei Lannister said. Her voice was very quiet, but her green eyes shone with triumph.

It took them all a moment to comprehend her words, but when they did, the king shrugged irritably. "As you will. Have Ser Ilyn see to it."

"Robert, you cannot mean this," Ned protested.

The king was in no mood for more argument. "Enough, Ned, I will hear no more. A direwolf is a savage beast. Sooner or later it would have turned on your girl the same way the other did on my son. Get her a dog, she'll be happier for it."

The twins glanced at each other, their green eyes shining with emotion. Joffrey's piercing with victory, Joanna's ripe with relief.
Chapter 7

Joanna both loved tourney's and hated them at the same time. She loved the idea of them, her uncle had taught her how to fight and joust away from the prying eyes of her mother. After an 8 year old Joana had expressed her annoyance that Joffrey was allowed to fight but she wasn't, Jaime took it upon himself to teach his favourite niece how to handle a sword. She was a natural and soon she surpassed Joffrey in ability, unbeknown to everyone except her teacher.

She loved watching others fight, she could analyse their techniques and practice them with Uncle Jaime. However it also made her jealous seeing others fight whilst she just sat there looking pretty.

In the end it came down to four; the Hound and his monstrous brother Gregor, Jaime Lannister the Kingslayer, Joanna's favourite to win, and Ser Loras Tyrell, the youth they called the Knight of Flowers.

Ser Loras was the youngest son of Mace Tyrell, the Lord of Highgarden and Warden of the South. At sixteen, he was the youngest rider on the field, yet he had unhorsed three knights of the Kingsguard that morning in his first three jousts. Joanna imagined that if her heart wasn't already Joffrey's she would be quite taken with the young knight. His plate was intricately fashioned and enamelled as a bouquet of a thousand different flowers, and his snow-white stallion was draped in a blanket of red and white roses. After each victory, Ser Loras would remove his helm and ride slowly round the fence, and finally pluck a single white rose from the blanket and toss it to some fair maiden in the crowd.

His last match of the day was against the younger Royce. Ser Robar's ancestral runes proved small protection as Ser Loras split his shield and drove him from his saddle to crash with an awful clangor in the dirt. Robar lay moaning as the victor made his circuit of the field. Finally they called for a litter and carried him off to his tent, dazed and unmoving. Ser Loras rode round to the seating area, pulling a single rose from his blanket and stopping in front of the Royal family. Much to Joanna's surprise he stopped in front of her, his armour shimmering in the sunlight.

To the other maidens he had given white roses, but the one he plucked for her was red. "Sweet lady," he said, "no victory is half so beautiful as you."

Joanna sat stunned at the open affection. A few knights had shown her attention before, usually followed by a quick exit after Joffrey talked to them. However Joanna had spoken to Ser Loras before and she knew that he was one of the suitors that the King was considering. His hair was a mass of lazy brown curls, his eyes like liquid gold. She inhaled the sweet fragrance of the rose and sat clutching it long after Ser Loras had ridden off. Quickly glancing to the side Joanna was not surprised to see a look of immense hatred and anger across her brothers face. Loras was a Tyrell, which meant that he was unique in power. His sister was married to her Uncle Renly and Joffrey couldn't threaten him without there being serious consequences. But Joanna on the other hand, Joffrey could get angry at. His love for her didn't dent his possessive jealousy.

After the tourney Joanna excused herself from her family and went in search of Ser Loras to thank him for his favour. She may be completely dedicated to Joffrey but she did appreciate a handsome man when she saw one.

Someone grabbed her arm and pulled her into a tent aggressively, Joanna almost stumbling over her own feet. She barely had time to register that it was her brother before he pushed his lips against hers.
The shock almost caused her to struggle but as Joffrey's hands wandered south her resistance vanished. Joffrey's hands firmly grasped her hips and kept her from pulling away. Though it had been weeks since he had been this attentive so she wasn't going to complain.

"I don't want you… talking to the Tyrell. Even if… the rumours about his preferences… for men… are true then I don't want… him anywhere near you. You are… mine… and until fathers forces you… to marry I won't… share you." Joffrey mumbled between kisses.

Normally Joanna would make a witty and rebellious comment which she knew would annoy Joffrey. But Loras was one of the only suitors who Joanna knew would be a good match. She was fairly certain that he would rather be having a relationship with Uncle Renly but as long as they produced one son then they could both ignore each other.

"Loras is nice, Joffrey. Besides, he prefers men, so if we have an heir then we could both pursue other romantic interests. Which means I can still be with you." Joanna explained, stroking her brother's face lovingly.

"If you think I am happy with this then you are mistaken. If your future husband so much as glances at another person, male or female, then I will not hesitate to cut him with his own sword from balls to brain." Joffrey threatened menacingly, his eyes glowing with anger.

Joanna pulled away from her brother, opening the tent curtain. "We better go before anyone becomes suspicious."

Joffrey left the tent and a few moments later Joanna joined him. She barely made it three paces when a voice stopped her.

"Does anyone know about this?"

Joanna spun round to see Ned Stark standing at the edge of the tent, having heard everything that happened in the tent.

Words failed Joanna as she stared helplessly. Her heart raced as her brain struggled to process the situation. She had never truly imagine what would happen if they were ever caught, but she knew it wouldn't be good.

"I can't begin to understand your feelings but this must stop. End this thing you have with your brother and I won't report this atrocity to your father." The Hand of the King said without blinking, his grey eyes staring into her soul unflinchingly.

"Yes Lord Stark." Princess Joanna Baratheon lied. She may be a Baratheon but she was also a Lannister. Ned Stark had just angered a lioness and he was going to hear her roar.
SANSA

He wouldn't send Ser Loras," Sansa told Jeyne Poole and Princes Joanna that night as they shared a cold supper by lamplight. "I think it was because of his leg."

Lord Eddard had taken his supper in his bedchamber with Alyn, Harwin, and Vayon Poole, the better to rest his broken leg, and Septa Mordane had complained of sore feet after standing in the gallery all day. Arya was supposed to join them, but she was late coming back from her dancing lesson. The King had suggested that Joanna dine with them so that the princess and Sansa would become closer if they would one day become good-sisters.

"His leg?" Jeyne said uncertainly. She was a pretty, dark-haired girl of Sansa's own age. "Did Ser Loras hurt his leg?"

"Not his leg," Sansa said, nibbling delicately at a chicken leg. "Father's leg, silly. It hurts him ever so much, it makes him cross. Otherwise I'm certain he would have sent Ser Loras."

"Well the only person to blame for the pain is himself. He should not have provoked Jaime unnecessarily." Joanna smugly stated, picking delicately at her food.

Sansa was unsure whether to defend her father and risk upsetting the princess so she just meekly nodded.

Her father's decision still bewildered her. When the Knight of Flowers had spoken up, she'd been sure she was about to see one of Old Nan's stories come to life. Ser Gregor was the monster and Ser Loras the true hero who would slay him. He even looked a true hero, so slim and beautiful, with golden roses around his slender waist and his rich brown hair tumbling down into his eyes. And then Father had refused him! It had upset her more than she could tell. She had said as much to Septa Mordane as they descended the stairs from the gallery, but the septa had only told her it was not her place to question her lord father's decisions.

That was when Lord Baelish had said, "Oh, I don't know, Septa. Some of her lord father's decisions could do with a bit of questioning. The young lady is as wise as she is lovely." He made a sweeping bow to Sansa, so deep she was not quite sure if she was being complimented or mocked.

Septa Mordane had been very upset to realize that Lord Baelish had overheard them. "The girl was just talking, my lord," she'd said. "Foolish chatter. She meant nothing by the comment."

Lord Baelish stroked his little pointed beard and said, "Nothing? Tell me, child, why would you have sent Ser Loras?"

Sansa had no choice but to explain about heroes and monsters. The king's councillor smiled. "Well, those are not the reasons I'd have given, but . . . " He had touched her cheek, his thumb lightly tracing the line of a cheekbone. "Life is not a song, sweetling. You may learn that one day to your sorrow."

Sansa did not feel like telling all that to Jeyne and Joanna, who she barely knew, however; it made her uneasy just to think back on it.

"Ser Ilyn's the King's Justice, not Ser Loras," Jeyne said. "Lord Eddard should have sent him."
Sansa shuddered. Every time she looked at Ser Ilyn Payne, she shivered. He made her feel as though something dead were slithering over her naked skin. "Ser Ilyn's almost like a second monster. I'm glad Father didn't pick him."

Joanna smirked and stared Sansa right in the face, "the beast attacked Joffrey unprovoked, it was only fair that one of the monsters should be killed. It isn't as if they have emotions."

Sansa was unsure whether she liked the princess or not. She seemed very protective of Joffrey, almost unnaturally so.

"Ser Loras certainly took a liking to you, your highness, at the tourney. You are very lucky. Ser Loras is a very handsome man." Jeyne commented, smiling at the blonde girl politely."Lord Beric is as much a hero as Ser Loras. He's ever so brave and gallant."

"I suppose," Sansa said doubtfully. Beric Dondarrion was handsome enough, but he was awfully old, almost twenty-two; the Knight of Flowers would have been much better. Of course, Jeyne had been in love with Lord Beric ever since she had first glimpsed him in the lists. Sansa thought she was being silly; Jeyne was only a steward's daughter, after all, and no matter how much she mooned after him, Lord Beric would never look at someone so far beneath him, even if she hadn't been half his age.

It would have been unkind to say so, however, so Sansa took a sip of milk and changed the subject. "I had a dream that Joffrey would be the one to take the white hart," she said. It had been more of a wish, actually, but it sounded better to call it a dream. Everyone knew that dreams were prophetic. White harts were supposed to be very rare and magical, and in her heart she knew her gallant prince was worthier than his drunken father.

"A dream? Truly? Did Prince Joffrey just go up to it and touch it with his bare hand and do it no harm?"

"No," Sansa said. "He shot it with a golden arrow and brought it back for me." In the songs, the knights never killed magical beasts, they just went up to them and touched them and did them no harm, but she knew Joffrey liked hunting, especially the killing part. Only animals, though. Sansa was certain her prince had no part in murdering Jory and those other poor men; that had been his wicked uncle, the Kingslayer. She knew her father was still angry about that, but it wasn't fair to blame Joff. That would be like blaming her for something that Arya had done.

Sansa noted that the princess hadn't spoken at all whilst they were discussing her twin. Instead Joanna had been glaring at her food, stabbing it brutally with her fork whilst muttering.

Jeyne smiled at the princess, "wouldn't it be wonderful when Sansa married the prince. You two will be sisters."

"How lovely." Joanna mumbled, smiling half-heartedly as she avoided looking at both girls.

"Joffrey is very handsome, I can't imagine anything better than marrying him. I hope that any daughters we will have will be as beautiful as you, Princess Joanna."

Joanna looked physically sick as Sansa discussed her future marriage. As Sansa and Jeyne laughed and joked with each other the concept that the boy she loved was going to marry this dim-witted little girl was becoming all too real. She had told herself many times before that her and Joffrey would never had a proper future as long as the King was alive and they had to marry other people. But Joanna couldn't help but hate Sansa intensely as the silly Northerner had no idea of the pain she was causing her and that she was quite literally destroying any chance of happiness she had.
"Are you alright, your highness?" Sansa asked her, placing a hand on Joanna's lap before immediately removing it following a cold glance.

The princess composed herself before standing up. "I must excuse myself, ladies."

Quickly she stormed out of room and immediately met a large force. Looking up she saw the face of her uncle Jaime. Before she could stop herself she burst into tears, the composed façade disintegrating within seconds.

Without Joanna having to explain herself Jaime drew her into a hug, whispering that there was nothing to cry about.

She buried her head of golden curls into her uncles chest, allowing the tears to stream uncontrolled. Jaime started stroking her back, holding her.

"Tell me who made you cry and I will bring you their head, little lion." Jaime reassured her, being completely truthful. Joanna was the only one of his children who truly felt like his and he would do anything to make her happy.

"Can I ask you something?" Joanna sniffed, mumbling into his chest.

"Anything, little lion."

"Have you ever loved anyone? Someone that you know you can't be with but the thought of someone else spending the rest of their life with them makes you heart break into a million pieces." Her heart poured out to the man she didn't realise was her father.

Jaime looked at his daughter and for once didn't see a girl who was free but saw a caged lioness, who was chained to a life that she didn't want. He wasn't certain about who she was talking about but he had a strong suspicion and it made his heart break knowing that Joanna and her love were even more doomed than he and Cersei were.

He didn't answer the question and silently led Joanna back to her chambers where he sat in her room, stroking her mane of gold until she fell asleep.
EDDARD

How long he waited in the quiet of the godswood, he could not say. It was peaceful here. The thick walls shut out the clamor of the castle, and he could hear birds singing, the murmur of crickets, leaves rustling in a gentle wind. The heart tree was an oak, brown and faceless, yet Ned Stark still felt the presence of his gods. His leg did not seem to hurt so much. He spent some time thinking about his brief talk with the princess. He had known that the twins were close but hadn't suspected anything romantic however what he overheard had confirmed it. From what he heard Joffrey wanted Joanna all for himself and was deeply unhappy when Joanna talked about marrying. For that he was glad. As long as their relationship didn't progress any further he didn't feel the need to tell Robert. He could keep their secret if they did as Joanna said and married though it did make him worry about Sansa's happiness. Joffrey seemed to make his daughter happy and in front of her the prince seemed to care about her somewhat but he didn't want her cursed to a marriage where heer husband was pining after another. He didn't want anyone to suffer that but at the same time he didn't want to be the one to break the news to her just yet.

She came to him at sunset, as the clouds reddened above the walls and towers. She came alone, as he had bid her. For once she was dressed simply, in leather boots and hunting greens. When she drew back the hood of her brown cloak, he saw the bruise where the king had struck her. The angry plum color had faded to yellow, and the swelling was down, but there was no mistaking it for anything but what it was.

"Why here?" Cersei Lannister asked as she stood over him.

"So the gods can see."

She sat beside him on the grass. Her every move was graceful. Her curling blond hair moved in the wind, and her eyes were green as the leaves of summer. It had been a long time since Ned Stark had seen her beauty, but he saw it now. "I know the truth Jon Arryn died for," he told her.

"Do you?" The queen watched his face, wary as a cat. "Is that why you called me here, Lord Stark? To pose me riddles? Or is it your intent to seize me, as your wife seized my brother?"

"If you truly believed that, you would never have come." Ned touched her cheek gently. "Has he done this before?"

"Once or twice." She shied away from his hand. "Never on the face before. Jaime would have killed him, even if it meant his own life." Cersei looked at him defiantly. "My brother is worth a hundred of your friend."

"Your brother?" Ned said. "Or your lover?"

"Both." She did not flinch from the truth. "Since we were children together. And why not? The Targaryens wed brother to sister for three hundred years, to keep the bloodlines pure. And Jaime and I are more than brother and sister. We are one person in two bodies. We shared a womb together. He came into this world holding my foot, our old maester said. When he is in me, I feel . . . whole." The ghost of a smile flitted over her lips. He was instantly reminded of Joanna both in words and emotion.

"My son Bran . . ."
To her credit, Cersei did not look away. "He saw us. You love your children, do you not?"

Robert had asked him the very same question, the morning of the melee. He gave her the same answer. "With all my heart."

"No less do I love mine."

Ned thought, If it came to that, the life of some child I did not know, against Robb and Sansa and Arya and Bran and Rickon, what would I do? Even more so, what would Catelyn do, if it were Jon's life, against the children of her body? He did not know. He prayed he never would.

"All four are Jaime's," he said. It was not a question.

"Thank the gods."

The seed is strong, Jon Arryn had cried on his deathbed, and so it was. All those bastards, all with hair as black as night. Grand Maester Malleon recorded the last mating between stag and lion, some ninety years ago, when Tya Lannister wed Gowen Baratheon, third son of the reigning lord. Their only issue, an unnamed boy described in Malleon's tome as a large and lusty lad born with a full head of black hair, died in infancy. Thirty years before that a male Lannister had taken a Baratheon maid to wife. She had given him three daughters and a son, each black-haired. No matter how far back Ned searched in the brittle yellowed pages, always he found the gold yielding before the coal.

"A dozen years," Ned said. "How is it that you have had no children by the king?"

She lifted her head, defiant. "Your Robert got me with child once," she said, her voice thick with contempt. "My brother found a woman to cleanse me. He never knew. If truth be told, I can scarcely bear for him to touch me, and I have not let him inside me for years. I know other ways to pleasure him, when he leaves his whores long enough to stagger up to my bedchamber. Whatever we do, the king is usually so drunk that he's forgotten it all by the next morning."

How could they have all been so blind? The truth was there in front of them all the time, written on the children's faces. All four couldn't be anything but all Lannister, and Joanna resembled her true father so much that Ned felt sick for not realising it earlier. "I remember Robert as he was the day he took the throne, every inch a king," he said quietly. "A thousand other women might have loved him with all their hearts. What did he do to make you hate him so?"

Her eyes burned, green fire in the dusk, like the lioness that was her sigil. "The night of our wedding feast, the first time we shared a bed, he called me by your sister's name. He was on top of me, in me, stinking of wine, and he whispered Lyanna."

Ned Stark thought of pale blue roses, and for a moment he wanted to weep. "I do not know which of you I pity most."

The queen seemed amused by that. "Save your pity for yourself, Lord Stark. I want none of it."

"You know what I must do."

"Must?" She put her hand on his good leg, just above the knee. "A true man does what he will, not what he must." Her fingers brushed lightly against his thigh, the gentlest of promises. "The realm needs a strong Hand. Joff will not come of age for years. No one wants war again, least of all me."

Her hand touched his face, his hair. "If friends can turn to enemies, enemies can become friends. Your wife is a thousand leagues away, and my brother has fled. Be kind to me, Ned. I swear to you,
"You shall never regret it."

"Did you make the same offer to Jon Arryn?"

She slapped him.

"I shall wear that as a badge of honor," Ned said dryly.

"Honor," she spat. "How dare you play the noble lord with me! What do you take me for? You've a bastard of your own, I've seen him. Who was the mother, I wonder? Some Dornish peasant you raped while her holdfast burned? A whore? Or was it the grieving sister, the Lady Ashara? She threw herself into the sea, I'm told. Why was that? For the brother you slew, or the child you stole? Tell me, my honorable Lord Eddard, how are you any different from Robert, or me, or Jaime?"

"For a start," said Ned, "I do not kill children. You would do well to listen, my lady. I shall say this only once. When the king returns from his hunt, I intend to lay the truth before him. You must be gone by then. You and your children, all four, and not to Casterly Rock. If I were you, I should take ship for the Free Cities, or even farther, to the Summer Isles or the Port of Ibben. As far as the winds blow."

"Exile," she said. "A bitter cup to drink from."

"A sweeter cup than your father served Rhaegar's children," Ned said, "and kinder than you deserve. Your father and your brothers would do well to go with you. Lord Tywin's gold will buy you comfort and hire swords to keep you safe. You shall need them. I promise you, no matter where you flee, Robert's wrath will follow you, to the back of beyond if need be."

The queen stood. "And what of my wrath, Lord Stark?" she asked softly. Her eyes searched his face. "You should have taken the realm for yourself. It was there for the taking. Jaime told me how you found him on the Iron Throne the day King's Landing fell, and made him yield it up. That was your moment. All you needed to do was climb those steps, and sit. Such a sad mistake."

"I have made more mistakes than you can possibly imagine," Ned said, "but that was not one of them."

"Oh, but it was, my lord," Cersei insisted. "When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground."

"Are you aware of what your eldest two are doing?" Ned queried before Cersei had the chance to leave.

The queen spun round, confusion written plainly across her face. "What are you talking about?"

"It seems Joanna and Joffrey take after you and Jaime in more than one way." Ned explained, watching as Cersei's face turned to one of shock then understanding.

"It should not be a crime to love, Lord Stark."

She turned up her hood to hide her swollen face and left him there in the dark beneath the oak, amidst the quiet of the godswood, under a blue-black sky. The stars were coming out.
Chapter 10

JOANNA

The royal steward led Lord Stark in. "All hail His Grace, Joffrey of the Houses Baratheon and Lannister, the First of his Name, King of the Andals and the Rhoynar and the First Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms and Protector of the Realm," he sang out.

Joanna was both happy and saddened by her father's death. Whilst it meant that Joff was King and didn't have to marry her off it also meant that her father was dead. She may not have been close to Robert Baratheon she still spent the day crying. Half of everything she was had died, and it was then that she had realised that she had always prided herself on her Lannister heritage so much that she had all but ignored the Baratheon side of her. Just because she didn't look like her father didn't mean that that side of her didn't exist, she was as much Baratheon as Lannister and it was then that she understood the King whenever she looked at her sadly.

It was a long walk to the far end of the hall, where Joffrey waited atop the Iron Throne. Supported by Littlefinger, Ned Stark slowly limped and hopped towards her twin. The others followed.

Five knights of the Kingsguard—all but Ser Jaime and Ser Barristan—were arrayed in a crescent around the base of the throne. They were in full armor, enameled steel from helm to heel, long pale cloaks over their shoulders, shining white shields strapped to their left arms. Cersei Lannister and her two younger children stood behind Ser Boros and Ser Meryn. Her mother wore a gown of sea-green silk, trimmed with Myrish lace as pale as foam. On her finger was a golden ring with an emerald the size of a pigeon's egg, on her head a matching tiara. Joanna on the otherhand was right by Joffrey's side, her hand on the arm of Throne, holding her brothers hand.

Prince Joffrey sat amidst the barbs and spikes in a cloth-of-gold doublet and a red satin cape. Sandor Clegane was stationed at the foot of the throne's steep narrow stair. He wore mail and soot-grey plate and his snarling dog's-head helm.

Behind the throne, twenty Lannister guardsmen waited with longswords hanging from their belts. Crimson cloaks draped their shoulders and steel lions crested their helms. But Littlefinger had kept his promise; all along the walls, in front of Robert's tapestries with their scenes of hunt and battle, the gold-cloaked ranks of the City Watch stood stiffly to attention, each man's hand clasped around the haft of an eight-foot-long spear tipped in black iron. They outnumbered the Lannisters five to one.

Ned's leg was a blaze of pain by the time he stopped. He kept a hand on Littlefinger's shoulder to help support his weight.

Joffrey stood. His red satin cape was patterned in gold thread; fifty roaring lions to one side, fifty prancing stags to the other. "I command the council to make all the necessary arrangements for my coronation," the boy proclaimed. "I wish to be crowned within the fortnight. Today I shall accept oaths of fealty from my loyal councillors."

Joanna smiled at her brother's confidence, the crown would lose power within the year with a weak ruler and Joffrey was many things but weak was not one of them.

Ned produced a letter letter. "Lord Varys, be so kind as to show this to my lady of Lannister."

The eunuch carried the letter to Cersei. The queen glanced at the words. "Protector of the Realm,"
she read. "Is this meant to be your shield, my lord? A piece of paper?" She ripped the letter in half, ripped the halves in quarters, and let the pieces flutter to the floor. Her actions surprised Joanna as she knew that her mother did not grieve her husband she thought she would at least respect his wishes.

"Those were the king's words," Ser Barristan said, shocked.

"We have a new king now," Cersei Lannister replied. "Lord Eddard, when last we spoke, you gave me some counsel. Allow me to return the courtesy. Bend the knee, my lord. Bend the knee and swear fealty to my son, and we shall allow you to step down as Hand and live out your days in the grey waste you call home."

Joanna knew that Lord Stark would not serve Joffrey easily she would never have anticipated his following words.

"Would that I could," Ned said grimly. If she was so determined to force the issue here and now, she left him no choice. "Your son has no claim to the throne he sits. Lord Stannis is Robert's true heir."

"What?" Joanna stammered, confused. She genuinely had no idea what Eddard Stark was talking about. Joffrey was Roberts son and therefore first in line of succession. Just because Lord Stark didn't have much love for her twin didn't mean that he got to choose who ruled.

"Liar!" Joffrey screamed, his face reddening.

"Mother, what does he mean?" Princess Myrcella asked the queen plaintively. "Isn't Joff the king now?"

"You condemn yourself with your own mouth, Lord Stark," said Cersei Lannister. "Ser Barristan, seize this traitor."

Joanna was suddenly seized with panic. If he was imprisoned and was looking for reasons to get Joffrey off the throne then he could easily reveal their relationship and whilst it wouldn't be reason for him not to be King it would certainly make matters harder.

The Lord Commander of the Kingsguard hesitated. In the blink of an eye he was surrounded by Stark guardsmen, bare steel in their mailed fists.

"And now the treason moves from words to deeds," Cersei said. "Do you think Ser Barristan stands alone, my lord?" With an ominous rasp of metal on metal, the Hound drew his longsword. The knights of the Kingsguard and twenty Lannister guardsmen in crimson cloaks moved to support him.

"Kill him!" the boy king screamed down from the Iron Throne. "Kill all of them, I command it!"

This was slightly extreme, Joanna knew, but Joff was not just her twin, he was also the King, and that meant supporting his actions. So Joanna couldn't do anything but watch.

"You leave me no choice," Ned told Cersei Lannister. He called out to Janos Slynt. "Commander, take the queen and her children into custody. Do them no harm, but escort them back to the royal apartments and keep them there, under guard."

"Men of the Watch!" Janos Slynt shouted, donning his helm. A hundred gold cloaks leveled their spears and closed.
"I want no bloodshed," Ned told the queen. "Tell your men to lay down their swords, and no one need—"

With a single sharp thrust, the nearest gold cloak drove his spear into Tomard's back. Fat Tom's blade dropped from nerveless fingers as the wet red point burst out through his ribs, piercing leather and mail. He was dead before his sword hit the floor.

Myrcella shouted and Joanna grabbed her and Tommen and hugged them, hiding their faces from the blood.

Ned's shout came far too late. Janos Slynt himself slashed open Varly's throat. Cayn whirled, steel flashing, drove back the nearest spearman with a flurry of blows; for an instant it looked as though he might cut his way free. Then the Hound was on him. Sandor Clegane's first cut took off Cayn's sword hand at the wrist; his second drove him to his knees and opened him from shoulder to breastbone.

As his men died around him, Littlefinger slid Ned's dagger from its sheath and shoved it up under his chin. His smile was apologetic. "I did warn you not to trust me, you know."

She felt like crying but held it in. It would do nothing except scare Cella and Tommen. Joanna knew that Lord Stark had little love for her family but she didn't expect him to be a traitor. But at the same time she was confident in her family. She knew that what he was saying was a lie and that Joffrey was the true King and anyone who claimed otherwise was a traitor. Despite this she worried about what Stark would say.

It was then that Joanna made a promise to herself: that she would do anything to protect her family, Joffrey, mother, Myrcella, Tommen and Uncle Jaime and the rest. Anyone that wasn't blood couldn't be trusted.
Chapter 11

It was late at night when Joanna was called to her brothers chambers. Since their father's death Joanna had not once stayed in Joffrey's chambers. There was something wrong about sleeping in the bed that her father was sleeping in only a few weeks prior. Luckily Joffrey hadn't called for her since, his kingly duties taking up the majority of his time.

Now that Joffrey was King their relationship had only become more complicated. Half the time Joanna couldn't stand to be apart from him but whenever Joffrey mentioned his betrothal to Sansa Stark Joanna didn't want anything else but to slap him.

"It seems that I've been neglecting you lately. I hope you haven't been feeling lonely." Joffrey said, closing the door behind her.

The room was candlelit and placed on an ornate table was a jug of wine and two goblets. A hand on her back guided her to the table.

"Wine?" Joff asked, pouring a goblet full of the red liquid.

Joanna nodded and the goblet was passed to her before her brother poured himself a glass. Determined to forget everything concerning Ned Stark and his traitorous family she downed the goblet in one gulp. Another one was poured and another and before long her mind started to become cloudy. Joffrey placed a hand on her thigh. Too tipsy to complain Joanna giggled, her inhibitions lowering.

"I love you Joff." Joanna stumbled as she stood up. Joffrey, who hadn't touched his wine caught her and spun her to face him.

He wrapped his arms round her waist and pulled her closer. "You are mine."

Joffrey pressed his lips to hers and found little resistance. They hadn't been this intimate since the tourney when Lord Stark had seen them but as their tongues intertwined and his hands went lower any doubt vanished from her mind.

He slowly manoeuvred them to the bed where Joanna was lowered on to. Joffrey's hands gently moved the skirt of Joanna's dress up.

"We can't do this... I-" Joanna's complaints were quickly cut off as the kiss continued. Joanna knew that they couldn't do this but her arguments were continuously ignored. The wine had clouded her judgement and the side of her brain that protested was being oppressed by the alcohol and her twin.

Joffrey's hands captured his sister's face. "Dear sister, I am the King. That means that you are now my subject and you must do what I say. I've waited too long for this."

"But if I am too marry..." Joanna protested, trying to move from beneath her twin's weight but to no success.

"As long as I am King then you shall belong to no one but me."

Joanna had no choice but to give in.

She woke tangled in the sheets, her dress lying on the floor. Joanna felt dampness between her legs.
and her hand came back red with blood. Memories of the previous night came back to her and the guilt washed over her like a tidal wave. That was not how she planned the night going, but from the way Joffrey had been acting he had planned it all along. He knew that she wanted to wait until she married and to have her first be her husband. For years Joffrey had joked about not letting that happen but she hadn't thought he was serious.

Yes, she loved Joffrey and the thought of being with him couldn't make her happier. However whenever she imagined her future she was marrying someone else, having someone else's baby and Joffrey had to deal with it. Now her entire future was ruined. No one would want to marry her now, she had no more value than a common whore. Joffrey had taken everything from her. What did he expect to happen? Did Joffrey just expect her to remain unmarried for the rest of her days as nothing more than his mistress? Joanna wanted children, lots and lots of children. She didn't care if they were Joffrey's or another mans. As long as she was married to a respectable husband with an heir she could only then have intimate relations with him.

Tears welling up in her eyes she sat up, using the sheets to cover herself despite being alone in the room. Joff would've already left to sort out Kingly matters whilst she sat there, deflowered in his rooms. Glancing at the sheet she let out a breath she didn't even know she was holding when there was not more than a speck of blood on the bed. Climbing out of bed she walked over to the full-length mirror.

Hanging on the corner of the mirror was a dress, a crimson gown with diamonds sewn into the skirt and lace decorating the bodice. The dress was beautiful and was exactly her fit but it left an ill feeling in Joanna's stomach. If it had been given to her any other day she would be ecstatic and only make her love for Joffrey grow but now it just seemed like payment.

But she could pretend it never happened and lie. She could put on a façade and pretend to still be the perfect daughter and convince her mother to arrange a marriage. Joffrey got what he wanted so now she would do the same.

After all, a Lannister always pays their debts.
Chapter 12

JOANNA

A herald's voice rang out. "All hail His Grace, Joffrey of the Houses Baratheon and Lannister, the First of his Name, King of the Andals, the Rhoynar, and the First Men, and Lord of the Seven Kingdoms. All hail his lady mother, Cersei of House Lannister, Queen Regent, Light of the West, and Protector of the Realm."

Ser Barristan Selmy, resplendent in white plate, led them in. Ser Arys Oakheart escorted the queen, while Ser Boros Blount walked beside Joffrey, so six of the Kingsguard were now in the hall, all the White Swords save Jaime Lannister alone. She had not spoken to him about last night yet and quite frankly Joanna didn't want to. In a perfect world she could just pretend that it never happened but she knew that Joffrey was likely to hold it over her head for a long time. Joff wore plush black velvets slashed with crimson, a shimmering cloth-of-gold cape with a high collar, and on his head a golden crown crusted with rubies and black diamonds.

When Joffrey turned to look out over the hall, his eyes purposely avoided hers, instead meeting Sansa's. He smiled, seated himself, and spoke. "It is a king's duty to punish the disloyal and reward those who are true. Grand Maester Pycelle, I command you to read my decrees."

Despite Joanna's anger towards Joffrey she couldn't help but be happy at the control he had over everyone. To her confidence was one of Joffrey's best features, a weak man was barely a man at all.

Pycelle pushed himself to his feet. He was clad in a magnificent robe of thick red velvet, with an ermine collar and shiny gold fastenings. From a drooping sleeve, heavy with gilded scrollwork, he drew a parchment, unrolled it, and began to read a long list of names, commanding each in the name of king and council to present themselves and swear their fealty to Joffrey. Failing that, they would be adjudged traitors, their lands and titles forfeit to the throne.

Joanna was both happy and worried that Lord Stark was a traitor, if he was guilty then he wouldn't be able to tell anyone about Joff and her and his credibility was ruined but unfortunately it also meant that people would actually be listening when he spoke.

The names he read included those who were family, blood, but still outrageously thought that Joffrey had no right on the throne: Lord Stannis Baratheon, his lady wife, his daughter. Lord Renly Baratheon. Both Lord Royces and their sons. Ser Loras Tyrell. Lord Mace Tyrell, his brothers, uncles, sons. The red priest, Thoros of Myr. Lord Beric Dondarrion. Lady Lysa Arryn and her son, the little Lord Robert. Lord Hoster Tully, his brother Ser Brynden, his son Ser Edmure. Lord Jason Mallister. Lord Bryce Caron of the Marches. Lord Tytos Blackwood. Lord Walder Frey and his heir Ser Stevron. Lord Karyl Vance. Lord Jonos Bracken. Lady Sheila Whent. Doran Martell, Prince of Dorne, and all his sons.

Some of these names meant absolutely nothing to Joanna but the sheer number of names made her questions what kind of lies Eddard Stark must have told them to make them believe that her and her siblings were bastards.

And at the end, near last, came the names Joanna was waiting to hear. Lady Catelyn Stark. Robb Stark. Brandon Stark, Rickon Stark, Arya Stark. Joanna heard a gasp come from Sansa Stark but she refused to look at the face of the girl who wanted to marry her brother. She had hoped that Joffrey's betrothed would be ugly but sadly Sansa was pretty in a plain, Northern way.
Grand Maester Pycelle rolled up the list, tucked it up his left sleeve, and pulled another parchment from his right. He cleared his throat and resumed. "In the place of the traitor Eddard Stark, it is the wish of His Grace that Tywin Lannister, Lord of Casterly Rock and Warden of the West, take up the office of Hand of the King, to speak with his voice, lead his armies against his enemies, and carry out his royal will. So the king has decreed. The small council consents."

Joanna knew that both her and Joff weren't close to their grandfather but he was extremely smart and she couldn't think of anyone better to be the new Hand.

"In the place of the traitor Stannis Baratheon, it is the wish of His Grace that his lady mother, the Queen Regent Cersei Lannister, who has ever been his staunchest support, be seated upon his small council, that she may help him rule wisely and with justice. So the king has decreed. The small council consents."

Eventually it was the Starks turn to testify.

"The Lady Sansa, of House Stark," the herald cried.

The auburn-haired girl stopped under the throne, at the spot where Ser Barristan's white cloak lay puddled on the floor beside his helm and breastplate. "Do you have some business for king and council, Sansa?" the queen asked from the council table.

"I do." She knelt on the cloak, so as not to spoil her gown, and looked up at her prince on his fearsome black throne. "As it please Your Grace, I ask mercy for my father, Lord Eddard Stark, who was the Hand of the King." She had practiced the words a hundred times.

Joanna smirked, her father was a traitor and a liar who attempted to overthrow Joffrey, did she really think that he deserved mercy?

The queen sighed. "Sansa, you disappoint me. What did I tell you about traitor's blood?"

"Your father has committed grave and terrible crimes, my lady," Grand Maester Pycelle intoned.

"Ah, poor sad thing," sighed Varys. "She is only a babe, my lords, she does not know what she asks."

She obviously knows enough to try and steal Joffrey, Joanna thought angrily.

Sansa had eyes only for Joffrey. The king shifted on his seat, "Let her speak," he commanded. "I want to hear what she says."

Joanna was mere moments from complaining. Had Joffrey forgotten what had happened last night? They were each others firsts. That meant something. She knew Joffrey was going to marry but his fondness for Sansa was annoying to say the least.

"Thank you, Your Grace." Sansa smiled, a shy secret smile, just for him. He was listening. She knew he would and this only fuelled Joanna's hatred for the girl.

"Treason is a noxious weed," Pycelle declared solemnly. "It must be torn up, root and stem and seed, lest new traitors sprout from every roadside."

She nodded and placed a hand on Joffrey's shoulder, hoping he would agree.

"Do you deny your father's crime?" Lord Baelish asked.
"No, my lords." Sansa knew better than that. "I know he must be punished. All I ask is mercy. I know my lord father must regret what he did. He was King Robert's friend and he loved him, you all know he loved him. He never wanted to be Hand until the king asked him. They must have lied to him. Lord Renly or Lord Stannis or . . . or somebody, they must have lied, otherwise . . ."

Was the girl really that blind? Did she really not see that it was her father, Lord Stark, who was to blame for everything? It was him who had spread these lies and deceit to the others. If anything it was everyone but Lord Stark who should be spared.

King Joffrey leaned forward, hands grasping the arms of the throne. Broken sword points fanned out between his fingers. "He said I wasn't the king. Why did he say that?"

"His leg was broken," Sansa replied eagerly. "It hurt ever so much, Maester Pycelle was giving him milk of the poppy, and they say that milk of the poppy fills your head with clouds. Otherwise he would never have said it."

Varys said, "A child's faith . . . such sweet innocence . . . and yet, they say wisdom oft comes from the mouths of babes."

Would somebody just shut this eunuch's mouth, Joanna felt like shouting. One second he was defending Lord Stark the next he was condemning him.

"Treason is treason," Pycelle replied at once.

Joffrey rocked restlessly on the throne. "Mother?"

Cersei Lannister considered Sansa thoughtfully. "If Lord Eddard were to confess his crime," she said at last, "we would know he had repented his folly."

"But the damage has already been done!" Joanna commented, turning to her mother earnestly.

Joffrey pushed himself to his feet. "Do you have any more to say?" he asked Sansa.

"Only . . . that as you love me, you do me this kindness, my prince," Sansa said.

Her mother took her hand and it was only Cersei's grip that stopped Joanna from pouncing on Sansa.

King Joffrey looked her up and down. "Your sweet words have moved me," he said gallantly, nodding, as if to say all would be well. "I shall do as you ask . . . but first your father has to confess. He has to confess and say that I'm the king, or there will be no mercy for him."

"He will," Sansa said, heart soaring. "Oh, I know he will."

But Joanna knew it wouldn't be that easy.
Chapter 13

EDDARD

The straw on the floor stank of urine. There was no window, no bed, not even a slop bucket. He remembered walls of pale red stone festooned with patches of nitre, a grey door of splintered wood, four inches thick and studded with iron. He had seen them, briefly, a quick glimpse as they shoved him inside. Once the door had slammed shut, he had seen no more. The dark was absolute. He had as well been blind.

Or dead. Buried with his king. "Ah, Robert," he murmured as his groping hand touched a cold stone wall, his leg throbbing with every motion. He remembered the jest the king had shared in the crypts of Winterfell, as the Kings of Winter looked on with cold stone eyes. The king eats, Robert had said, and the Hand takes the shit. How he had laughed. Yet he had gotten it wrong. The king dies, Ned Stark thought, and the Hand is buried.

The dungeon was under the Red Keep, deeper than he dared imagine. He remembered the old stories about Maegor the Cruel, who murdered all the masons who laboured on his castle, so they might never reveal its secrets.

He damned them all: Littlefinger, Janos Slynt and his gold cloaks, the queen, the Kingslayer, Pycelle and Varys and Ser Barristan, even Lord Renly, Robert's own blood, who had run when he was needed most. Yet in the end he blamed himself. "Fool," he cried to the darkness, "thrice-damned blind fool."

Cersei Lannister's face seemed to float before him in the darkness. Her hair was full of sunlight, but there was mockery in her smile. "When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die," she whispered. Ned had played and lost, and his men had paid the price of his folly with their life's blood.

When he thought of his daughters, he would have wept gladly, but the tears would not come. Even now, he was a Stark of Winterfell, and his grief and his rage froze hard inside him.

When he kept very still, his leg did not hurt so much, so he did his best to lie unmoving. For how long he could not say. There was no sun and no moon. He could not see to mark the walls. Ned closed his eyes and opened them; it made no difference. He slept and woke and slept again. He did not know which was more painful, the waking or the sleeping. When he woke, there was nothing to do but think, and his waking thoughts were worse than nightmares. The thought of Cat was as painful as a bed of nettles. He wondered where she was, what she was doing. He wondered whether he would ever see her again.

Hours turned to days, or so it seemed. He could feel a dull ache in his shattered leg, an itch beneath the plaster. When he touched his thigh, the flesh was hot to his fingers. The only sound was his breathing. After a time, he began to talk aloud, just to hear a voice. He made plans to keep himself sane, built castles of hope in the dark. Robert's brothers were out in the world, raising armies at Dragonstone and Storm's End. Alyn and Harwin would return to King's Landing with the rest of his household guard once they had dealt with Ser Gregor. Catelyn would raise the north when the word reached her, and the lords of river and mountain and Vale would join her.

He found himself thinking of Robert more and more. He saw the king as he had been in the flower of his youth, tall and handsome, his great antlered helm on his head, his warhammer in hand, sitting...
his horse like a horned god. He heard his laughter in the dark, saw his eyes, blue and clear as mountain lakes. "Look at us, Ned," Robert said. "Gods, how did we come to this? You here, and me killed by a pig. We won a throne together . . ."

I failed you, Robert, Ned thought. He could not say the words. I lied to you, hid the truth. I let them kill you.

The door to his cell swung open and stood there in the dim candle light was Cersei.

"Lord Stark."


The princess didn't enter the cell but just stood there watching him cautiously but not pityingly.

"You can leave us." Joanna said turning to the guard. He seemed hesitant to leave her alone but a quick glare fixed the situation.

"I probably want to be here as much as you want to see me much I want to make sure we are both clear on our situation."

Ned queried, "situation?"

"Yes." She scoffed. "You keep what you saw a secret and I will advise Joffrey to make you join the Nights Watch. You just have to swear fealty to Joffrey and admit that you lied about-"

"No."

Joanna's mouth twitched in confusion. "What?" She thought this was a good deal. A better deal than a traitor and a liar deserved. He claimed he was honouring Robert but claiming that his true children were bastards was doing the exact opposite.

Ned stared the girl straight in the eye. "Joffrey is not the rightful King. Your real father is Ser Jaime. You and your siblings are bastards."

He watched her reaction carefully, watching the disbelief which quickly turned to anger.

"You're lying!" Joanna snapped, stepping forwards.

"You look like the Queen when you're angry. All four of you look like your mother and not at all like Robert Baratheon. In fact you look just like the Kingslayer. You act like him too and from what I've seen you and him are incredibly close. Doesn't that strike you as odd at all?"

Her face froze and in her emerald eyes was a anger that burnt so deeply and harshly he knew that she would gladly execute him right there herself.

"My uncle is a better man than you could ever hope to be. Whilst Robert Baratheon, my real father, practically ignored me since birth, Jaime actually cared for me. When my mother refused to let me learn how to fight he would. At night when everyone else slept we would sneak into the courtyard and he showed me how to use a sword and bow. He didn't care if I was a princess and a girl and whether or not it was proper for someone of my status. He saw a lonely little girl who need someone to fill that gap that was left in her heart. So how dare you criticise him when you idolised that fat drunken oaf who called himself the King. My uncle is a honest and caring man who took vows and unlike your best friend has the honour not to break them. So you dare lie to my face again and say such disgusting and slanderous things about him then it isn't my brother you should
be worrying about. I won't hesitate to kill you myself."

Ned saw the love she had in her eyes. It was different to the love she had for Joffrey. When she spoke of Joffrey she seemed to hover between love and hate but with Jaime he saw a pure, true love that Ned hadn't seen in a long time.

"Guard! Lock him up," She almost growled before storming off.

She may not have Baratheon blood, Ned thought, but she definitely had fury.
Joanna was surprised when her mother came to her chambers. They had barely spoken since Lord Stark's execution but to her mother's credit that was mostly Joanna's fault. She was worried what he had said to her mother before his death, hoping he hadn't mentioned Joanna's and Joffrey's relationship. Luckily even dead Ned didn't know the exact extent of their relationship, at the time of his death he didn't know that they had lost their virginity to each other.

"Joanna?" Her mother approached her, her eyes red and puffy. She had never seen her mother in this state before, this emotional wreck wasn't the composed Queen that Joanna had grown up with. The only time she had ever seen her mother cry was when Myrcella was 7 and decide to copy her and cliff jump on a visit to Casterley Rock. Myrcella was a weak swimmer and was unable to outswim the current. If it hadn't been for Uncle Jaime then she surely would've drowned.

"What's wrong, mother?" Joanna asked carefully, unsure how to approach this unfamiliar situation.

"It's Jaime…" Cersei began, sitting down beside her daughter and taking her hands in her own.

Joanna's heart immediately stopped as her mind raced with a thousand situations, all of which involved her uncle's demise. She didn't know what she would do if he was gone, he was the closest thing she had ever had to a father figure and she wasn't prepared to lose that.

"What's happened? Is he okay? Had he been killed?" Joanna questioned, her eyes welling up and the thought.

Shaking her head, Cersei replied. "Robb Stark has captured him. He is their prisoner."

Before Cersei had a chance to finish the sentence Joanna rushed out of the room, leaving her mother in her room. As she ran through the palace tears streamed down her face.

Joanna didn't hesitate to push servants and guards out of the way as she reached her brothers room. Two members of the Kings Guard stood by the door blocking her path.

"Let me in." She demanded, glaring at the knights.

"Your highness…" One of the guards hesitated, not moving from his station.

"I don't care who you are and how important you think you are. You will let me into this room right now to see my brother the king. I am a princess, my mother is the Queen, my father was the King. I'll die before I let a nobody like you stop me from doing something. I could have you executed right now if I wanted to so I advise you let me in this instant!" Joanna growled at the unsuspecting guard.

He immediately moved and Joanna stormed through the door.

"What are we going to do?" She asked Joffrey who was changing into his bed clothes.

He turned to her, his upper body naked. "About what, dear Joanna?"

"Don't patronise me Joffrey. What are we going to do to get Jaime back?"

Joffrey didn't even seem bothered about the current problem. She knew that Joffrey and Jaime
weren't close to say the least but she didn't expect him to be so nonchalant about his uncle's capture.

"Grandfather says that we can't give into the Starks demands." Joffrey explained, placing his hands onto her shoulders.

"Wait!" Joanna remarked angrily, shaking his hands off. "How long have you known?"

"Yesterday we discussed the terms. Robb Stark is demanding that we exchange Sansa for our uncle."

Joanna failed to see what the big issue was. "Then do it! Jaime is worth a hundred Sansa Stark's."

"No Joanna. We will not give into them. We've done nothing wrong, they are the traitors. We will look weak if agree."

"Joff." She held his hands, before kissing him, letting her lips linger on his for a moment before pulling away. "You know how much I care for Uncle Jaime. If you love me at all then you will do this for me. Get Jaime back and I won't complain about you marrying and I'll never marry anyone. I will be yours and yours alone till I die if you just do this."

He cradled her face in his hands, leant in close and kissed her cheek. "I am the King. You're never going to marry anyone anyway. I can do what I want."

It was as if her heart shattered into a million sharp fragments. Before he became King Joff would do whatever she said. It would never take more than a kiss to make him give in but since Ned Stark's execution he was beginning to ignore her wishes.

"Fine."

Pulling away from her brother she quickly and quietly left the room, returning not to her own room but to Sansa Stark's. If no one else was going to save Jaime, she was going to take matters into her own hands. If Jaime had taught her anything over the years it was stand up for those you love. If disobeying Joffrey was going to save him then it was a risk Joanna was very willing to take.

She had to pack light. After all it was a long ride to Robb Stark but she had company.
Sansa grimaced as a piece of mud flew past her face. She'd only been on the road for a few days but it seemed like forever. She was still trying to understand what exactly was going on in the princess's mind. Late one night she had just turned up at her room and dragged her on this journey. Not that she wasn't glad to be going home to her family it just seemed wrong. Joffrey and the Queen wouldn't like her leaving, even if she was going to be traded for the queen's brother.

"We should set up camp for the night soon. We're only a few hours from Harrenhall so tomorrow we're heading west." Joanna announced, slowing her horse down. Much to Sansa's surprise the princess had adapted very well to life on the road. Gone were the fancy red gowns and ornate jewellery and in its place were brown breeches and a green top. Despite the plainness of her clothes it was easy to tell that she wasn't a commoner. The way she held herself, the delicateness of her hands, her accent all screamed nobility. Sansa wasn't comfortable wearing men's clothes so had retained a sky blue dress that she hoped wouldn't dirty before she reached Riverrun. But next to Joanna she couldn't help but feel plain.

She knew the princess didn't like her, her cold stares and frigid words were evidence of that. But Sansa didn't understand what exactly she had done to offend her so badly. However they only had each other for company Joann was forced to interact.

Joanna pulled her horse's reins and steered off the path, heading into the darkening woods. The day before Sansa had suggested they stay at an inn but as they got nearer Robb Stark's camp Lannister gold meant less and less. One trader at the previous village refused to sell them a loaf of bread and for an instant she was worried that Joanna was going to draw her sword.

Soon they reach a small clearing with a number of trees that would offer some protection in case of rain. The princess unsaddled her horse and tied him to a tree, feeding him a carrot from her bag.

"I'll keep watch tonight." Joanna stated as she gathered the materials to light a fire. "We have a long ride tomorrow if we want to reach Riverrun the following evening."

Sansa argued. "But you kept watch last night… and the night before. You need to sleep."

Joanna gave her a pointed look. "I'm not going to let you keep watch. We would be dead if we were ambushed."

She decided to remain silent and just quickly and quietly help with the fire, being careful not to get in her way. Not long after they set up camp night fell and the only sources of light were the moon and the dwindling embers of their fire.

Despite her exhaustion Sansa was unable to sleep, something nagged at the back of her mind. She could dimly see Joanna leant against a tree, her curls giving her a golden halo in the dark.

"Joanna…" She timidly asked, "why do you hate me?"

Joanna couldn't help but slightly empathise with the girl. As much as she annoyed her it wasn't her fault that she didn't understand the love she and Joffrey have.

"I don't hate you." She lied.
Sansa replied sadly. "Please don't lie to me. I see the way you look at me. I'm sorry if I did something to offend you."

Sansa was beginning to understand how Joanna's mind worked. Like her brother and mother she wouldn't reveal anything personal unless their egos were stroked.

"It's just that I want to be a good wife to Joffrey one day and hope to be half the Lady you are." Sansa explained cautiously, watching Joanna's reaction.

Normally she would have expected that to work, but all Joanna did was stare sadly at the ground, her tear-filled emerald eyes reflecting off the dying fire.

"Do you love someone?" The stoic princess asked, turning to then young Stark, the younger girl caught off guard.

"I hope to love Joffrey when."

"No." She cut off. "I mean now. Is there someone you would do anything for? You would die for them. You would kill for them."

She had to pause before she answered. "I don't think so."

"As I thought." Joanna mumbled grumpily, holding her sword up in the fire light.

"Do you?"

When the older girl didn't answer Sansa immediately worried that she said something wrong and offended her. But after a minute of contemplation Sansa saw the princesses silhouette nod.

"I would die for him. I would kill for him. I would climb the wall if he wanted me to. I would swim the narrow sea for him." She said with more emotion than Sansa had ever heard her use. Usually her words were hidden with commands and pleasantries but as Joanna spoke about this mystery boy she couldn't imagine a luckier person than to be the recipient of her affection.

"What is he like-this boy?"

"I wouldn't exactly call him boy. He is in no way a child. He's brave and passionate and wouldn't hesitate to kill for me."

"Would he die for you?" Sansa whispered as the last orange embers died and the only sound was a wolf somewhere far away.

Sansa assumed the princess hadn't heard her.

But she had.

As Joanna sat motionless she thought of Joffrey. Once long ago she knew Joffrey would die for her in a heartbeat. But lately she wasn't so sure. The power had gone to his head and his impulsiveness had gotten worse. That was the moment Joanna remembered the night weeks ago when Joffrey had taken her innocence from her.

It was in this chilling silence that Joanna realised something she had been too busy to notice before. A moon had passed since the night she had wished to forget yet she had not bled.
A stomach upset meant that their journey was delayed by two days. The second day Joanna had convinced Sansa that she was perfectly fine and they began the ride for Riverrun but barely an hour into the ride she had to run into the woods where Sansa could her retching.

Sansa assumed it was because she was a Princess and her stomach was used to eating rich meals full of meat. The food they had managed to scavenge and hunt was barely on par with her usual diet.

On the third day Joanna managed to keep her food down long enough for them to make large amounts of progress. The sun was already setting by the time the Stark camp came into sight. It was a huge affair which boasted hundreds of men. She instinctively wondered where in the camp her uncle was. She hoped he wasn't being mistreated too badly, and a small part of her praid to the gods that Robb Stark was truly as honourable as he seemed.

As if Sansa had read her mind the auburn-haired girl offered some words of reassurance. "I'm sure your uncle is fine. Robb's a good person, he wouldn't hurt him without provocation."

That last part worried Joanna. Jaime, like her, didn't know when to keep quiet. They were both brutally honest. That attitude back in Kings Landing may have been intimidating but s a prisoner in an enemy camp it could get him into trouble.

They began approaching the camp and very soon they were stopped by Stark soldiers.

"Who are you?" One solider demanded, holding a sword in the dim torch light.

"Get me Robb Stark." Joanna commanded,

ROBB

He removed his cloak and placed it next to his bed. He prepared to change into his night clothes when a soldier ran into his tent.

Robb, annoyed at being disturbed, asked angrily. "What is it?"

"Lady Stark is here." The soldier panted, obviously having run cross camp.

"I don't understand. Is my mother okay?" Robb asked, confused. He took a step towards the tent flap but wasn't prepared for the following answer.

"Not your mother. Your sister, Sansa."

Without hesitation Robb ran past the solider and followed the noise. He reached a crowd of soliders all shouting and jeering. Pushing past them he reached the middle.

Stood there was his sister, his oldest sister. She looked much older than the last time they had seen each other, her time in Kings Landing aging her. Her blue dress, one that had been made for the trip south, was dirty round the edges from time on the road.

But his eyes moved slightly to the right and he saw someone he expected to see even less than his sister. Joanna Baratheon-Lannister- stood with her hand on his sisters arm holding her there. The
girl he saw was completely different to the one he'd sat with in Winterfell. Her clothes were hardly suitable for a princess, her blonde curls a mess but the biggest change was in her eyes. When they'd met, those few short months ago, there was a little girl trying her hardest to look strong. Now that little girl was gone and in her place was a lion baring her claws.

"Robb Stark." She greeted, her grip preventing her companion from stepping forward.

His muscles tensed. "Joanna Lannister."

"Baratheon." A hint of annoyance in her voice.

"Maybe. Maybe not."

She took a step forward. "I have your sister. You have my uncle. I'm sure we can come to an agreement."

"I'm surprised your mother and brother allowed you to offer this." Robb asked cautiously. "Did your brother know of this?"

"It doesn't matter. I'm sure you would agree this is a fair trade." Joanna argued, her emerald eyes burning into his blue ones.

It was then that Catelyn arrived, pushing past to see her daughter. When they laid eyes on each other she burst into tears of happiness as she almost ran to her.

"Thank you so much for bringing Sansa to us. You will be rewarded for-"

"I didn't do this for you." Joanna coldly stated. "Sansa for my uncle. We make the trade then continue on our separate paths."

Catelyn, tears still in her eyes turned to her daughter. "Sansa, my daughter. Are you alright?"

She nodded, tears welling in her eyes. "I thought I would never see you again."

Robb asked "did the princess treat you well?"

Joanna rolled her eyes and scoffed. "If you don't mind I would like to begin my journey home as soon as possible."

"Why don't you stay?" Catelyn suggested, slowly moving towards the two girls.

"What?" Joanna and Robb exclaimed at the same time, shocked.

Lady Stark shook her head. "Just for tonight. It's too late for you to make any progress tonight. I swear on my honour that in the morning you and your uncle are free to go."

Robb stood there, astounded. "I am the King not you,. It's my decision."

"So you don't want your sister back?" Joanna laughed mockingly. "I could always take her back."

Sighing Robb nodded. "Fine. You can stay tonight."

"I would like to see my uncle now." She demanded, her vision wavering slightly.

"Of course." Robb agreed. His brow furrowed slightly as the Lannister girl swayed for a few moments before collapsing into a heap on the ground.
He sat in his cell, his hair plastered to his face. The only soldiers still in this portion on the camp were guarding his cage. The rest had ran off in some commotion.

Footsteps approached his cage and he turned his head up, expecting it to be Robb Stark come to mock him again.

It turned out he was only partially right. Robb Stark was standing there but his purpose was far from what he expected.

"It seems you have a visitor, Kingslayer."

"Who?" Jaime asked curiously as he tried to sit up but the pole he was tied to restricted his movement.

"Your daughter has come to rescue you."

This time Jaime didn't even bother to deny it.
Chapter 17

Her eyes twitched as she awoke, her consciousness slowly returning. Joanna could hear voices but through her muddled state sounded distant and muffled. Movement returned to her limbs gradually but at the same time an aching pain accompanied it. Her stomach ached with a consistency that forced her to groan.

Joanna's eyes flew open as she sat up abruptly and found herself face to face with Robb Stark, his mother and another man. Anxiously her eyes darted around, trying to assess the situation as quickly as possible. Light flooded into the tent, meaning several hours must have passed since she collapsed. Her travelling clothes had been replaced by a simple white nightgown that was too large and must belong to Lady Stark. A large table was placed by the side of her bed, covered with various medical instruments and most worryingly a blood soaked rag.

A wave of pain shot through her abdomen, causing her hands to fly instinctively. Once the pain had passed her gaze flew accusingly to the young Lord Stark.

"What have you done to me?" Joanna rasped angrily and she tried to climb out of the bed, only to stumble and fall unceremoniously to the floor.

Much to her annoyance she was helped back on to the bed.

"If it wasn't for us you would be in a much worse state. " Robb countered matter-of-factly. "Or would you have rather we left you to bleed."

Her brows furrowed in confusion, "But I wasn't injured…"

Out of the corner of her eye Lady Stark was giving her an unfamiliar sympathetic look. Alarm bells rang in Joanna's head, more confused than she had ever been in her life. She normally prided herself in her knowledge but now that the tables were turned she felt physically ill.

"You may not have been injured, my dear. But you were not in normal condition either. " Lady Stark began, walking over to Joanna where she placed a hand on her shoulder. This motherly action was both welcomed and dismissed. As much as she wanted to push away the affection there was something unfamiliar about this genuine care.

Joanna had had enough with these half-truths. "Just tell me!"

With a nervous glance the final person in the room turned to her. "You were with child."

At that moment Joanna regretted ever asking. Her world shattered as her brain struggled to comprehend the news. Whilst pregnancy explained how ill she had been feeling recently there was something unreal to her. Her encounter with Joffrey had been something that she had tried to push to the back of her mind and in this denial she had forgotten to take something to prevent a babe.

She placed a tender hand on her stomach as she thought of a child that was half her and half Joffrey but all she felt was emptiness.

"Were?" She whispered hesitantly, a grim realisation setting in. The idea of a golden child had been ripped cruelly away from her before she had even known it existed.

"We believe your journey had taken a great toll on your body and it was too much for your child. " Robb explained, keeping a safe distance from the blonde girl and made sure there were no possible
weapons near her.

A single tear made its way down her cheek and fell on to her lap. Her body began to shake as she began to sob silently. Years of composure collapsed instantaneously as she couldn't stop the raw emotions from overwhelming her. Joanna cried and cried, her heart aching with an overwhelming grief.

Joanna felt arms wrap around her and cradle her. A tender hand stroked her golden curls as Joanna buried her face into Lady Stark.

At that moment there was neither Stark nor Lannister, friend nor foe, ally nor enemy. There were only two mothers shared by grief.
Chapter 18

I'm going to be shifting the order of events slightly from now on so don't be confused, everything I am changing is for a reason.

JAIME

For days he had asked to see Joanna. Ever since he had heard of her arrival making sure that she was safe was his priority. The girl was definitely headstrong and impulsive but he found himself unable to condemn her for the traits that she had unfortunately received from him.

There had been whispers, rumours concerning his daughter/niece that he refused to believe but as his requests were continuously denied the reality of the situation began to settle.

He heard voices and turned his eyes slightly upwards to see Catelyn Stark.

Jaime raised his hands to cover his face, the chains around his wrists clanking. "Lady Stark," he said, in a voice hoarse with disuse. "I fear I am in no condition to receive you."

"Look at me, ser."

"The light hurts my eyes. A moment, if you would." Jaime Lannister had been allowed no razor since the night he was taken in the Whispering Wood, and a shaggy beard covered his face, once so like the queen's. Glinting gold in the lamplight, the whiskers made him look like some great yellow beast, magnificent even in chains. His unwashed hair fell to his shoulders in ropes and tangles, the clothes were rotting on his body, his face was pale and wasted . . . and even so, the power and the beauty of the man were still apparent.

"I see you had no taste for the wine I sent you."

"Such sudden generosity seemed somewhat suspect."

"I can have your head off anytime I want. Why would I need to poison you?"

And risk Cersei's wrath, I doubt it.

"Death by poison can seem natural. Harder to claim that my head simply fell off." He squinted up from the floor, his cat-green eyes slowly becoming accustomed to the light. "I'd invite you to sit, but your brother has neglected to provide me a chair."

"I can stand well enough."

"Can you? You look terrible, I must say. Though perhaps it's just the light in here." He was fettered at wrist and ankle, each cuff chained to the others, so he could neither stand nor lie comfortably. The ankle chains were bolted to the wall. "Are my bracelets heavy enough for you, or did you come to add a few more? I'll rattle them prettily if you like."

"You brought this on yourself," she reminded him. "We granted you the comfort of a tower cell befitting your birth and station. You repaid us by trying to escape."

"A cell is a cell. Some under Casterly Rock make this one seem a sunlit garden. One day perhaps I'll show them to you."

If he is cowed, he hides it well, Catelyn thought. "A man chained hand and foot should keep a
more courteous tongue in his mouth, ser. I did not come here to be threatened."

"No? Then surely it was to have your pleasure of me? It's said that widows grow weary of their empty beds. We of the Kingsguard vow never to wed, but I suppose I could still service you if that's what you need. Pour us some of that wine and slip out of that gown and we'll see if I'm up to it."

Catelyn stared down at him in revulsion. Was there ever a man as beautiful or as vile as this one? "If you said that in my son's hearing, he would kill you for it."

"Only so long as I was wearing these." Jaime Lannister rattled his chains at her. "We both know the boy is afraid to face me in single combat."

"My son may be young, but if you take him for a fool, you are sadly mistaken . . . and it seems to me that you were not so quick to make challenges when you had an army at your back."

"Did the old Kings of Winter hide behind their mothers' skirts as well?"

"I grow weary of this, ser. There are things I must know."

"Why should I tell you anything?"

"To save your life."

"You think I fear death?" That seemed to amuse him.

"You should. Your crimes will have earned you a place of torment in the deepest of the seven hells, if the gods are just."

"What gods are those, Lady Catelyn? The trees your husband prayed to? How well did they serve him when my sister took his head off?" Jaime gave a chuckle. "If there are gods, why is the world so full of pain and injustice?"

"Because of men like you."

"There are no men like me. There's only me."

There is nothing here but arrogance and pride, and the empty courage of a madman. I am wasting my breath with this one. If there was ever a spark of honour in him, it is long dead. "If you will not speak with me, so be it. Drink the wine or piss in it, ser, it makes no matter to me."

Her hand was at the door pull when he said, "Lady Stark." She turned, waited. "Things go to rust in this damp," Jaime went on. "Even a man's courtesies. Stay, and you shall have your answers . . . for a price."

He has no shame. "Captives do not set prices."

"Oh, you'll find mine modest enough. Your turnkey tells me nothing but vile lies, and he cannot even keep them straight. One day he says Cersei has been flayed, and the next it's my father. The things he has been saying of my dear niece would make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. Answer my questions and I'll answer yours."

"Truthfully?"

"Oh, it's truth you want? Be careful, my lady. Tyrion says that people often claim to hunger for truth, but seldom like the taste when it's served up."
"I am strong enough to hear anything you care to say."

"As you will, then. But first, if you'd be so kind . . . the wine. My throat is raw."

Catelyn hung the lamp from the door and moved the cup and flagon closer. Jaime sloshed the wine around his mouth before he swallowed. "Sour and vile," he said, "but it will do." He put his back to the wall, drew his knees up to his chest, and stared at her. "Your first question, Lady Catelyn?"

Not knowing how long this game might continue, Catelyn wasted no time. "Are you Joffrey's father?"

"You would never ask unless you knew the answer."

"I want it from your own lips."

He shrugged. "Joffrey is mine. As are the rest of Cersei's brood, I suppose."

"Including your dear Joanna?"

At this his head flew upwards. "Joanna more so than the others. I've never felt any affection for any of my children except for her. I would kill every man and woman in this camp if it meant I could see her a final time before you kill me."

"You admit to being your sister's lover?"

"I've always loved my sister, and you owe me two answers. Do all my kin still live?"

"Ser Stafford Lannister was slain at Oxcross, I am told."

Jaime was unmoved. "Uncle Dolt, my sister called him. It's Cersei and Tyrion who concern me. As well as my lord father."

"They live, all three." But not long, if the gods are good.

Jaime drank some more wine. "Ask your next."

Catelyn wondered if he would dare answer her next question with anything but a lie. "How did my son Bran come to fall?"

"I flung him from a window."

The easy way he said it took her voice away for an instant. If I had a knife, I would kill him now, she thought, until she remembered the girls. Her throat constricted as she said, "You were a knight, sworn to defend the weak and innocent."

"He was weak enough, but perhaps not so innocent. He was spying on us."

"Bran would not spy."

"Then blame those precious gods of yours, who brought the boy to our window and gave him a glimpse of something he was never meant to see."

"Blame the gods?" she said, incredulous. "Yours was the hand that threw him. You meant for him to die."

His chains chinked softly. "I seldom fling children from towers to improve their health. Yes, I
meant for him to die."

"And when he did not, you knew your danger was worse than ever, so you gave your catspaw a bag of silver to make certain Bran would never wake."

"Did I now?" Jaime lifted his cup and took a long swallow. "I won't deny we talked of it, but you were with the boy day and night, your maester and Lord Eddard attended him frequently, and there were guards, even those damned direwolves . . . it would have required cutting my way through half of Winterfell. And why bother, when the boy seemed like to die of his own accord?"

"If you lie to me, this session is at an end." Catelyn held out her hands, to show him her fingers and palms. "The man who tried to slit Bran's throat gave me these scars. You swear you had no part in sending him?"

"On my honour as a Lannister."

"Your honour as a Lannister is worth less than this." She kicked over the waste pail. Foul-smelling brown ooze crept across the floor of the cell, soaking into the straw.

Jaime Lannister backed away from the spill as far as his chains would allow. "I may indeed have shit for honour, I won't deny it, but I have never yet hired anyone to do my killing. Believe what you will, Lady Stark, but if I had wanted your Bran dead I would have slain him myself."

Gods be merciful, he's telling the truth. "If you did not send the killer, your sister did."

"If so, I'd know. Cersei keeps no secrets from me."

"Then it was the Imp."

"Tyrion is as innocent as your Bran. He wasn't climbing around outside of anyone's window, spying."

"Then why did the assassin have his dagger?"

"What dagger was this?"

"It was so long," she said, holding her hands apart, "plain, but finely made, with a blade of Valyrian steel and a dragonbone hilt. Your brother won it from Lord Baelish at the tourney on Prince Joffrey's name day."

Lannister poured, drank, poured, and stared into his wine cup. "This wine seems to be improving as I drink it. Imagine that. I seem to remember that dagger, now that you describe it. Won it, you say? How?"

"Wagering on you when you tilted against the Knight of Flowers." Yet when she heard her own words Catelyn knew she had gotten it wrong. "No . . . was it the other way?"

"Tyrion always backed me in the lists," Jaime said, "but that day Ser Loras unhorsed me. A mischance, I took the boy too lightly, but no matter. Whatever my brother wagered, he lost . . . but that dagger did change hands, I recall it now. Robert showed it to me that night at the feast. His Grace loved to salt my wounds, especially when drunk. And when was he not drunk?"

Tyrion Lannister had said much the same thing as they rode through the Mountains of the Moon, Catelyn remembered. She had refused to believe him. Petyr had sworn otherwise, Petyr who had been almost a brother, Petyr who loved her so much he fought a duel for her hand . . . and yet if
Jaime and Tyrion told the same tale, what did that mean? The brothers had not seen each other since departing Winterfell more than a year ago. "Are you trying to deceive me?" Somewhere there was a trap here.

"I've admitted to shoving your precious urchin out a window, what would it gain me to lie about this knife?" He tossed down another cup of wine. "Believe what you will, I'm past caring what people say of me. And it's my turn. Have Robert's brothers taken the field?"

"They have."

"Now there's a niggardly response. Give me more than that, or your next answer will be as poor."

"Stannis marches against King's Landing," she said grudgingly. "Renly is dead, murdered at Bitterbridge by his brother, through some black art I do not understand."

"A pity," Jaime said. "I rather liked Renly, though Stannis is quite another tale. What side have the Tyrells taken?"

"Renly, at first. Now, I could not say."

"Your boy must be feeling lonely."

"Robb was sixteen a few days past . . . a man grown, and a king. He's won every battle he's fought. The last word we had from him, he had taken the Crag from the Westerlings."

"He hasn't faced my father yet, has he?"

"When he does, he'll defeat him. As he did you."

"He took me unawares. A craven's trick."

"You dare talk of tricks? Your brother Tyrion sent us cutthroats in envoy's garb, under a peace banner."

"If it were one of your sons in this cell, wouldn't his brothers do as much for him?"

My son has no brothers, she thought, but she would not share her pain with a creature such as this.

Jaime drank some more wine. "What's a brother's life when honour is at stake, eh?" Another sip. "Tyrion is clever enough to realize that your son will never consent to ransom me."

Catelyn could not deny it. "Robb's bannermen would sooner see you dead. Rickard Karstark in particular. You slew two of his sons in the Whispering Wood."

"The two with the white sunburst, were they?" Jaime gave a shrug. "If truth be told, it was your son that I was trying to slay. The others got in my way. I killed them in fair fight, in the heat of battle. Any other knight would have done the same."

"How can you still count yourself a knight, when you have forsaken every vow you ever swore?"


"He took a healthy swallow of wine and closed his eyes for an instant, leaning his head back against the patch of nitre on the wall. "I was the youngest man ever to wear the white cloak."

"So many vows . . . "
"And the youngest to betray all it stood for, Kingslayer."

"Kingslayer," he pronounced carefully. "And such a king he was!" He lifted his cup. "To Aerys Targaryen, the Second of His Name, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms and Protector of the Realm. And to the sword that opened his throat. A golden sword, don't you know. Until his blood ran red down the blade. Those are the Lannister colors, red and gold."

As he laughed, she realized the wine had done its work; Jaime had drained most of the flagon, and he was drunk. "Only a man like you would be proud of such an act."

"I told you, there are no men like me. I wish to know one more thing?" His worrying tone betraying his concern. "Joanna… how is she?"

Catelyn sighed and took a few moments to respond. "Your daughter is well physically, emotionally perhaps not."

Jaime would have leapt up had he not been tied down. "What did you do to her?"

Anger dripped off his words, a venomous glare present. Catelyn Stark was unfazed.

"She was with child."

He shook his head in confusion. "That's not possible."

"You obviously don't know your family as well as you think you do. The maester believes that she was two moons gone. The stress of the journey caused her to miscarry."

Jaime couldn't do anything but try to understand the situation. Joanna wasn't silly enough to lay with a man and conceive a child before she was married. She was a princess, her one job was to marry a Lord and have his child. Now that she wasn't a maiden her choice of husband would be severely limited.

"Can I see her? Please. Let me see my daughter."
JOANNA

She had refused every meal in front of her and declined to answer any questions that were posed to her.

"Let me see my uncle." Joanna would demand whenever someone would enter the tent. Several days had passed since she had woken in the camp and so far she had only had the company of Lady Stark and her son. Sansa Stark had yet to make an appearance and hadn't yet thanked her for bringing her to her family. Not that Sansa's wellbeing was a major concern. By making the trade she had eliminated the threat that Sansa posed for Joffrey's affections. No more could the meek Northern girl attempt to smile and flatter her way to the throne. But most importantly it meant she would get her uncle Jaime back. Jaime was like her father to her and fulfilled the hole left by her miserable excuse of her Royal father.

She also wondered what her family's reaction would be to her return. Mother would be angry, of course, for doing something so reckless and dangerous but her anger would be more than balanced by her happiness for her and Jaime's return. Cersei and Jaime were twins, like her and Joff, and the love felt by twins was like no other. Joanna hoped that her pregnancy would be kept a secret, she didn't think she could survive the disappointment in her mother's eyes.

Tommen and Myrcella would be overjoyed to have her back. She wasn't hugely close to her younger siblings but they were still blood and family, and there was nothing more important in the world.

Joffrey. The thought of seeing him again was both a dream and a nightmare all at once. The past few days had been incredibly hard on her and she wanted nothing more than for him to hold her in her arms and mourn the loss of their unborn child. Before her miscarriage if anyone had ever asked her if she wanted to have her brothers child she would have truthfully told them no. But actually having a babe inside her, even if she didn't realise it, made her realise that any child she bore either her future husband of Joffrey was a precious miracle. It made her realise that she truly wanted this child and to have no say on its early death broke her heart. She would have to tell him, Joanna realised. Joffrey deserved to know that he had been a father, even if it was for such a short time. Now that she was ruined Joffrey would have an excuse to keep her by his side. For once the idea sounded truly a possibility. He could refuse to marry her off and explain it on her lack of purity. Safe in the Red Keep she could have more children to replace the once she lost. Westeros didn't have to know that her children were her brothers. Joff could imprison or execute anyone who spoke ill of her.

But then again that was also impossible. Even Joffrey's disapproval and her ruin would not stop her grandfather Tywin from arranging a marriage for her. Whether it required lies, threats or bribes her would find a way for her to marry a Lord.

It was whilst she was deep in thought that the tent flap opened and in stepped Catelyn Stark.

"You may see you uncle." She announced sourly.

The walk to Jaime's prison was not a long one but as Stark bannermen glared at her and shouted crude remarks the journey seemed infinite. Finally they reached her uncle, tied to a post in a muddy and small cage. At first she didn't recognise the man sat hunched in the dirt but once she managed to look past the mud crusted hair and the filthy beard she finally saw a familiar face.
"Uncle Jaime…” Joanna stumbled, rushing forwards to the bars. Not caring about the mud she threw herself to his height and pressed her face to the cage.

Slowly but surely his head turned up and green eyes met green eyes. His brain seemed to take a few moments to process the situation and he suddenly tried to leap forwards to touch her but his chains stopped him and pulled him painfully back to the ground.

"Joanna!" Jaime exclaimed, his energy returning to him. "Are you okay? Did they hurt you?"

With a definite nod she replied. "They didn't hurt me. I came to rescue you but faced some unforeseen problems…"

"The news of your problem doesn't have to reach home. I won't tell your mother." Jaime announced, the smallest glimpse of a smile reaching his face for the first time in weeks.

Catelyn asked the guard to open the cage door and as soon as it was unlocked Joanna darted past and inside where she threw herself as the man she called uncle. Their affections were limited by his chains but that didn't stop Joanna burrowing her golden head into her uncle's chest as one of his hands stroked her hair.

The duo stayed like this for several minutes, just embracing and mumbling to each other. Joanna had abandoned her façade of formality completely and was in a fit of tears whilst she couldn't stop whispering "I love you."

As Catelyn watched she didn't see an incestuous Kingslayer and the sister of the boy who had executed Ned. She only saw a father and daughter, despite Joanna's lack of knowledge of this. The affection she saw in their eyes would not have been misplaced in Ned and their daughters. But she pushed this to the back of her mind as she addressed more pressing matters.

"As you have returned my daughter to me my honour would allow me to release you and let you return unharmed to Kings Landing. However my son doesn't share the same views. He believes you are both too valuable to let go. As much as it pains me I cannot let you go."

Both Lannister faces fell in surprise before turning to anger. Joanna released her uncle before standing up, her height making her eye to eye with Lady Stark. "We could make another deal."

"I can't disobey my King despite his youth."

Joanna's eyes narrowed into a glare. "Then your son doesn't have to know of it. You are still his mother, you alone can disobey him with repercussions."

Catelyn sighed. "You don't have anything to offer me, Lannister."

"Oh but I do." Joanna smirked. "Your daughter."

"Sansa is safe in this camp now, you have no control over her." Catelyn Stark approached the girl curiously.

"You have two daughters."
JAIME

Jaime, Joanna and Brienne sat in a flimsy wooden boat as they followed the current down river. The female knight had tried to make Joanna row despite her fragile physical and mental state recently. He had tried to avoid questions related to her pregnancy but it was becoming harder as he watched his niece's demeanour sadden throughout the course of the day. She was in no fit state to be exerting her physically so she had spent most of the journey by boat resting her head on her uncle.

Witnessing the cloud of darkness settle on Joanna's face reminded him of a time long ago. Cersei's first and only successful pregnancy by Robert Baratheon had led to a weak infant that left the world as swiftly as it entered it. Despite his sister baring no love for her husband Jaime couldn't do anything to lift her spirits. Her heart had broken and her spirit had even gone from their love-making. Her mood had only lifted when she had the twins and since then she had made sure nothing bad ever happened to any of her children ever again.

"Are you alright, Joanna?" He asked the miniature version of his twin due to the paleness of her skin.

"Quiet," the wench grumbled, and he doubted that a smile had ever graced her face.

He wore iron manacles on his wrists and a matching pair about his ankles, joined by a length of heavy chain no more than a foot long. "You'd think my word as a Lannister was not good enough," he'd japed as they bound him. He'd been very drunk by then, thanks to Catelyn Stark. Of their escape from Riverrun, he recalled only bits and pieces. There had been some trouble with the gaoler, but the big wench had overcome him.

Luckily Joanna had remained unchained, Lady stark obviously not deeming her an important enough threat but Jaime knew otherwise. Joanna knew exactly how to use a sword from their secret lessons years ago. However she had yet to participate in a true fight where her enemy was truly wishing her home and for that reason Jaime knew that if she tried to fight Brienne she would lose.

After that they had climbed an endless stair, around and around. His legs were weak as grass, and he'd stumbled twice or thrice, until the wench lent him an arm to lean on. At some point he was bundled into a traveller's cloak and shoved into the bottom of a skiff. He remembered listening to Lady Catelyn command someone to raise the portcullis on the Water Gate.

He must have drifted off then. The wine had made him sleepy, and it felt good to stretch, a luxury his chains had not permitted him in the cell. Jaime had long ago learned to snatch sleep in the saddle during a march. This was no harder. Tyrion is going to laugh himself sick when he hears how I slept through my own escape. He was awake now, though, and the fetters were irksome. "My lady," he called out, "if you'll strike off these chains, I'll spell you at those oars."

She scowled again, her face all horse teeth and glowering suspicion. "You'll wear your chains, Kingslayer."

"You figure to row all the way to King's Landing, wench?"

"You will call me Brienne. Not wench."

"My name is Ser Jaime. Not Kingslayer."
"Do you deny that you slew a king?"

"Can you two try and be civil?" Joanna complained, yawning. "Lady Brienne. Do not try and presume you know things you don't."

Brienne scoffed. "If I am a Lady then you are a Baratheon."

She sat up immediately, confusion etched across her face. "What are you talking about?"

Brienne and Jaime shared a glance. To be precise Jaime glared with hate and threat.

"It is not my right to say." The female knight deflected.

In many ways Brienne pitied the young princess. She seemed extremely clever and witty but her biggest flaw seemed to be her love for family. She didn't know a Lannister who loved anyone outside of their family and Joanna seemed no exception. The princess idolised her true father and it surprised Brienne how she hadn't figured out the truth yet. They both resembled each other greatly in both appearance and personality. The poor girl had no idea that she and her siblings were bastards born of incest and had no right to the throne. She probably didn't even realise her twin was a psychopath.

They'd all done a deal of vowing back in that cell, Jaime most of all. That was Lady Catelyn's price for releasing him. She had laid the point of Brienne's sword against his heart and said, "Swear that you will never again take up arms against Stark nor Tully. Swear that you will compel your brother to honour his pledge to release my daughter safe and unharmed. Swear on your honour as a knight, on your honour as a Lannister, on your honour as a Sworn Brother of the Kingsguard. Swear it by your sister's life, and your father's, and your son's, by the old gods and the new, and I'll send you back to your sister. Refuse, and I will have your blood." He remembered the prick of the steel through his rags as she twisted the point of the sword.

I wonder what the High Septon would have to say about the sanctity of oaths sworn while dead drunk, chained to a wall, with a sword pressed to your chest? Not that Jaime was truly concerned about that fat fraud, or the gods he claimed to serve. He remembered the pail Lady Catelyn had kicked over in his cell. A strange woman, to trust her daughter to a man with shit for honour. Though she was trusting him as little as she dared. She is putting her hope in Tyrion, not in me. "Perhaps she is not so stupid after all," he said aloud.

It had been Joanna's quick thinking that had got them freed. She had lied to Lady Starks face and told her that Arya had tried to escape and had been thrown in prison. That was why Sansa had no idea her sister was still in the palace, Joanna explained. If she had discovered her younger sister was there she would have tried to rescue her.

This was how Joanna had managed to manipulate the words Catelyn used when making Jaime swear vows. Arya was not in their possession so they had already 'released' her. It meant that technically he was under no obligations. This was one of the times when Joanna most reminded him of Cersei and it almost scared him how much she resembled her at that moment.

"A man who would violate his own sister, murder his king, and fling an innocent child to his death deserves no other name."

"Vicious rumours." Joanna scoffed. "Nobody in Kings Landing believes your lies."

Sighing Brienne paused rowing and turned to the golden girl. "On the topic of rumours, which man dared deflower a princess?"
Joanna glared. "A better man than you shall ever know."

Jaime could sense that she was getting angry and that was not something easily achieved. Joffrey and Joanna were both similar and different in their tempers. Whilst Joffrey angered easily Joanna needed much more provocation however once angry they were both forces to be reckoned with and Joanna had gone through many septas this way.

"I would advise you stop this now wench!" Jaime exclaimed, attempting to calm his daughter/niece.

"Once you return to Kings Landing you are truly ruined. No respectable man will want you, I hope you realise. I would be surprised if your lover won't abandon you."

Joanna's eyes blazed with fury. "Don't be ridiculous. Joff wouldn't-"

Her mouth slammed shut once she realised what she had said. She couldn't believe she had just admitted to sleeping with her twin in front of an enemy knight and her favourite uncle.

Jaime was shocked to say the least. He knew that Joanna and Joffrey were close, perhaps closer than normal siblings however he hadn't even considered that they were victim to the same affections that he and Cersei were. Before he had been disappointed in her for being so careless with her affections but now he didn't have the heart to judge her for the same crime he had committed.

He was however worried for her and he had hoped that Brienne hadn't noticed her slip. Glancing at the large woman it was clear that she had. The knight was staring at Joanna with a look of absolute disgust.

Whilst all 3 of them were distracted by the reveal none of them were steering the boat. A sharp bend and drop in the river jolted the passengers as the current dragged them along fiercely. Out of nowhere the boat hit a rock and the force cause Joanna to lose her balance as she was thrown into the murky waters.

"Joanna!" Jaime screamed, attempting to throw himself after her. Brienne grabbed him and wrestled him back into the boat. He continued to scream and struggle but soon the golden head was out of sight.
Chapter 21

JOANNA

The moment she was thrown from the boat Joanna thought she was going to die. She was finally being punished for her sins, the gods had finally deemed her unworthy enough to keep living a life of sin. Jaime now knew of her relationship with Joffrey and the enemy knew as well. If the masculine woman wanted to she could immediately return to the Stark camp and tell Robb Stark of her sin.

She wasn't used to swimming in fast moving rivers, the sea by Casterley Rock familiar enough to escape any currents. Dragged downstream her head kept being pulled underwater before she could take a breath. Joanna was tossed around the murky water and it kept becoming harder to breathe as she was pulled under.

Please, she prayed. If there is even one part of me that deserves forgiveness then let me live.

Joanna was already weak from her loss only a few days prior and had she been at full health she would have more strength to battle the currents.

As the air left her lungs her mind was filled with faces.

Joffrey.

Uncle Jaime.

Mother.

Myrcella.

Tommen.

Some smiling. Some disappointed.

Her vision clouded as her family vanished.

SOME TIME LATER

Something warm was placed on her face. Muffled voices were in the background as the mist was slowly lifted from her mind. Memories of prior events slowly began to return her and she briefly wondered if she had died and she was now to be punished in hell.

"-by the river. Barely alive." A voice said, male and elderly.

Joanna tried to sit up but she only succeeded in groaning in pain. Her chest and lungs ached, causing her to start coughing relentlessly.

Footsteps started towards her and soon she could feel a presence beside her. Cautiously opening her eyes Joanna was met by the short figure of a greying woman. Approximately the same age as her grandfather but the poor standard of clothing suggested that she was much poorer.

"Here's some water." The woman held a cup to her mouth and slowly tipped then cold water down her throat. The liquid tasted far different from the pure water she normally drinks in Kings Landing though lately she had probably indulged in more wine than water.
The pain in her throat diminished enough for her to attempt to speak. "I-"

The man she had heard before approached her and placed a hand on the woman's shoulder. "Don't try and speak just yet. Your lungs were filled with water when I found you. It's lucky I was walking by the river when I found you. You were caught on a branch, unconscious so I managed to resuscitate you. I brought you back to my house where you have been for the past week. A few times you have woke but you kept falling back."

Glancing down at herself Joanna saw that the leather and cotton travelling clothes that Lady Stark had gifted her to replace her blood stained ones had been replaced by a dirty, off-white night gown that was far too big and short for her. She stared critically at the garment, thinking that she wouldn't normally be caught dead in such a poor quality dress.

The man glanced at his wife? "My wife changed you out of your wet clothes. She's given you one of her old dresses. It's nowhere near the same quality as you previous clothes but it's all we have."

Joanna managed a nod and took her time to evaluate her surroundings. She was sat in a make-shift bed at the side of a small room. All the furniture was wooden and light was spilling in through gaps in the roof and walls. With a closer glance she realised that this was the only room in the house and she was occupying the only bed in the home.

"I'm Tomas and this is my wife Hema. Can you remember your name?" The man, Tomas, asked.

She nodded and was about to say her true name: Joanna Baratheon, but then she realised something. She had no idea who these people were and what side of the war they were on. By revealing her true identity she could be making herself a hostage again.

"Emicah. Emicah Waters." She lied, hoping they believed her.

For some reason this made Hema frown, a glazed look appearing in her eyes. "We had a grandson who had a similar name." Tomas explained.

Hema looked sadly at her. "His name was Mycah. He was killed by one of the Kingsguard for no reason. Since then we've have a mistrust of anyone from the Crownlands."

That name sparked something inside of Joanna, the name somewhat familiar. That is when she remembered where she knew it from.

Mycah had been the name of the boy who attacked Joffrey along with Arya Stark and her rabid direwolf. And now here she was, the sister of the boy who led to the death of the grandson of the people who saved her life.

She was glad then that she had lied about her identity.
During the next few days Joanna smiled when appropriate and was the perfect guest. Once she was well enough to walk she slowly began to gain the old couple's trust. Whenever they queried about her past she would lie effortlessly, as she began to gain information about her location. She was about equal distance between the Stark camp and Kings Landing. The Lannister family wasn't popular in the area however they were far enough from the north to not have the full support of the Starks.

To them she was Emicah Waters, the bastard daughter of a unimportant Western Lord who was travelling to Kings Landing to live with her mother's family. This fake story explained both her accent and why she was travelling east.

As her health improved Joanna began gathering supplies for her journey. Tomas and Hema wanted her to stay until she was completely recovered however Joanna had no intention of staying that long. Almost drowning meant that she now became out of breath much faster than before, her chest aching from when Tomas resuscitated her.

She was grateful to them, without a doubt, they had no idea that they were housing a princess. However they were happy and cheerful to the point when Joanna felt sick. They were so in love that thinking about it made her heart hurt. It stirred an emotion in her that she had never felt before, it resembled jealousy but she would never admit it.

One evening, the trio sat in the single candle-lit room with tiny portions of food and the conversation turned to how Tomas and Hema had met. Truthfully Joanna couldn't care less about them but she didn't wish to appear rude.

"When did you realise you loved each other?" Joanna attempted to appear interested but the bland gruel she was spooning down her throat was making it incredibly hard.

As they gushed to her, their hearts open and singing true, Joanna tuned their voices out from her mind. Her thoughts turned to the past, to a time several years earlier; to the moment she realised that she was in love.

A 12 year old Joanna ran through the Red Keep, her blonde curls trailing behind her small figure. Her crimson slippers had been abandoned a long time before to aid her speed. Narrowly missing a collision with a servant she giggled and turned a corner to the corridor containing both hers and Joffrey's rooms. However everyone knew that they rarely spent their time in their own chambers, much preferring to spend their time together.

Their siblings were almost always excluded from their fun, Tommen being only 6, and a 9 year old Myrcella more concerned with needlework. The twins were practically joined at the hip and luckily for Tommen and Myrcella meant that Joffrey had little time to torment them.

Joanna had bled for the first time a few moons before and since then the Queen had tried to make her spend more time with other young Ladies, much to Joanna's displeasure. But even Cersei couldn't keep them apart for long.

"Keep up Joff!" she turned her head and shouted, her emerald eyes gleaming mischievously. Her twin quickly came into sight and smirked as she chased her down the hall.

She pushed open her door and sprinted into her bedchamber where she leapt on to the bed in a less
than graceful manner. Seconds later her male counterpart tackled her across the bed. Soon they came to a stop, with Joanna face-up on the covers with Joffrey poised above her, pinning her down.

Their faces were almost touching and the only noise was their tired breathing. The next few seconds felt like eternity and their eyes locked and no words were spoken.

"I won." Joffrey smirked, his face drawing closer.

Joanna scoffed. "What do you want-a prize?" She dismissed, her brother was unbelievably competitive.

"It's only fair, dear Joanna."

"And what do you want?" The golden princess asked amused. "What could a prince ever desire?"

Joffrey's playful smirk disappeared as he answered.

"You."

Her mouth fell open in surprise but not true shock. Joanna had been having inappropriate thoughts about her twin for a long time now but she had hid her feelings in fear of them being unrequited. For so long she had buried any romantic feelings in the knowledge that they could never be together. Watching her parents had taught her that whether or not she loved her future husband would be of little importance.

Hearing his feelings out loud seemed so unbelievable that Joanna worried that she had misheard or misinterpreted the meaning behind his statement. But as his lips slowly moved towards hers she knew she was right.

Their lips met and time seemed to freeze around them. Neither of them had kissed someone before so they had no guide. His lips parted and so did hers as their tongues met. Their mouths moved and the kiss deepened as the passion grew. The lust that presented itself in their embrace was equally obvious in their matching eyes. An unintended moan escaped Joanna's mouth and she froze, scared that she had done something wrong.

She stared up at Joffrey, her eyes full of embarrassment. Joffrey laughed as his normal smirk returned. He climbed off her and pulled her up so they were sitting next to each other. Their hands remained interlocked as Joanna's mind tried to process what had just happened.

"Joff…. I-" Joanna stammered, words failing her.

"Please tell me you felt something." Nervousness seeming out of place in his usually confident voice.

Unable to lie Joanna nodded, a small smile emerging.

"We are twins, two halves of a whole. I can't imagine not loving you as I do."

The blonde girl stated. "We are family." Concern entering her tone. "We should only love each other as brother and sister do."

Joffrey's grip on her hands tightened and he brought their palms to his heart. "I am your brother; and this is how I love you. Love should not be a crime."

And that is what they told themselves as the years passed as their affections only grew.
And as Joanna sat at the table she once more told herself that.

And that night, as the couple slept, she told herself that as she stole a horse as she rode off in the direction of the boy she loved.
Chapter 23

I was originally going to split this chapter into two but it seemed to flow better as one. I'm currently writing this as I travel through the French countryside but my hotel has free wifi so this will be uploaded once I can access it.

Joanna rode night and day until she reached Kings Landing. Tomas and Hema unfortunately didn't own any horses so she had walked through the night to reach the nearest farm.

Luckily she found a white mare and a saddle after careful examination of the barn.

With only a rough estimate of her location Joanna relied on advice from other travellers to reach Kings Landing. Her meagre supplies ran out the following evening so she was forced to steal what she needed to survive. All this thievery left a sour taste in her mouth as her grandfather had always taught her that a Lannister always pays their debts so she always left something of worth. Only a few of her possessions had survived her near-drowning but Joanna hated owing anyone so it made the sacrifice worth it.

Joanna was used to travelling and being recognised, the royal processions helped with that. So being completely anonymous was an unfamiliar feeling which she didn't like. It made her feel powerful when people knew who she was, with the knowledge that their lives could end with a single word from her. Normally she didn't care that there were many who hated her mothers family, she preferred to be feared than loved. But without all the knights to protect her she only had a stolen sword to protect herself and whilst Joanna knew she was highly skilled in combat she had little experience with someone who truly wished her harm.

Her appearance and many in public where nothing less than her station required but without access to her gowns and a warm bath she looked like any other peasant-however beautiful she knew she was.

Her blonde curls were matted and greasy, plastered against her head with sweat and mud. Dirt and grime covered every inch of her skin and had caused spots to gather on her face for the first time in years and the exposure to the sun highlighted even the smallest freckle.

So by the time she actually reached Kings Landing she didn't look anything like the Princess Joanna Baratheon that the world knew. As she passed through the more unfavourable parts of the city on her way to the Red Keep the uncomfortable feeling in her stomach grew with the anticipation. It seemed like years since she had last seen her mother and siblings when in reality it had only been a few weeks. She was genuinely scared about how Joffrey had reacted to her disappearance. He had never handled separation well and this had been the longest they had spent apart in the lives. His anger was usually taken out on their younger siblings and she hoped that he had chosen servants as his victims instead. Myrcella and Tommen may not inspire the same love she feels for Joffrey they were still her family and that meant everything.

Fortunately the palace gates were open with only two knights, ones she didn't recognise, guarding the entrance. Dismounting her horse and tying her to the nearest post she approached them cautiously.

"Go away, street rat." The taller of the two exclaimed, swatting her away carelessly.

Her ego bruised she puffed out her chest and stepped forwards. "I demand that you let me pass if you know what is good for you!"
Whilst she did look vastly different to normal she still resembled her family, particularly her mother so there was little excuse for not recognising her.

The other guard began pulling his sword out. "If you know what's good for you then you should leave and we'll forget this ever happened."

Joanna was about to draw her own sword and reveal her identity when a familiar face emerged from behind the gate.

Her second favourite and shortest uncle was stood in crimson and gold and smirking as usual.

Tyrion Lannister was greatly amused at the sight of his oldest niece covered in mud and the least composed he had ever seen her. Pride mattered to Joanna as much as it did the rest of his family so seeing her so humbled was a great source of amusement.

As he laughed Joanna glared with a scowl that could rival Cersei's.

"Lord Tyrion this peasant girl was trying to enter." One of the guards explained, thinking so highly of himself.

"I am not a peasant, you fool!" Joanna argued, stamping her foot quite childishly.

"Have you two ever experienced suicidal tendencies?" Tyrion asked the guards, his mismatched eyes shining.

They looked at each other with a confused look across their faces, cautiously they both shook their heads. "No..."

"Well I don't think King Joffrey will react well to you calling his twin sister a peasant."

A smile grew on Joanna's face as the smiles fell from theirs. They looked at each other in fear before staring in fear at her.

Quickly they fell to their knees in front of her and began begging for forgiveness.

Joanna smirked. "It's good to be back."

Tyrion walked Joanna into the palace towards the Throne Room. He attempted to ask her questions about her journey but she all but ignored him as she practically raced ahead to find Joffrey.

By the time they reached the large doors she was almost sprinting, ignoring the pain from her swollen feet.

Joanna swung open the doors hastily, not caring what was happening within the room.

She saw her family, Joffrey was sat on the Throne with her mother and grandfather sat either side of him.

Joffrey and Joanna locked eyes and for a few moments neither of them could move as they just stared at each other.

Then time began again and Joffrey stood up and pushed past the minor Lord who was addressing him as he ran across the hall.

Joanna did the same and within seconds they were embracing, a few stray tears emerging from her eyes as she clutched her twin and love. Joffrey clutched her possessively as if he could stop her
from ever leaving his sight again.

"I love you." He whispered, refusing to release her. Joanna had expected him to be angry at her for leaving without notice but anger was the furthest thing from the emotion in his eyes-love.

"I'm so sorry Joff!" She stuttered, not caring about the dozens on staring Lords and Ladies. "I'll never leave you again."

"I know."

Joffrey eventually pulled away and in his place stood Joanna's mother. Queen Cersei seemed to have aged years in the few weeks she was gone but her mother still looked as radiant and elegant as ever.

Mother and daughter embraced as Cersei clutched her child closely.

"I missed you so much, Joanna. I thought I would never see you again."

Joanna cradled her head into her mothers chest and was too absorbed in the moment to reply.

Soon Tommen was summoned and Joanna gave him the biggest hug he had ever received from his sister.

He seemed to have grown at least an inch since they had last seen each other and he had lost some of his baby fat and it was clear to Joanna that he was going to grow up to be extremely handsome.

It was as everyone who wasn't a Lannister was being escorted from the Throne room that Joanna noticed someone missing from the family reunion.

"Where's Myrcella?" Joanna asked, not seeing her final sibling anywhere. Her and Tommen were usually always together so she noticed it was odd she wasn't there.

Cersei placed her hands on her daughters shoulders and looked sympathetically at Joanna.

In fear Joanna automatically assumed the worst, terrified that Myrcella had died without her getting to say goodbye.

"Your uncle Tyrion has sent her to be a prisoner in Dorne." Cersei spat angrily.

Tyrion sighed. "Don't be dramatic, sister. She is betrothed to Trystane Martell."

The happiness she felt for seeing her uncle vanished immediately as the realisation seeped in icily.

Flames burning angrily in her emerald eyes Joanna marched over to her uncle where she slapped him with all the force she could muster. The sound echoed around the room as the family fell silent.

"How dare you!" Joanna spat, her anger rising to previously unseen levels. "How dare you send away my sister without letting me say goodbye!"

"We didn't know when you would be seen again-" Tyrion began explaining.

Joanna cut him off. "That is no excuse." She growled.

She span and stormed out of the throne room, with Joffrey on her heels calling her name.
Joanna was back and reunited with her family but far from happy.
Joanna's handmaidens bathed and clothed her in her favourite crimson dress which had been a present from Joffrey shortly after his coronation.

The next few hours were spent with Joff in her bedchamber as she retold her adventure, making sure to leave out the part about her pregnancy. The subject was still too sore and fresh in her memory to discuss. She didn't want anyone in her family discovering it-excluding Jaime.

She realised that she had forgotten to ask about her uncle whilst Joffrey was with her and her mind filled with worry.

Jaime had been left with the female knight, held prisoner. Now that Joanna had been separated from them anything could have happened. It had been her lie that had got them released and if Brienne so much as suspected that she had been lying Jaime was in grave danger. Adding to that she had to knowledge that Joffrey had been the father of Joanna's unborn child. If she had returned to the Stark camp then that information could be used to blackmail her family.

But despite everything Joanna couldn't be happier to be home despite the fact that her sister had been sold like cattle to Dorne where she would be a prisoner to those who hated the Lannisters.

Whilst Joffrey had been in her room it had been as almost nothing had changed between them. He had kissed and embraced her with a passion greater than ever before. He attempted to take it further but she had refused and unlike before he actually listened, not pressuring her.

Her door was knocked on and then opened and stood there was someone Joanna didn't expect to see.

Jaime Lannister stood in the doorway, looking completely different to when she had last seen him. His long flowing blonde curls had been cut short and his usual decadent, shiny armour had been replaced by simple cotton clothes that looked strange on him.

Joanna could do nothing but stare

in shock as she was surprised into immobility. Smiling warmly Jaime approached her and drew her into his arms.

Once Joanna had regained control of her body she returned the hug more than equally. Her worst fear had been never seeing the man who she considered her father figure again so this was a huge weight off of her shoulders.

"How... What happened... I don't know..." Joanna stumbled as she struggled to form sentences.

Releasing his niece her brought her over to the bed where they sat down.

"Brienne returned me to Kings Landing expecting to receive Arya Stark in return."

"So what happened to her?" Joanna asked curiously, wondering how her lie turned out.

"She is currently being held in the cells for treason against Joffrey. If she doesn't confess she will be executed." Jaime explained, brushing a stray damp curl from his daughters face.
Joanna scoffed. "Confessing didn't protect Ned Stark."

"Their situations are very different. Joffrey can be more easily controlled now. You help with his unpredictability."

She nodded. "I agree. Besides Lord Stark was making outrageous accusations. Brienne isn't doing that."

"Joanna..." Jaime sighed. "You do understand that if she is to be execute then she has nothing to lose. She might make claims about you and Joffrey."

Her face fell as she remembered that both her uncle and the knight knew her secret.

"Joanna I just want you to know that I don't think any less of you for who you love and want to be with. I believe in true love and true love knows no limitations. We love who we love and no matter what we do we can't hide it. I see no crime in love. No one knows what true love is like twins. That feeling of having one person who makes you complete and you can't live without. However the rest of the world doesn't understand and they can't possibly comprehend your feelings so your life will be hid. You'll have to constantly hide your feelings and watch the person you love marry someone else as you live a lie."

As Jaime finished his speech Joanna's mind started putting things together. The more her uncle spoke of forbidden love and twins the more things became clear in her head.

A sudden realisation hit her and she thought herself a fool for not realising it sooner.

"Your my father."
Chapter 25

For most the betrothal of Joffrey Baratheon to Margaery Tyrell was a joyous occasion and it was clear that the young widow was favoured much more than Sansa Stark. Joanna never thought that she would ever pick the Stark girl as her favourite in anything, let alone marrying Joffrey but after meeting Margaery she would even walk Sansa down the aisle herself.

Margaery was pretty and polite and witty, and Joanna hated it all. She may not be as pretty or smart as Joanna, much to Joffrey's assurance, but there was something about her perky attitude that annoyed her immensely. Joffrey had assured her repeatedly that he wasn't going to fall in love with her and that the affection he was showing was all an act but she couldn't help becoming jealous watching them laugh and talk together.

Since Joanna's return she couldn't have felt more alone. Joffrey was enamoured with Margaery and her mother was spending much of her time with Jaime or resolving political matters. After her revelation that Jaime was in fact her father, it made her cringe every time both him and her mother were missing. She wasn't disgusted with them, she couldn't be when she was guilty of the exact same thing, however it didn't stop her wishing that she had never known. Shortly after her discovery she realised that it meant that her siblings didn't have any right to the throne. Ned Stark had been right in his accusations, and he had been executed for it, however in Joffrey's defence he had no idea of the truth in his words.

However Joffrey had been King Robert's heir, he had raised him, no matter how poor a job he did. All four of his 'children' had been raised as Baratheon's, but now her mother's insistence that they embrace their Lannister side became more understandable. Luckily she and Joffrey were in a better situation than their parents had been. But it was all going to be ruined if Joff decided he preferred Margaery Tyrell to her.

"You look adorable when you're jealous." Joffrey chuckled, as they awoke from their night shared together. It had been common for Joanna to spend the night in her brothers chambers, to prevent rumours Joanna made sure that her uncle was on guard duty those nights.

Scowling and scoffing she replied. "I am not jealous! I just don't want you to replace me."

"How could I ever replace you? You're my twin, my other half, she will just be my wife and mother of my children."

Hearing it said out loud froze the air in Joanna's lungs. "I thought I was going to have your children. Can't you."

"Joanna..." Joffrey warned, his tone darkening. "I must have an heir with Margaery, as you must have a child with your husband. After that we can have a few together."

In protest Joanna stormed out of the bed, wrapping the sheets around her naked figure. Sitting herself down on a chair she folded her arms and glared. "So her son will grow up to be King whilst mine will be nothing more than a lowly Lord."

He sighed and approached his sister, placing a hand on her shoulder which she immediately removed. "What do you want me to do? Not give her a child?"

"If she finds herself unable to have a child you could remain married to her out of 'love' and then declare my son, your son as your heir."
"It isn't that simple!" He exclaimed, pulling his twin up so that they were looking eye to eye. Pulling her close he dropped the sheet that was protecting their modesty.

"Then I'll make it simple." Joanna smiled sweetly. "Agree to my idea or I'll agree to marry whoever mother wants. Even if it means we never see each other again."

Joffrey called her bluff. "I am the King. I decide who you marry."

Joanna dressed quickly without a word and left on a war path.

JOFFREY

"Loras Tyrell!!" He shouted as he stormed into his sisters chambers. "You agreed to marry Loras Tyrell!"

Not even bothering to close the door behind him he marched up to Joanna and grabbed her arms forcefully. Despite his harsh grip obviously causing her pain he shook her aggressively. There was an anger in his eyes that Joanna had never seen directed towards her before and for the first time in her life Joanna has genuinely terrified.

"You said that I must marry and give my husband an heir. Isn't this what you wanted?" She exclaimed, struggling to free herself.

"I was to be the one who chose your husband. Everyone knows that he is a pansy who prefers the company of men. What were you thinking?"

Joanna waited for him to calm down slightly before she gave her answer, bruises beginning to form on her arms. "Exactly. He prefers the company of men. He will never truly love me and will probably be grateful that I don't want him in bed."

Joffrey scoffed and released her. "Would you really be happy being married to a man who can never love you?"

Slowly stroking her brother's arm Joanna replied sadly. "I will never be truly happy until I marry the man I love-you."

"If he ever mistreats you, I-" Joffrey began, his previous anger diminishing.

Joanna nodded, understanding. "I know, sweet love. I just have to lay with him until I am with child."

"Do you want to have his child?"

The question threw her. "I….I want a child."

"That's not what I asked." Joffrey retorted. "Would bearing his child make you forget about your wish to have one with me?"

All this talk of babes made Joanna's stomach ache in longing of the child she had lost in secret. She had made an agreement with herself to never speak of her pregnancy to anyone, especially Joffrey but hearing him speaking of children was almost too much to bear.

"I want your child, Joff, more than you can ever imagine. After I give the flowery young knight I will give you a child of our own. A golden boy with my eyes and your hair or a girl with my hair and your eyes or we may even be blessed with twins. I would give anything to hold a child of our
Once she said those words her body tensed up. Hopefully Joffrey hadn't quite heard what she had said but as usual with her brother he paid attention to every minute thing she did.

"Replace?" He asked, curiously, "What do you mean replace?"

Joanna struggled to think of an excuse for her words but sentences failed her. She fumbled, not a sound emerging from her dry mouth as her brothers expression grew darker.

"Joanna, tell me." He ordered. "I may be your brother but I am also your King, tell me what you meant."

A single tear rolled down Joanna's cheek as Joffrey reached out to grab her arm and the tear rolled off her chin on to his arm. The tear was quickly joined by a second and a third and within seconds Joanna was in tears, sobbing into her brother's arms. Despite being unsure of what was happening Joffrey pulled her on to the bed and held her in his arms.

"I was with child… when I….. went to get uncle Jaime… at the Stark camp…. I didn't know…" Her words were interrupted by involuntary sobs. "I didn't know…. How did I not know… How did I not realise…. I should have felt something…. Anything."

Once her muffled words died out they just sat there in silence, Joanna's head resting against his chest as he held her.

"What happened?" The usually arrogant and cocky man had evaporated and had left behind a young boy.

"I lost it."

Stroking her head as she began crying again, Joffrey replied. "It wasn't your fault. Don't worry. I will make the Stark's pay for it. They killed our child. They are to blame."

And so the lovers lay there in mourning for hours, forgetting all responsibilities as their father guarded the door and prayed that they can have the life that he and Cersei wanted.
Joanna was surprised to hear that the Lady Margaery had invited her to break fast with both her and her grandmother, a few days after the announcement of the engagements. She was sick of seeing the Tyrell rose wherever she went, the sigil was entirely stupid and pointless to the young lioness. Roses could easily be destroyed and once cut would soon wither. They may have thorns but it would not be difficult to locate and remove them. Actually, the rose rather suited the Tyrells, pretty to look at but nothing special once closely examined.

She had not intention of accepting the invitation until the Queen had told her that the Lady Margaery and her crone grandmother may take offence at her rejection and following her marriage she would have to call them family. So she made sure to have her handmaidens wake her and bathe her with good time of the meeting but soon dismissed them to ready herself. Whilst she would soon be a Tyrell in name Joanna had no intention of her future 'family' forget that she was a Lannister, more so than they could imagine. For that reason she wore a elegant gown of crimson with gold thread decorating the bodice. Her hair was styled in an intricate southern manner that had rubies intertwined in her curls. It was perhaps a bit formal for the occasion but she had a flair for the dramatic, as did her mother.

She arrived at Margaery's chambers in good time and sat at a small table was the lady herself but her grandmother was nowhere to be seen.

"Joanna!" The girl cried and rushed forward to embrace her. She was about to remind her that was a princess and should be treated in an appropriate manner but she forced herself to bite her tongue.

"You look even more radiant than usual, your highness. I only wish that I had as many fine gowns as you as to wear them at leisure."

Joanna replied as warmly as she could. "Lady Margaery, I thank you for our invitation. Will your grandmother be joined us or is she not well? I hope she feels no pressure to attend if she is feeling her age."

As see as she said it the Queen of Thorns herself emerged from behind a curtain, smiling smugly as if she knew something no one else did.

"I see you have your mothers charms as well as her subtlety." The crone remarked, seating herself facing Joanna.

Both girls seated and immediately food was placed in front of them. Some of the foods were more unfamiliar to her, no doubt brought from Highgarden and Joanna forced herself to try them.

"I was surprised to hear of your engagement to my grandson, as was the King from what I have been told." Lady Olenna stared at Joanna, watching her reactions carefully to such an extent it was making her want to squirm.

"I'm sure it will only strengthen the alliance between our families. My mother and grandfather are please that I will join such a noble house as yours."

Lady Olenna chuckled dryly. "I told my son that Margaery's marriage was all the alliance we needed but my fool of a son wanted a Lannister to rule Highgarden."

"I'm sure that a Baratheon" she stressed "at Highgarden will be valuable for the years to come."

Joanna was beginning to tire of the crones poorly veiled threats and actually began to feel sorry for
Margaery who had to listen to her all day.

"Speaking of marriage, what is Joffrey's character." Margaery queried. "Sadly I have only began to know His Highness yet who knows his better than his twin. Speak truthfully I ask you."

This silly girl couldn't dream of understand Joffrey, let alone make him love her and the notion of him fooling for her became pitiful.

"Joffrey is a kind and just ruler who-"

"No girl," Olenna interrupted with a dismissive wave. "What will he be like as a husband?"

This Joanna didn't know. She knew what he was like with her as a lover but how he would treat Margaery she had no clue. "As good and gentle husband as I'm sure Ser Loras will be to me, I am sure."

It was Margaery who replied. "Loras is noble and gallant, as well as a noble Lord once my father passes. It was kind for the King to allow him to take a wife whilst remaining in his guard."

These questions and half-answers continued for several minutes until Margaery was called away for a dress fitting, leaving the young lioness and the Thorn Queen alone.

"Now we are alone I can ask the real questions." She began, leaning forward in her chair, locking eyes with Joanna. "Can I have your word that this silly thing will stop before the weddings?"

Her eyes narrowed in confusion, words failing her as she tried to interpret the older woman's words. "I don't understand..."

"I am not blind nor deaf child. I know that you will never truly love Loras as he will never love you. You both have other preferences."

Sensing where the conversation was heading Joanna stated. "Ser Loras prefers to share his bed with men."

"As you share yours with your brother." Lady Olenna was bold enough to state.

"How dare you accuse me of such a thing!" Joanna denied, standing up abruptly.

"Calm yourself! You and my grandson will keep each other's secrets and in return you will provide Loras with an heir... A Tyrell heir."

Joanna decided she had had enough of this embarrassment and stormed out of the chambers, she cheeks a rosy pink. Her anger remained until she passed Ser Loras in the corridor.

Grabbing his arm she pulled him into the nearest room, an used guest room that would not be interrupted.

"What-" The handsome knight shouted as Joanna pushed him to the wall.

"We need to talk." She announced, releasing him and straightening her gown.

Loras laughed. "You made it clear that you wanted my attention. I assumed you wanted to fight or fuck."

Sighing Joanna retorted. "And in both cases you'd be wishing I was my uncle Renly."
The young man tried to find his words but she saved him the effort.

"I want to make a deal."

He nodded "Ok, what is it?"

"We both want to spend as little time in the marriage bed as possible but there is also the matter of producing an heir. I propose that we spend as little time together as possible to produce a son for you to name heir then we can continue laying with whoever we wish as long as we are discreet."

Loras remained silent as he thought through the terms. Eventually he nodded.

"I don't care whether you sleep with a man or even another woman, our affairs will be our own, but make a fool out of me and you will regret it. Remember a Lannister always pays their debts."

In silent agreement the pair left the room as quickly as they had entered it and no one was any wiser of the events that had happened.
The weeks before the weddings passed quickly but Joanna was not given any input into any part of the arrangements. Her dress had been designed by the finest dressmakers in Kings Landing and Cersei had made sure Margaery's dress would look simple in comparison.

But despite all the preparations Joanna couldn't help but feel nervous. Not about marriage or the bedding, both her and Loras had agreed to not consummate their marriage that night. What made her truly anxious was the thought of leaving her family. It had been agreed that following the wedding Joanna and new husband would travel to Highgarden until she gave Loras an heir and then he would return to his duties guarding the King.

Joanna had retired early the night before the wedding, desperate to get away from anyone who wasn't family. She had spent the first few hours struggling to sleep so she had a cup of wine to assist her. Luckily it had worked and within minutes she had drifted to a dreamless sleep.

Soon night had fallen on the city but the noises from outside suggested that the city was coming to life. The common people were ecstatic for this wedding as the Tyrell siblings were beloved, much more so than the Baratheon ones.

Slowly emerging from her sleep Joanna felt her bed being stirred. The covers were being lifted from her body but she was still too drowsy to protest.

It was a caress of her leg that truly woke her and she immediately sat up only to see her brother sitting on the edge of the bed, naked as his name day.

"Joffrey... What are you doing here?"

They had spent little time together since the engagements, and they certainly hadn't had time to share a bed.

Smiling her brother climbed in beside her. "Tomorrow we will both belong to another in the eyes of the law but I want you to know that you will always be mine."

Joanna reached for her brothers hand and held it tightly. "Together forever?"

"Forever and ever." He replied softly, leaning his head forward.

Their mouths met and for once Joanna led the embrace. A moan escaped both of their lips as she wrapped her arms around Joffrey's neck, her eyes closing.

Without any provoking Joanna slipped off her nightgown and Joffrey took back control, making her feel better than she had in weeks. Others may say what they were doing was disgusting and an abomination but as Joanna became one with her brother she wondered how it could be anything less than perfect. They were born as one and neither of them were truly prepared for the other to be separated.

She had seen the looks the servants would give her but they didn't bother her, nobody would believe them if they told someone. Some knew for certain, the Hound had stood guard outside of Joffrey's chambers long enough to know and hear what was happening but he had gone missing after the Blackwater Battle. Jaime knew, but considering he was guilty of the same crime and more he could be trusted. Joanna assumed that he other uncle knew, he seemed to know everything that was going on but both mother and grandfather hated him so he posed no threat. The bigger threat to
her happiness was not the secret of her incest, it was that of her parents, or the lack of secrecy.
Thanks to Ned Stark and her former uncle Stannis most of Westeros at least suspected that they
were bastards. Though luckily he didn't know about her and Joffrey.

It was her other uncle that she had cared for more, Renly, and once she had heard of his deaths she
actually cried, which she wouldn't do following Stannis's demise. It made her squirm slightly
knowing that her soon-to-be husband had bedded her uncle though remembering that they actually
shared no blood made her feel better.

Soon the couple lay side by side, too exhausted for Joffrey to return to his own chambers. Only a
single candle lit the room but as it flickered and her view of her brother became hazy she saw his
expression change.

"I don't want this to end." Joanna sighed, grieving the end of their relationship for a while.

"Aren't you tired?" He asked, spinning a finger around one of her curls.

"I don't mean right now, though that as well." Joanna sat up, not caring to cover herself. Turning to
Joffrey she said: "I mean us, whatever it is that we have. Tomorrow I'll be a Tyrell and my home
will be Highgarden. It may be many months until we see each other. Instead of you I will have to
be with Loras. You will have Margaery in bed instead of me. What if a few years pass and you
don't even love me anymore, not in the way we do now."

"Joanna..." Joffrey chuckled. "That would never happen."

Her doubts were sated only for a moment when more insecurities came pouring out.

"What if Loras is unable to do his duty as a husband? What if he can't get me with child? What if I
never have a child and..."

Tears were threatening to escape her eyes as her body began to shake.

"Then I will find a reason to bring you back to Kings Landing and I will give you a child. I couldn't
stand seeing you a childless old woman, you are better than that."

"You swear?"

"I promise you."

Placing a hand over her stomach Joanna lay down and faced the ceiling. As she lay next to Joffrey
a great sense of nostalgia washed over her as she remembered all the times they would sneak into
each other's rooms and do nothing but hold hands and sleep. The innocence of those moments had
all gone but she reached out and grasped her twin's hand as if they were children again. The past
few months had been hard on both of them, they were forced to grow up, Joff especially, in a few
days he turned from a young prince into the King, the most powerful boy in the seven kingdoms.
He had changed a lot in that time, and Joanna wasn't blind to his faults, but she wouldn't judge him.
The rest of the world was doing that for her.
Chapter 28

The morning of her wedding Joanna woke alone. Reaching a hand out she discovered the mattress was still warm meaning her brother hadn't left too long ago. Daylight was only just breaking through the window but the harsh light momentarily blinded her as she sat up. It was then that she realised that she would never go to bed as Princess Joanna Baratheon again, after the wedding she would be Lady Joanna Tyrell, much to her displeasure. No longer would this be her home, instead she would be residing far away, and she wished that she had at least been allowed to visit Highgarden once before the marriage.

Slowly she roused herself from the bed and wandered to her wardrobe. Opening it she saw almost all red and gold, the Lannister colours. Prior to the King's death she had owned only one black and gold gown, but after she had discovered the truth of her parentage keeping it just seemed wrong so she accidently ripped it.

Soon a dozen handmaidens, both her own and her mother's came to dress her. Silently they dressed her and did her hair, whilst Joanna just sat there, refusing to smile. Once they had finished and left she stood in front of the mirror and she could barely recognise the girl looking back at her. She was so used to wearing strong, bold colours that the pale shades of the dress gave her a ghostly look in her opinion.

As befitting her royal status the gown was exquisite, made of a fine, cream material that hugged her body before flowing out gradually to the floor. Patterns covered the dress, golden thread outlining flowers and even a lion was seen chasing its tail around the skirt. The sleeves were short and left her arms bare but they would soon be covered by her maiden cloak.

Her curls had been curled even more and left mostly down, forming a golden halo around her face. The front strands were plaited and pulled to the back and a small lace hair net was woven with them at the very back. The jewellery was all golden and most importantly a lion locket sat upon her neck, a gift from her mother for her wedding.

The door opening interrupting her musing and the noise made her spin round suddenly. Stood there was her mother, dressed finely herself. Unable to stop herself Joanna rushed forward and threw her arms around Cersei. Without a word the Queen Regent returned the embrace, clutching her oldest daughter firmly.

"Joanna… my beautiful daughter… my little lioness…"

Sucking in a deep breath she admitted. "I'm scared."

Cersei moved her daughter to the chairs of the balcony from where they could see the final wedding preparations being made. She looked at her daughter and grasped her hands.

"It is normal to be scared, darling, you are being sold to another family. I felt much the same when I was married to your father. My advice to you is to be strong. It may seem hard but ignore your weaknesses and eventually they will disappear. Men are cruel and in the end will only cause you heartache so don't allow yourself to become close to your husband. Love only your children and your blood because everyone else will turn on you."

Nodding Joanna sighed. "Can I return here soon?"

No matter how many years she would spend in Highgarden she knew that Kings Landing would
always be her home, and she would do anything to remain here.

"It's up to your husband but I'm sure Joffrey would find a way to allow you to visit. He would do anything for you."

"And I would do anything for him too." Joanna stated, trying to ignore the butterflies in her stomach.

"No one can ever understand the love between twins and you will never find that kind of love again. Cherish it and know that you can always rely on each other."

Joanna understood more from that statement than her mother meant her too. Cersei was right. It couldn't be a coincidence that her and Joffrey loved each other as their parents had. Twins were a part of each other and trying to deny the connection would cause nothing but pain.

Cersei turned to her and placed a hand on her cheek, smiling. "You look so much like me when I was your age, just as beautiful. But I know for a fact that your marriage will be happier than mine was."

Joanna scoffed dismissively. "That isn't hard. You and... father, you couldn't have been more ill-suited to each other."

"Yet my life has turned out wonderful. My son is the King, I have 4 beautiful children and your father isn't here. My suffering has been worthwhile and I know that yours will be too."

She imagined having to spend years pretending to be happy next to a man she didn't love and that moment she wanted nothing more than to find Joffrey and run away to somewhere where no one had ever heard of them.

The door opened just as Joanna the knot in her stomach became unbearable. Stood there was her uncle Jaime. Referring to him as her father still felt strange so old habits stuck.

"Jaime will be taking the place of your father." Cersei explained, taking her daughters hands.

Joanna pulled away from her mother and embraced her uncle-father. He returned the embrace for only a few seconds before he release her and hugged his sister.

"How is she?" he asked, concerned.

"Worried, as she has every right to be." Cersei stroked Joanna's cheek, a sad smile on her face. "But she is a Lannister lion and she will survive."

This answer didn't please Jaime and his face twisted in anger. "I don't want Joanna to just survive. What kind of life is that for a young beautiful girl? She deserves a life where sadness and loneliness are unknown and a smile never leaves her face. The moment Joanna starts living your life, dear sister, is the moment Loras Tyrell dies. I don't care how many wars it will start, if that boy hurts her then those Tyrells can take their bloody roses and shove-"

Joanna interrupted quickly. "No need uncle. If my soon-to-be husband hurts me in any way he will learn that even lionesses have claws."

Cersei turned to her daughter and held her close. "My brave little lion. We have to go now but remember this: never forget who you are and be strong and one day it will be easier."
Chapter 29

The two couples stood side with the Baratheon twins in the middle, the hands barely touching. Margaery had been led to the alter by her father, a man that Joanna hated with a passion. There wasn't a particular reason for her dislike but she found something unnerving about how long Lord Tyrell had lasted in power with the little intelligence he had. He couldn't stop grinning, overjoyed that his children were to be married to royalty. Joanna had barely said two sentences to her future father but with the emphasis he was putting on his daughters marriage, his sons marriage was slightly overshadowed in his eyes.

Jaime Lannister had taken the place of Robert Baratheon though Joanna knew that it was his rightful place. For once he was dressed in Lannister red and gold instead of his white Kingsguard uniform. Walking to the alter side by side the resemblance was obvious but Joanna couldn't help but stare at her betrothed who even she had to admit was stunning.

All four stood side-by-side between the towering gilded statues of the Father and the Mother and as the sun sparkled through the windows they seemed to shine.

Margaery was in ivory silk and Myrish lace, her skirts decorated with floral patterns picked out in seed pearls. As Renly's widow, she might have worn the Baratheon colors, gold and black, yet she came to them a Tyrell, in a maiden's cloak made of a hundred cloth-of-gold roses sewn to green cloth. Her brother wore the same cloak and his clothes matched, the literal embodiment of his house.

Joffrey looked near as splendid as his bride, in his doublet of dusky rose, beneath a cloak of deep crimson velvet blazoned with his stag and lion. The crown rested easily on his curls, gold on gold but kept wobbling as he continued to glance at his sister beside him. He could not stand still, and for the first time ever Joanna knew that her brother was truly scared. Joffrey had told her that morning that he required the wine to get married to a girl he didn't love but she was more worried that the alcohol would loosen his tongue and was at the risk of saying things he would regret.

The princess wore a gown that more than rivalled Margaery's. It was white with gold accents that shone as the light hit it. The material flowed and fit tightly to Joanna's lithe figure. Her sleeves were long and reached her fingers where she wore a red ring that had been a gift from her mother.

He ought to have seen it long ago.

Tyrion watched the young siblings as they were about to be married to people they didn't love and he knew that they would rather be marrying each other. At that moment Joanna and Joffrey looked exactly like Cersei and Jaime and Tyrion mused why his family where cursed to love those they couldn't have.

The seven vows were made, the seven blessings invoked, and the seven promises exchanged. When the wedding song had been sung and the challenge had gone unanswered, it was time for the exchange of cloaks.

Mace Tyrell removed his daughter's maiden cloak tenderly, while Joffrey accepted the cloak. He draped Margaery in the crimson-and-gold and leaned close to fasten it at her throat. The attention then turned to the Knights of Flowers who placed his green and gold cloak on his wife after Jaime had removed her Lannister and Baratheon one.

"With this kiss I pledge my love! " Joffrey declared in ringing tones. When Margaery echoed the
words he pulled her close and kissed her lightly and without passion. The young bride closed her eyes during the embrace but Joffrey's eyes were wide open as he stared coldly at a point in the distance. Pulling away after only a second he turned away from the bride to watch as his sister repeated the vows with Loras. Their kiss was as equally lifeless however rainbow lights danced about the High Septon's crown as he solemnly declared Joffrey of the Houses Baratheon and Lannister and Margaery of House Tyrell and Joanna of the Houses Baratheon and Lannister and Loras of House Tyrell to be one flesh, one heart, one soul.

As the wedding ended the procession began. Joanna smiled as Tommen, scattering rose petals from a basket before the king and queen. After the couples followed Queen Cersei and Lord Tyrell, then Lady Tyrell with Lord Tywin. The Queen of Thorns tottered after them with one hand on Ser Kevan Lannister's arm and the other on her cane, her twin guardsmen close behind her in case she fell. Looking back Joanna cringed as she watched her uncle Tyrion walk alone, no Lady was had been willing to partner him.

Joanna all but ignored her new husband as they made the journey back to the Red Keep in their extravagant litter. Loras had his head out, waving to the common folk as his sister did but this pleasantness didn't come as naturally to Joanna and her twin who awkwardly smiled at them. She had never understand why she had to pretend to care for the poor, they would be just as poor whether or not she smiled at them. However her mother had taught her manners so she reluctantly joined her husband.

"Are you okay, Joanna?" He asked as the crowd dimmed and they neared the end of the journey.

She was about to lie but something happened in her mind and Joanna made a realisation. If she lied then what would be gained? Loras was no longer a distant stranger, he was the man she had to spend the rest of her life with. She didn't want to start their union too unpleasantly as she would just be setting herself up for years of misery. So instead she replied honestly:

"I am not fond of the common folk. I don't understand your fondness for them."

Loras seems surprised by her honesty but nonetheless explained himself to her.

"Margaery once told me something years ago that I still remember to this day. It isn't the King that makes a kingdom but the common folk. What good is a king if his army refuses to fight for him? Or his own subjects rebel? Wars aren't fought by the rulers but by the individuals that are fighting for them."

This answer shocked Joanna into silence, she closed the litter curtain and turned away from her husband.

Although evenfall was still an hour away, the throne room was already a blaze of light, with torches burning in every sconce. The guests stood along the tables as heralds called out the names and titles of the lords and ladies making their entrance. Pages in the royal livery escorted them down the broad central aisle. The gallery above was packed with musicians; drummers and pipers and fiddlers, strings and horns and skins.

Joffrey and Margaery rode into the throne room on matched white chargers and a few seconds later Joanna and Loras followed. Pages ran before them, scattering rose petals under their hooves. The king and queen had changed for the feast as well. Joffrey wore striped black-and-crimson breeches and a cloth-of-gold doublet with black satin sleeves and onyx studs. Margaery had exchanged the demure gown that she had worn in the sept for one much more revealing, a confection in pale green samite with a tight-laced bodice that bared her shoulders and the tops of her small breasts. Unbound, her soft brown hair tumbled over her white shoulders and down her back almost to her
waist. Around her brows was a slim golden crown. Her smile was shy and sweet.

Where Margaery was sweet and lovely Joanna was stunning and magnificent. The innocent act had never suited the young girl and her outfit echoed that perfectly. Her gown was crimson with a deep neck and long, hanging sleeves. A golden belt sat around her waist and red ribbons were interwoven in her hair in a plaited updo that Cersei was known to wear. Joanna wanted to look intimidating and as the spitting image of Cersei Lannister it wasn't hard.

The Kingsguard escorted them onto the dais, to the seats of honor beneath the shadow of the Iron Throne, draped for the occasion in long silk streamers of Baratheon gold, Lannister crimson, and Tyrell green. Cersei embraced Joanna and Margaery and kissed their cheeks, with Joanna's kiss lasting much longer and holding more emotion. Lord Tywin did the same, and then Lancel and Ser Kevan. Joffrey received loving kisses from the bride's father and his new brother, Loras.

Joanna and Margaery exchanged pleasantries before Joanna was finally met by her brother. Joffrey was staring intensely at her and embrace her in a manner that was not quite appropriate for a brother. Her grandfather cleared his throat and the pair quickly separated, not wishing to anger him.

When the king and queen had taken their seats with the new Lord and Lady Tyrell beside them the High Septon rose to lead a prayer.

"Let the cups be filled!" Joffrey proclaimed, when the gods had been given their due. His cupbearer poured a whole flagon of dark Arbor red into the golden wedding chalice that Lord Tyrell had given him that morning. The king had to use both hands to lift it. "To my wife the queen!"

"Margaery!" the hall shouted back at him. "Margaery! Margaery! To the queen!" A thousand cups rang together, and the wedding feast was well and truly began.

Margaery, of course, smiling sweetly as she and Joffrey shared a drink from the great seven-sided wedding chalice.

Joffrey then once again turned to the guests and raised his cup.

"To my beautiful sister Joanna."

The response was less enthusiastic than the previous toast, the princess was less loved.

Joanna took this as a signal to start drinking and as she hadn't the stomach for food she found herself become tipsy very quickly. The next few hours and performers passed as a blur as she was forced to converse with various lords and ladies and watch acts that she couldn't care less for.

Soon it was full night outside the tall windows, and Joanna thought the festivities would never end. But suddenly Joffrey lurched suddenly to his feet. "Bring on my royal jousters!" he shouted in a voice thick with wine, clapping his hands together.

Then a pair of riders entered side by side. A wave of laughter followed them down the center aisle toward the table and Joanna couldn't help but laugh with the obsurdity of the sight.

The jousters were a pair of dwarfs. One was mounted on an ugly grey dog, long of leg and heavy of jaw. The other rode an immense spotted sow. Painted wooden armor clattered and clacked as the little knights bounced up and down in their saddles. Their shields were bigger than they were, and they wrestled manfully with their lances as they clomped along, swaying this way and that and
eliciting gusts of mirth. One knight was all in gold, with a black stag painted on his shield; the other wore grey and white, and bore a wolf device. Their mounts were barded likewise. Tyrion glanced along the dais at all the laughing faces. Joffrey was red and breathless, Tommen was hooting and hopping up and down in his seat, Cersei was chuckling politely, and even Lord Tywin looked mildly amused.

The wine had all gone to Joanna's head and her boredom immediately vanished as she couldn't help but start laughing like the rest of her family. Glancing at her imp uncle she saw that he was trying not to look at the dwarfs. Giggling Joanna turned to her uncle, a smirk across her face. "Are you not impressed dear uncle? Doesn't this show that you have the potential to entertain? Maybe one day who can be as useful as your fellow beasts." Joanna couldn't stop he inner thoughts coming out as wine clouded her decisions.

As the act came to a close Joffrey was snorting wine from both nostrils. Gasping, he lurched to his feet, almost knocking over his tall two-handed chalice. "A champion," he shouted. "We have a champion!" The hall began to quiet when it was seen that the king was speaking. The dwarfs untangled, no doubt anticipating the royal thanks. "Not a true champion, though," said Joff. "A true champion defeats all challengers." The king climbed up on the table. "Who else will challenge our tiny champion?"

Joanna suddenly clapped and a giggle escaped her mouth. "Oh Joff, I have the best idea!"

She turned to Tyrion with a smile, watching his face flash with fear

"Uncle! You'll defend the honor of Joffy's realm, won't you? You can ride the pig!"

Laughing Joffrey stumbled over to his twin and pulled her up, embracing her haphazardly. "What a wonderful idea dear sister."

The laughter crashed over him like a wave. Tyrion Lannister rose in anger. He twisted his face into the most hideous mockery of a smile the Seven Kingdoms had ever seen. "Your Grace," he called, "I'll ride the pig... but only if you ride the dog!"

Joff scowled, confused. "Me? I'm no dwarf. Why me?"

Joanna frowned, this wasn't happening how she thought it would.

Stepped right into the cut, Joff. "Why, you're the only man in the hall that I'm certain of defeating!"

Joanna gasped dramatically, glaring at her uncle in dismay.

The dwarf hopped back to the floor well satisfied, and by the time he looked back Ser Osmund and Ser Meryn were helping Joff climb down as well. When he noticed Cersei glaring at him, Tyrion blew her a kiss.

Joffrey approached Tyrion, red-faced and staggering, wine slopping over the rim of the great golden wedding chalice he carried in both hands. "Your Grace," was all he had time to say before the king upended the chalice over his head. The wine washed down over his face in a red torrent. It drenched his hair, stung his eyes, burned in his wound, ran down his cheeks, and soaked the velvet of his new doublet. "How do you like that, Imp?" Joffrey mocked.

Having completely improved the mood, Joanna applauded Joffrey, smiling proudly at her twin.

Tyrion's eyes were on fire. He dabbed at his face with the back of a sleeve and tried to blink the world back into clarity. "That was ill done, Your Grace." A knight whispered.
"Not at all, Ser. Not every king would think to honor a humble subject by serving him from his own royal chalice. A pity the wine spilled."

"It didn't spill," said Joffrey, too graceless to take the retreat Tyrion offered him. "And I wasn't serving you, either."

Queen Margaery appeared suddenly at Joffrey's elbow. "My sweet king," the Tyrell girl entreated, "come, return to your place, there's another toast."

Joanna internally glared at the other girl and her silly ways. If she tried to ensnare her Joffrey with her wonton ways then she was to be poorly mistaken. There was no way Joff would ever leave his true love, Joanna told herself.

"I have no wine," Joffrey declared. "How can I drink a toast if I have no wine? Uncle Imp, you can serve me. Since you won't joust you'll be my cupbearer."

"I would be most honored."

"It's not meant to be an honor!" Joffrey screamed. "Bend down and pick up my chalice." Tyrion did as he was bid, but as he reached for the handle Joff kicked the chalice through his legs. "Pick it up! Are you as clumsy as you are ugly?" He had to crawl under the table to find the thing. "Good, now fill it with wine." He claimed a flagon from a serving girl and filled the goblet three-quarters full. "No, on your knees, dwarf." Kneeling, Tyrion raised up the heavy cup cautiously. But Joffrey took the wedding chalice one-handed, drank deep, and set it on the table. "You can get up now, Uncle."

Tyrion had to grab hold of a chair to steady himself. Joffrey laughed, and Cersei as well. Joanna smirked, happy the entertainment had improved.

"Your Grace." Lord Tywin's voice was impeccably correct. "They are bringing in the pie. Your sword is needed."

"The pie?" Joffrey took his queen by the hand. "Come, my lady, it's the pie. Dear sister, Ser Loras, join us."

The guests stood, shouting and applauding and smashing their wine cups together as the great pie made its slow way down the length of the hall, wheeled along by a half-dozen beaming cooks. Two yards across it was, crusty and golden brown, and they could hear squeaks and thumpings coming from inside it.

The young couples met beside the pie and Joffrey placed one hand on Joanna's waist before drawing his sword. As Joff drew his sword, Margaery laid a hand on his arm to restrain him. "Widow's Wail was not meant for slicing pies."

Scoffing Joanna announced. "Ser Ilyn, your sword!"

From the shadows at the back of the hall, Ser Ilyn Payne appeared.

Ser Ilyn bowed before the king and queen and Joanna and Loras ans reached back over his shoulder, and drew forth six feet of ornate silver bright with runes. He knelt to offer the huge blade to Joffrey, hilt first; points of red fire winked from ruby eyes on the pommel, a chunk of dragonglass carved in the shape of a grinning skull.

Joffrey was about to offer the sword to Margaery when instead he turned to his sister.

"Join me Joanna."
Joffrey and Joanna joined hands to lift the greatsword and swung it down together in a silvery arc, much to Margaery's annoyance. When the piecrust broke, the doves burst forth in a swirl of white feathers, scattering in every direction, flapping for the windows and the rafters. A roar of delight went up from the benches, and the fiddlers and pipers in the gallery began to play a sprightly tune. Joff took his bride in his arms, and whirled her around merrily.

As the pie was being served Joanna noticed that Tyrion was attempting to leave.

But before he could make his retreat, Joffrey was back. "Uncle, where are you going? You're my cupbearer, remember?"

"I need to change into fresh garb, Your Grace. May I have your leave?"

"No. I like the look of you this way. Serve me my wine. Fill Joanna's at the same time, her cup appears to be empty."

The king's chalice was on the table where he'd left it. Tyrion had to climb back onto his chair to reach it. Joff yanked it from his hands and drank long and deep, his throat working as the wine ran purple down his chin.

Joanna's cup was filled and she immediately took a sip before she began to feel sick. Noticing her pale face Loras remarked: "perhaps you've had enough wine for tonight." He removed the cup from in front of her.

"My lord," Margaery said, "we should return to our places. Lord Buckler wants to toast us."

"My uncle hasn't eaten his pigeon pie." Holding the chalice one-handed, Joff jammed his other into Tyrion's pie. "It's ill luck not to eat the pie," he scolded as he filled his mouth with hot spiced pigeon. "See, it's good." Spitting out flakes of crust, he coughed and helped himself to another fistful. "Dry, though. Needs washing down." Joff took a swallow of wine and coughed again, more violently. "I want to see, kof, see you ride that, kof kof, pig, Uncle. I want..." His words broke up in a fit of coughing.

Joanna was about to go to her brother when her throat felt sore. She was finding it harder to breathe and she couldn't get enough air into her lungs. Watching her distress Loras handed her a cup of water which downed, attempted to clear her throat.

The world began to blur as the water had no effect. Her breaths became harsher as she tried to draw air into

"It's, kof, the pie, noth—kof, pie." Joff took another drink, or tried to, but all the wine came spewing back out when another spate of coughing doubled him over. His face was turning red. "I, kof, I can't, kof kof kof kof..." The chalice slipped from his hand and dark red wine went running across the dais.

"He's choking," Queen Margaery gasped.

Her grandmother moved to her side. "Help the poor boy!" the Queen of Thorns screeched, in a voice ten times her size. "Dolts! Will you all stand about gaping? Help your king!"

Joanna's world was crashing down as she stumbled, her throat burning. She grasped her neck, her legs failing her.

In the back of her mind she heard Loras shout for help as she fell to the ground. Barely being able to turn her heard she saw Joffrey, only a few metres from her, lying on the ground. Guards and
family surrounding him and the noises she heard from her brother made tears come to her burning eyes.

The feeling had left her limbs but just before her sight left her she saw Jaime grabbing her, clutching her failing body.

Darkness tinted her vision and began to spread across her world. The pain in her throat and head was unbearable and it was almost a relief when the world around her faded completely from view.
LORAS

Loras Tyrell sat by his wife's bedside as he had done for the last 3 moons. He played the part of dutiful husband well, he would spend hours watching her for any change but after all this time he knew that it was unlikely she would ever wake up.

Joffrey had died almost immediately from the poison but Joanna, who had merely sipped the poison wine suffered immense pain and hadn't woken from her unconscious state since the wedding.

His father was constantly reminding him that he was to remain in the marriage for if the young King atom men was to die then Joanna would be next in line, with Loras as her king.

His grandfather, the Lady Olenna had a completely different view and was in fact hoping for the girls demise. Now that Margaery was Queen she felt that his marriage no longer served much purpose and that it would be putting Joanna out of her misery. She said it would be what she wanted.

Loras scoffed at the idea. There was no way Joanna would ever just accept death, the girl that he barely knew would stay fighting until the very end. There was no way that she would ever just lay down and die. She may have lost her brother and lover but Joanna wouldn't rest until those responsible be found and punished.

Her brother would have ordered the murderers death if he had been the one to survive, nowhere near the act itself. However Joanna was completely different, she would go to the ends of the earth to get revenge. Her determination was one of the few traits that he found admirable in her, that and her love for her family.

Making sure that no one else was in the room Loras walked to the side of the bed and looked down at his wife.

The past few months hadn't been kind on her and her face had pale and ghostly, her cheekbones prominent as her weight had tumbled. Even her blonde hair had gone limp. Most of her injuries had healed within a few weeks but there was no way of knowing what damage was within. The maester had said that the damage may be as mental as it was physical and even if she did eventually wake up then there would be no way of knowing if she would still be herself.

Pulling back the covers to see if there was any moment at all he was disappointed. Apart from the gentle, shallow rise of her chest indicating breathing there was nothing.

The white night gown that she wore had hiked slightly up her thigh so he pulled it down, taut against her stomach. About to turn away Loras noticed something strange yet barely noticeable.

Due to the difficulties in feeding Joanna in her unconscious state her body had wasted away, many of her bones stuck out unattractively. But there was one area that seemed to have grown. Her stomach had a curve which he was sure hadn't been there before, it had been completely flat before the marriage. Blinking a few times the mound remained but it was still there. There was definitely a bump that was visible through the fabric of her dress.

He didn't know what possessed him but without thinking he reached out and carefully placed a hand on Joanna's stomach and he swore he could feel something.
Joanna didn't know how long she was in the darkness for, it could have been days or even mere seconds. She would drift from the darkness every so often but to where she went she didn't know. Noises and colours would flash in front of her eyelids but she was unable to move or even be fully aware of what was going on.

But when she was consumed by the darkness there was one overwhelming feeling: pain.

She had felt pain before, having fallen from a horse and broken her wrist when she was 8. However it had been nothing compared to the torment that she felt. Joanna felt as if fire had been poured down her throat and every gasp of air burnt her insides.

Every time she wished for everything to end a face appeared to her, Joffrey's and she would cry if she could as something told her that even if she did awake from her torment then she would never see him again. Never again would she feel his touch and see him smile. The pain was unbearable but suddenly ceased as she felt pressure on her stomach. Time seemed to slow as the darkness changed and she was no longer unaware.

She appeared to be standing in a wooden hut, not the kind of place she would ever be allowed to go. From the gaps in the wood she could see that the hut was within a dark forest but it was the inside of the building that scared her more.

The hut was full of unusual objects and items that both frightened and interested Joanna at the same time.

A voice behind her startled her as she spun round to face it.

"Now what do we have here..." A strange old crone cackled, circling Joanna menacingly.

The woman was squat and warty, with crusty yellow eyes, no teeth, and pale green jowls.

Terrified Joanna threatened. "Who are you? Where am I? Let me go or my brother will have you killed. He's the King and I'm a Princess so you can't hurt me."

The crone seems to find this highly amusing and let out a hearty chuckle, staring at Joanna with piercing eyes.

"I am known to the people as Maggy the Frog and this is my home you have appeared in, spirit."

Confused Joanna questioned, "spirit? What are you talking about? I am supposed to be in Kings Landing for my wedding."

"The girl doesn't see... I'm not surprised. You remind me of another girl I met not long ago, with golden hair and a dark heart. She wanted to know her future yet was too stubborn to understand it."

"Who was this girl?" Joanna queried. She didn't understand what was happening and a sore throat and an aching stomach didn't help with her concentration.

After a few seconds the woman replied but with an unexpected answer. "The girl was your age, a Lannister, Cersei Lannister I believe she was called."

Shaking her head Joanna rebutted. "That's not possible. Cersei Lannister is my mother. She hasn't been a young girl for many years. What would she want with a crone like you anyway?"
"She wanted to know her future. I don't think she was particularly pleased with the answers I gave her."

Curious, Joanna couldn't help but enquiring further. "What answers?"

"I can't give you her answers but I can give you those of your own to the same questions."

Hesitantly Joanna was tempted to turn around and run but there was something alluring about knowing what was yet to happen and before she could stop herself she nodded.

In the blink of an eye Maggy had sliced her finger and drawn blood. Grasping her hand in pain she didn't have a chance to see what the woman was doing.

"3 questions I have her and the same I shall give to her daughter. One of marriage, one of children and one of death."

Joanna hissed through the pain of her bleeding hand. "Marriage? Will I ever marry again?"

The woman replied slowly. "Your Tyrell husband shall be your only. He will be the only man you shall know for the remainder of your days."

Disappointed Joanna continued. "What of children?"

"You shall give your husband 2 and your brother 1."

"But... Joffrey is..." She couldn't bring herself to finish the sentence. She was reminded of the pain in her stomach and she glanced down. Placing a hand on her stomach she felt a bump where one hadn't been there before. Realising what this meant she smiled with the knowledge that she wouldn't have lost him completely.

"And my death?"

"Death will not come for you for many years. He has had a taste for you now and he doesn't wish to see you for many years to come. You shall die surrounded by family and an old woman."

Happy Joanna smiled, Maggy's words not truly sinking in. But as she stared wordless at the strange crone her vision began to blur. The wooden hut disintegrated before her eyes and sharp pain made her eyes fly open.

She was awake.
Chapter 31

When Joanna woke up no one had to tell her that her brother was dead. She could remember everything that had happened at the wedding and she knew from what she had seen of Joffrey's face that there was no way he survived whatever had happened to them.

The tears began to fall immediately and not even the milk of the poppy could ease the pain of her heart breaking. Her tears soon became hoarse, painful screams as her anguish burnt her raw throat. Nothing could stop the terrible noises emerging from her chambers and soon even the servants had to be forced to go anywhere near her.

The rest of Kings Landing had done their grieving already, yet the three months she had spent in her coma had seemed like mere moments to her. Cersei would spend hours a a time with her, holding and comforting her in her grief. It didn't seem fair how her other half had gone whilst she remained. It was as if she had lost half her soul and nothing could repair it, not even the knowledge of her pregnancy.

No one seemed to know of her condition, her lack of moons blood had been attributed to her sickness and grief. Joanna had no idea how she would explain how she was with child despite being invalid before the marriage could be consummated.

One day, a few weeks after her awakening she was visited by Loras for the first time. It was a well known fact within the castle that her husband had all but ignored the fact that he had a distraught wife.

"I'm sorry I didn't visit earlier." He said calmly, his tone genuinely upset.

She merely nodded in acknowledgement, not even glancing up.

Loras was surprised by the girl he saw. Gone was the fiery lioness that he had married and now all her spirit had left her. She had lost even more weight than before, except round her stomach, he noticed.

He walked to her bedside and sat on the edge, next to her estranged wife. She sat up in the bed, her knees tucked under her chin with her hair hanging over her face.

"Are you okay?"

Her head popped up, and a deadly look appeared in her eyes. Perhaps the old Joanna wasn't completely gone after all.

"Do you think I'm okay?" Her raspy, strained voice questioned. She was in visible pain speaking.

"I know you're grieving but you need to start eating properly. It's not healthy."

"What's the point anymore?" Joanna rasped. "I have no reason to live."

Loras never imagined that he would actually miss her old personality but he found himself wishing that she would start shouting at him and threaten him. There was something so depressing about seeing someone who was usually so confident so broken.

"You have your family to live for. Tommen has been missing you terribly and your mother and... uncle have been worried sick."
"I hear my grandfather was killed, is it true?"

Loras nodded and returned the conversation to more pressing matters. "I've heard you haven't been having your moons blood?"

A red tinge appeared on her cheeks as she replied. "The maester said it was because I was so sick."

Loras decided to confront her directly, realising that she may not even be aware of her condition.

"You are with child."

She didn't react at all and Loras realised that she already knew.

He knew that they would have to address the situation alone rather than later as people would begin to wonder how she became with child.

"It isn't yours." She mumbled halfheartedly.

"Of course not," he scoffed. "But I'm not going to go and announce that my wife is expecting her brothers child. I would never be respected ever again and your child will be treated like a monster."

His reaction seemed to shock Joanna and she looked him in the eye for the first time. "You won't tell anyone?"

"You are a Tyrell now and your child will be a Tyrell."

"You would raise another mans child?" She was extremely confused. She couldn't imagine anyone ever doing that. However Robert Baratheon had managed to raise 4 children that weren't his and it had taken years for anyone to even suspect that something was wrong.

"You are my wife and I will not let your child, no matter who the father is be raised a bastard. I will say that we couldn't wait until the wedding and lay together the night before. I will be this child's father."

Joanna couldn't help the tears running down her face and she threw her arms around Loras. She wouldn't stop whispering "thank you" into his shoulder as she shook.

Loras realised how much this child meant to her and it was then that he knew that whilst he would never love her as he should he could care for her.

"Have you thought of any names?" He asked her, pulling her away.

She snorted as she used her sleeve to wipe away the tears. "I would like to give the child a Lannister name... If you let me."

Loras nodded. "He will be a Lannister by blood, it's only right."

"He?"

"Or she."

Joanna smiled at the thought of a little blonde baby with golden curls and green eyes. "I was thinking Lann for a boy and Cersei for a girl."

"You would name the baby Cersei?" He queried, surprised.
"My mother has been there no matter what for me and she has had to go through things I couldn't even imagine. I will be honouring the most admirable woman I know."

Loras couldn't complain considering the serious tone she had and he accepted her decision.

"Lann or Cersei Tyrell. My grandmother would love that." He laughed sarcastically and he saw her smile slightly.

"She'll get over it."

"Who else knows?"

"No one," she shook her head. "Only you and me."

He frowned. "He have to tell someone at some point. You can't just give birth suddenly."

"Not yet, I want to try and return to some sort of normality first."
Chapter 32

Sorry this is such a short chapter but not much will happen until the birth. After that it will become more interesting.

She had been expecting shouting, anger and disappointment when she told her family of her pregnancy. She was after all admitting to laying with a man before she was married. In the eyes of the Gods she had sinned even if she had married the man the next day.

Obviously Joanna didn't care in the slightest what the Gods thought. She had already sinned enough to deserve eternal damnation so she accepted that her ethical standing couldn't exactly worsen.

But, she realised, appearances must be maintained and so she spent the next week in the sept praying. She would only leave to sleep but it the end it was worth it.

Unfortunately her religious devotion wasn't fooling everyone and Joanna often saw Lady Olenna watching her suspiciously. Ever since she had woken they had only spoken a handful of times and since the pregnancy announcement she had been avoiding the younger woman like a plague.

Cersei had been shocked at first, as one would expect. Her mother, as smart as she was, could also be incredibly blind. She suspected nothing of the babes parentage and instead kept insisting that Joanna mustn't let the Tyrell's control the child. She was already talking of marrying the child, if a girl, to a Lannister cousin who was only an infant himself.

This was one of the few times Joanna was truly shocked by her mother. Cersei had been married to a man she hated for years and had tried to delay any of her children's marriages as long as possible. Yet here she was trying to sell her child like she had been sold.

Jaime was perhaps the only person to react with anger. Once she had told him he had threatened to castrate Loras for dishonouring her but once Joanna was able to explain the truth he instead turned to disappointment.

He had had to watch the woman he loved raise his children with another mans name. He had to watch Joanna and her siblings refer to Robert Baratheon as "father" whilst he was "uncle."

"At least Joffrey isn't here to feel the pain I felt. Maybe you would become as good of a liar as your mother has become after all these years." Jaime fumed, his cheeks turning red. He had hoped that Joanna would have a better marriage than her mother had. But Joanna had to go and follow in Cersei's footsteps, and the thought of that made his lip curl. He wanted Joanna to stay as happy and carefree as her age allowed but the situation she had created had ruined all of that.

"What did you expect me to do?!" Joanna retaliated, staring up at her father. "Abort the baby? Drink a galleon of moon tea? I was unconscious for weeks! You probably wish the child died as I almost did."

He was taken aback by her venom and had to move away to compose himself.

"Joanna, you don't understand the situation you've put yourself in. If Loras finds out that-"

"Loras knows!" She practically screamed, her emotions running wild. "I am not mother! You
should be happy for me. I've found an honourable and kind man who is willing to raise the child of another man."

Running his hands through his hair he gripped her shoulders tightly. "I'm not so much worried about your husband as I am worried about other people. People mostly aren't idiots and love to spread rumours, especially about our family. There have been rumours about you and Joffrey for years so what happens when your child looks all Lannister and they realise one rumour is too close to the truth. The faith could imprison or even execute you for your crimes and you husband would be an accessory to your crimes!"

Pulling away angrily Joanna spat. "That didn't stop you and mother."

The sound of the door slamming could be heard across the palace.
Chapter 33

Joanna had never known such pain in all of her life. It was as if her insides were being torn apart and no amount of comfort could lessen the burden. The baby wasn't supposed to be due for another moon but her child was a true Lannister, he or she would only arrive by their own terms.

She cursed as she felt a contraction ripple through her body and doubted whether the child would be worth it if it was already causing her this much anguish.

Cersei was holding her hand lovingly, enduring every painful squeeze. Brushing a damp curl from her forehead she assured Joanna that the pain would be over soon.

The last few months had been relatively uneventful. She had had to watch her baby brother Tommen, her only brother left, be seduced by Margaery. Every day she saw them together and every day she wished the new Queen a long and painful death but her prayers remained unanswered. She couldn't imagine what it would have been life if it was Joffrey married to her, as Joanna was forced to have her heart ripped apart daily.

Her mother had appointed a new High Septon, who his followers referred to as the High Sparrow. This left Joanna slightly confused as he embraced such extremely different views to that of her family she could sense that it was going to end badly.

Mentally cursing she wished that Joffrey had never spilled his seed inside her and then die, leaving her to bear this pain without him to help her.

Loras had been a better husband than she previously expected, but she couldn't help but compare him to Joffrey and see her Tyrell spouse as inferior. Whenever Loras sparred, Joffrey would have fought better. When he faked affection for her, Joffrey would have been genuine.

"I want to see my wife!" A voice called and Joanna looked up to see Loras attempting to enter the birthing chamber. Various midwives were trying to forced him back out the door but he refused to relent.

"I won't let her do this alone." He announced, and the women finally allowed him to pass. He came to sit on the other side of the bed from Cersei and gripped her other hand.

Confused, Joanna looked at him, wondering why he was taking his charade of affection this far. He was under no obligation to witness the birth. Most lords would be as far away as possible, only arriving when news of a son had been birthed, or less joyously a daughter.

She felt another contraction and she screamed through her gritted teeth.

"Push." She was told. "I can see the head."

As much as she wanted this child she hated how troublesome bringing it into the world was considering how happy conceiving it was.

The minutes passed instantaneously and before she knew it the baby had been expelled from her body. Joanna tried to gather her breath as her eyes were fixed on the crying infant in the arms of the midwife. The baby definitely inherited Joffrey's lungs, she smiled as her mother leant over to kiss her forehead.

"You've done so well, my little lion." Cersei whispered, her face beaming.
"Well done," Loras told her, "He's a little fighter."

"He?" Joanna said hopefully.

"I apologise Lord Tyrell, the child is a girl."

A girl.

Joanna didn't care what the child was as long as she was healthy. The midwife passed the child into her arms and she couldn't help but remark on how small she was.

"She wasn't meant to be born for another month, of course she's small." Cersei told her.

Her fears of a dwarf child were instantly calmed and she took the time to really look at her daughter.

She had eyes that seemed to swallow you, shining emeralds that could only stare up at her full of innocence that only a child could have. On top of her head were tuffs of blonde curls which were as soft as feathers. She looked nothing like the Tyrell she was supposed to be but Joanna couldn't be happier. She was unable to stop staring at this little cub that was hers and hers alone. No matter if she was raised as only a Tyrell Joanna knew that her child was a Lannister and she would make sure that her daughter would know it.

Loras reached out to stroke the child's head and Joanna didn't have the strength to stop him.

"What shall we name her?" Loras asked and it made her flare up in anger. This child was Joffrey's, not his, he had no right to presume that he had a choice in her future.

"Loren. After the last King of Casterly Rock. Loren Lannister."

Loras seemed to be content with this, it was close enough to his name to seem like that was why she was named so and not many were versed enough in the history of the Westerlands to know of her ancestor.

Joanna smiled as she imagined the life Loren could have, peaceful and happy and free to marry the man she loved.

She wouldn't stop until her daughter could have that life.
Chapter 34

Loras couldn’t help but laugh as his daughter clutched her latest favourite toy to her tiny chest. The last few months seemed to fly by as did Loren. Every day she seemed older and more mature, a concept that both frightened him and made him proud. She may not be his by blood but he saw himself as her father and gradually even Joanna accepted Loras as Loren's father.

Clutched in her small, chubby arms was a stuffed lion, a gift from the King. Tommen had taken to his role as an uncle like a duck to water and had doted on his niece constantly. Rarely a day went by without a new toy or outfit delivered to the chambers the small family shared. Next to Loren's crib lay a dozen animals varying in shape and size, stags, does, lions and lionesses. The young child was as infatuated with her uncle as he was to her and whenever he entered the room she would wave her arms in his direction until he picked her up.

At first Joanna had been cautious of anyone except herself and Loras holding her but over time she accepted that she had other family members who wanted to spend time with her. Cersei always volunteered to care for her granddaughter whenever Joanna was otherwise engaged and constantly showered her with attention, refusing to let any septas near her.

Loren bonded with everyone, it seemed, except for the Queen. No one could explain it but whenever Margaery approached her she would burst into tears and scream until she left the room. Joanna liked to joke that her daughter had good taste in people, though it often earned a glare from her husband.

Everyone commented on how much Loren looked like Joanna and she was constantly told that she would grow up beautiful. Whilst it was perhaps too early to be accessing her attractiveness, it had to be said that her family's good looks had passed themselves on. Her hair had grown slightly, her golden curls forming a mane around her head, earning her the nickname "lion cub". Despite her young age she had already developed a Lanniser smirk, as well as their traditional green eyes.

Sat on Joanna's lap, Loren hugged her little lion and babbled as Loras kept placing different toys in front of her to capture her interest.

"My grandmother keeps telling me that Loren should have more Tyrell themed toys, roses and such. She doesn't seem to understand that a child much prefers an animal than a flower, she is nothing if not persistent." Loras explained, waving a small doll with green and gold colours in front of the oblivious baby.

"I'm surprised she hasn't tried to claim that she should be raised at Highgarden yet. The only reason she even stands my family is because Margaery is Queen."

Nodding in agreement he rubbed Loren's head, smiling as she giggled. He had adapted to fatherhood much better than anyone could have anticipated, the fact that the child wasn't actually his didn't matter.

"I have a feeling she may know the truth about who her father is. She's keeping her distance until she knows that the truth won't become known." Loras explained, thinking about how his grandmother seemed to know everything about everyone.

There was a knock at the door so Loras placed the doll on the ground and went to open it. Stood in the doorway was King Tommen, smiling like a boy on his nameday. Seeing the childish expression on his face reminded him just how young his brother-in-law was. Tommen had only
recently celebrated his 9th nameday, making him less than half of Loras's age. Dressed in Lannister colours he held a basket in his hands.

"You honour us with your presence, your Grace." He greeted, as the King followed him back into the room.

"Loren!" Tommen exclaimed, rushing over to his niece. He practically collapsed in front of the girl, happily tickling her feet causing a chorus of laughter from both parties.

"My wife requests your presence, Ser Loras, she is in the Tyrell chambers." Announced Tommen, barely taking his eyes off of the baby.

"Of course, my King."

The boy turned to look at his elder, "Just call me Tommen. I don't care for titles, it's mother who insists. We are brothers now."

"Then I am only Loras, if it pleases you."

Loras smiled and said his farewells to his wife before leaving Tommen and Joanna alone with Loren.

Joanna looked at her younger brother and wondered how him and Joffrey could share the same blood. In appearance they were relatively similar but in disposition couldn't have differed more. Tommen was humble and kind where Joffrey was firm and strict. As much as she had loved her twin she accepted that Tommen made a much better King than him. The people loved her younger brother and praised him for not being his predecessor.

"I have a present for Loren. In case she is ever lonely." He announced, bringing forth the basket he had brought with him.

Pulling back the cloth he revealed a small golden kitten, asleep. Now embraced by light the feline purred and started pacing round the basket. She was lifted up by Tommen, who held the kitten in his arms, grinning.

"She will be nice when Loren is older. I find that cats are good friends when you're lonely. Like Ser Pounce, he's my best friend."

As happy as she was at the gift, his words did nothing to reassure any doubts Joanna had. She knew that Tommen had been particularly lonely the last few years since Myrcella had been sent to Dorne. Joanna had spent all of her time with Joffrey so Tommen would have been all alone, especially since Cersei all but ignored her youngest child. Without any other children his age he must have had an extremely lonely childhood, and even his pets weren't constant, most of them only lasting a year before Joffrey did something to them. Of course she hadn't agreed with her twins mutilation of animals but until now she hadn't realised that those cats were all he had, and it must have been terrible to have them constantly ripped away so brutally.

Deep in thought Joanna didn't even realise when a tear rolled down her cheek, the dampness falling on to her daughters head.

"Did I do something wrong? Don't you want her? I've even let you name her, or you can wait until Loren's old enough to choose a name herself?" Tommen asked, worried that he had upset his sister somehow. Until recent they hadn't spent much time together so he wasn't able to read her emotions very well.
Rubbing her eyes with the sleeve of her dress she shook her head. "No no, don't worry Tommen." She placed her hand on his arm. "I was just thinking."

"About what?"

"I have been a terrible sister. I've ignored you for years, I've had no idea how lonely you must have been and especially recently. For too long I was blind and I understand if you could never forgive me."

Shocked, he took his sisters hand from his shoulder and held it tightly. "Of course I forgive you. Besides he have to stick together now, with Myrcella gone and Joffrey... Where ever he is now. Joffrey didn't let me spend time with you anyway, whenever I tried he..."

"You shouldn't worry." As much as it pained Joanna to say what followed, once she did she realised that it had been true all along. "Joffrey is gone now and it seems that everyone is better off without him. I wouldn't swap what we have now for him back."

Tommens's mouth fell open in disbelief. "Really?"

Smiling she reached over and hugged him, holding her brother tightly as Loren tugged on her lions limbs carelessly.

Without warning the doors swung open with a bang, causing the siblings to jump. Pouring into the room came several poorly dressed men, and Joanna was surprised to recognise her mothers cousin, Lancel among them. Protesting, Tommen tried to reason with them as they grabbed Joanna and pulled her to her feet. Separating her from her mother, Loren screamed as the strange men manhandled Joanna.

"What is the meaning of this? I am a princess, you can't do this! Let me go!"

Tommens jumped to his feet. "I am the King! As your king I order you to release her immediately." He exclaimed to little effect as the sparrows ignored him.

One of the men, Lancel, stood in front of his relative and unrolled a piece of parchment which he proceeded to read from.

"Lady Joanna Tyrell, formerly known as Princess Joanna Baratheon stands accused of fornication outside of marriage and incest. She is to be imprisoned to await trial where her innocence or guilt of these crimes can be determined in the light of the seven."

Unable to form words, let alone denial she just shook silently as her crimes were accused. Turning to look at Tommen he looked, if possible, more shocked than she was.

The men began to drag her away, an she began to fight. Kicking and scratching she tried to stay in the room with her child but she was no match for her kidnappers.

Before she was pulled out of the door she managed to shout to Tommen.

"Look after Loren! Do whatever you can to protect her!"
Chapter 35

3 weeks she had spent in her cell, with no way to record the passing of time other than how often she hungered. No matter how much she screamed to be released or at least to see her daughter her attempts were futile. The only person she had been permitted to see was an overweight woman who persisted in her torment of the young woman.

Every day she would come to her cell with food and water which Joanna would only be allowed if she confessed to her crimes. Of course she denied them, she was accused of incest, a crime which could have her executed. As much as she wanted to be with her family she didn't want to risk death, she knew she had to stay strong and resilient.

The lack of nourishment had weakened her considerably especially since she still wasn't fully recovered from her poisoning and giving birth. Soon even moving an inch tired her so she took to sitting curled in the corner, where she had claimed as her bed. There was no separate to relieve herself so she'd done that in the opposite corner. This kind of living was completely foreign to Joanna, the closest she's ever been to this was when she was returning to Kings Landing after freeing her uncle. Even then it had been nothing compared to this, which but her entire life into perspective. She desperately wanted a bath, something that before had been daily, now seemed like a distant memory.

Narrow-mindedly she had believed that Joffrey and their relationship was in the past, something to be recalled fondly in her old age. It wasn't that she didn't still love Joffrey, every fibre of her being still cared for him. However now that he was gone she could see how much better everyone's lives were. Even the servants no longer had to fear for their lives on a daily basis. Joanna loved him and it was with her that his good traits came out but even she had to admit that he wasn't a good person despite how they were together. Joffrey used to only allow her to talk to certain people, including their own family and recently she had improved relations with all their kin.

Her relationship with Cersei was slightly more complicated. Her mourning period had mostly ended by the time Joanna had recovered from the poisoning though it was obvious her mother would never be back to normal after losing a child.

Loren now filled the gap caused by Joffrey's death and Joanna even swore that she had saw Cersei laugh once or twice.

Aside from Loren she probably missed her mother the most, a mothers love was without doubts and hesitation and it was exactly what Joanna needed right now.

Curling in her cell she ran her fingers through her limp greasy hair and saw her mothers hair, looked at her pale, sun-deprived skin and imagined her mothers creamy hands.

The large, heavy doors that kept her imprisoned opened with a creak. She lacked the energy to look towards it but she could hear a woman's voice before she was lifted up slightly. Craning her eyes up to look at her visitor she saw an angel. Golden hair cascaded around her head and a heavenly smile.

"Joanna..." The angel whispered, stroking her cheek carefully. A cup was placed to her lips and she felt water run down her throat, quenching her thirst and hydrating her cracked lips. "It's your mother, can you hear me?"

The angel turned into Cersei and her heart soared. She was being rescued, she was finally going to
see Loren again and leave this terrible cell.

"Mother... Are you here to rescue me?" She managed to stammer but watching the expression on her mother's face broke her hopes.

Cersei shook her head sadly and kissed Joanna's forehead softly. "I'm so sorry, darling. Despite the ridiculousness of their accusations they won't release you. Tommen and I have been doing everything we can and trust me, we will get you out of here."

Pulling herself into a seated position Joanna rested her head against her mother as if she was a small child once more, as if she wasn't imprisoned.

"I don't know what's going to happen to me. They won't let me leave until I confess but then I could be imprisoned for life or even executed." She voiced her fears as she checked to see if any of her jailers were nearby.

"Don't confess to anything. You're innocent and have nothing to hide."

It shocked Joanna that there were still people in her family who didn't know the truth or at least suspect it. Hearing the accusations should have answered so many questions that surrounded her and Joffrey so how could Cersei be that blind. In a way it reminded her of her grandfather who didn't accept the truth of her parents relationship despite all the evidence.

Meeting her eyes Joanna took a deep breath and told the truth for the first time in ages. "It's true. I'm guilty of everything they accuse me of."

There was complete silence for several seconds and Joanna was more scared than she had ever been in her life. She worked so hard to earn her family's approval that she didn't know what she would do if her mother abandoned her.

"But that would mean..." She began cautiously.

"Loren is Joffrey's, conceived the night before the weddings. I'm so sorry mother, I should have told you."

"No." Cersei announced. "Don't apologise, I should have seen it earlier, the signs were all there. I don't know how I was so blind to it."

Unable to stop herself Joanna replied. "Just as Grandfather was to you and Uncle Jaime."

The fact that the truth of their relationship was known even by her own daughter was a surprise to Cersei who struggled to form sentences. "You... knew? For how long."

"Since I returned from the Riverlands, Uncle Jaime confirmed it for me."

With no suitable reply and no desire to change the topic of conversation the mother and daughter sat in silence until Cersei was escorted out of the cell and Joanna was once again alone.
Digging her cracked fingernail into the wall Joanna marked another line into the wall. 2 months she had been trapped, 1 month since her mother visited her. Sadly Cersei hadn't lived up to her promise and got her released but at this point she didn't care. She would do anything to see her family again, even Loras. This miserable experience was torture to her, taking her away from the people she loved most in the world.

She imagined what Loren would look like now. At her daughters age two months would change her appearance drastically. Joanna wondered if her baby was crying for her, too young to understand why her mother had left her. It made her eyes well up, the thought of Loren missing her almost too much to bare.

Knowing that her guards would be coming soon she decided to put her plan into action. Reaching behind her at the wall she gripped the loose brick. Slowly she pulled it out of the wall and reached her hand into the gap created. It had been two weeks before when she had discovered the hole by accident. It was in here that she had found her method of escape.

She assumed the stone knife had been crafted by a previous prisoner in her cell and left behind when he was either executed or freed. It had been almost impossible to resist the temptation to act immediately but she had remembered her grandfather. Tywin Lannister wasn't one to make rash decisions and his careful planing and strategy had won him many battles. Joanna would be damned if she made the mistakes that her grandfathers enemies had. Her plan required refinement. What good would killing the first person she saw do? She was outnumbered and not familiar with the prison. She could easily get lost and captured if she ran without thought.

For the past week she had been spying through the small gaps in the door. She watched when the guards switched and where they went. It seemed that when those pious old women came to make her confess the current guards would leave and it would be several minutes before he next shift arrived. Whenever they left they would head to the end of the corridor and turn left, where Joanna assumed the exit was. The two sets of guards seemed to differ considerably in strength. The night guards were thin, pasty men who Joanna was surprised were allowed to guard at all. The second group where much larger and she recognised one as a former member of the city watch. The first group would be much easier to face, if not for the identity of one of the men. Lancel Lannister, or brother Lancel as he now preferred to be called. Lancel was a couple of years older than her and she had memories in her youth of her and Joffrey playing with him when her would visit from Lannisport. Her mothers cousin had always been a sore loser and whenever he would lose he would claim they were cheating, which they were, but Joanna found that fact irrelevant. He may have been a Lannister but he was from the secondary branch and his status was nothing compared to that of royalty. He needed to know his place but like now he always had a stick up his arse and was a thoroughly miserable person.

Footsteps sounded outside and Joanna quickly slid the knife up her sleeve. Bending into a crouch she prepared to leap at whoever opened the door. The thick wooden door opened and she leapt forward, aiming the knife towards the guard. Unfortunately the guard caught her arm and twisted it behind her back.

Squirming Joanna cursed and attempted to get out of his grip.

"Stop! Joanna calm down. It's me!" A muffled voice said, whispering into her ear.

Recognising the voice she stopped fighting and twisted her head around to look at his face. Stood
just under a head taller than her was her husband. Loras was dressed in a guards uniform but Joanna could recognise his golden brown eyes anywhere.

He let go of her and looked at his wife. She was lost large amounts of weight and her skin had lost its golden glow and was now a pasty white. Any extra weight from the pregnancy had completely vanished leaving a shell of her former self.

"What are you doing here?" She questioned, still in shock. "I could have killed you!"

Loras chuckled and grabbed her hands. "I'll explain later but we have to go now before more guards come."

He pulled her outside and Joanna saw the bodies of both her cousin and the other man laying unconscious on the floor.

Loras had been able to free relatively easily but sadly Joanna couldn't disguise herself as a man so stealth would have to be their method of escape.

He managed to navigate the maze of corridors with ease, dragging the weakened girl behind him. Several times she tripped and almost fell, her legs unused to that level of work.

Soon they reached what looked liked an exit and Loras informed her that it was the door for the guards and lead straight outside.

Pulling a key out of his pocket he unlocked the door and pushed it open. The sun was blazing outside, the midday sun at full power. Joanna had to shield her eyes from the sun, the bright light made her dizzy.

The rest of the escape was a blur, the starvation, thirst and tiredness catching up with her.

After what seemed like only a few seconds but what was in fact most of an hour Joanna felt herself being carried inside. Craning her head to the side she saw several people she recognised but couldn't put names to. She knew that her family were there but in her weakened state she couldn't match their faces to names.

Loras placed her on a bed, the soft mattress a strange feeling after weeks of sleeping on the floor.

In and out of sleep she fell, night and day blurred together in her half-awake state.

At one point she awoke and felt almost back to normal. The sight of light no longer blinded her and her thoughts began to come back to her.

Sitting up she saw that she was in her chambers, the ones she had had before her marriage. All her old furniture was still there, and Joanna could almost laugh with happiness. A delicate yawn sounded from the side of the bed and she saw Tommen sat on a chair, his head resting on the side of the bed. His clothes were creased and old, his hair unbrushed but Joanna couldn't care in the slightest. At that moment he wasn't the King, the most important person in the seven kingdoms. He was just her brother Tommen, who appeared to have refused to leave her side. She imagined that his wife wasn't very happy about that.

"Jo..." Tommen mumbled, looking at her with sleep filled eyes.

Happiness filled her and she couldn't stop the tears from falling. Sobbing she pulled her brother into her arms and clutched him to her. He returned the embrace with equal fury and started rambling about how much he had missed her.
The door opened and Loras entered, holding Loren, who was considerably larger than last time she had seen her. He rushed over to her and sat on the side of the bed. No words were required as he passed their daughter to her.

Joanna couldn't recall a time when she was happier as she sat surrounded by family, and soon Loras was also in tears.

A soft meow sounded and Joanna laughed and Loren's kitten bounced up on to the bed and began nuzzling her leg.

Joanna smiled, she was back with her family and she knew nothing could ever hurt again, she wouldn't let it.
Whilst he had faded from most of his family's thoughts, across the Narrow Sea Tyrion Lannister couldn't say the same for them. Every day thoughts of Cersei plagued him yet reminded him why he was helping her enemy. But as much as he hated his sister and wished her dead he worried about how the rest of his family would fare once he helped Daenerys conquer Westeros.

In particular he feared for Jaime, because to his Queen he was the man who killed her father and slept with his own sister. She didn't know what he truly was like: a proud man with the heart of a child who desperately craved the affection and approval of those around him. His insecurities allowed him to be manipulated by Cersei for years but no matter what that witch did Jaime still managed to keep some of his kindness. In his heart Tyrion knew that despite helping him to escape it was unlikely that Jaime would ever leave Cersei, he was too infatuated to do that.

As much as he trusted Daenerys he had yet to bring up the matter of his nephew and nieces out of fear of her answer. If they were kept alive then they would be a threat to her rule but if she had them killed then she would begin her reign with the title 'child killer'. All 3 children had no control over who their father was and to blame them for being born of incest was ridiculous. But Tyrion worried about their other potential crimes. Tommen was King, and even though he was but a boy of 9 years he was still a major obstacle. Cersei would get into his head and try to turn him against reason and logic and no doubt use any means necessary to keep her family on the throne. He feared what she would do if that battle began turning against the Lannisters, ending both her children's lives and her own wouldn't be out of the question.

His only surviving nephew was nothing like Joffrey, Tyrion thanked the gods for that. However where Joffrey had an iron will, Tommen had a weak will. He was easily persuaded and still very naive and innocent in the ways of the world.

His youngest niece Myrcella was perhaps the best of them all. Her outside beauty disguised the true Lannister brains she possessed. She was a lot smarter and more cunning than anyone realised, more Tywin than anyone else in the family. Cella was incredibly observant and Tyrion wouldn't be surprised if she had worked out the truth of her parentage long before anyone else.

The two of them had a good relationship with Tyrion before the war had started, they weren't the focus of their mothers obsessiveness unlike their older siblings. This meant they hadn't been poisoned against him yet, which meant that they shouldn't be too troublesome if Daenerys succeeded in her fight for the throne.

Joanna on the other hand, Tyrion knew would fight tooth and claw for her family claim. Having lost Joffrey probably made her even more protective of her remaining brother. She was an exact mix of her parents, her mothers beauty and temper combined with her fathers romantic heart and pride. He had long suspected of her affair with Joffrey, he had recognised the signs that Jaime and Cersei had growing up. Joffrey, like Cersei, was possessive to a point of madness and any obstacle to their obsession was immediately disposed of. Tyrion still didn't know if what they felt to their twins was true love or lust and he doubted he would ever truly know. Jaime and Joanna loved their twins as much as they could. Growing up they hadn't even experienced what love should be like and so relied heavily on whatever their twins offered.

From what he had heard Joanna was actually happy, she had gone with her husband and child to Highgarden, far away from the madness that is Kings Landing. He had been surprised to hear from his spies that his niece and her Tyrell husband actually seemed to care a great deal for each other. Tyrion assumed that now Joffrey was dead Joanna could finally have a proper relationship with
another person, whether it was love or just friendship.

A cough sounded and Tyrion turned to see the silver-haired Queen stood before him, dressed in a gown of silver and gold. Despite her young age she looked more like a Queen than Cersei ever had.

"You asked to speak to me, Lannister." Daenerys stated, sitting at the table. Folding her hands on the table she looked expectantly at Tyrion.

"Yes, your highness. I ask as to the fate of my nephew and nieces once you have reclaimed the throne."

The Targaryens face was unreadable and he immediately worried that he had said that wrong thing.

"All children born of incest-"

"As were you."

Tyrion was on the receiving end of a glare. "Don't forget that you are still a guest in Meereen and I can still banish you."

"As I was saying. They are not Baratheons and as such have no claim to the throne, even through the Usurpers line. Nonetheless, they still pose threats to my reign, so what would you have me do?"

Thinking, Tyrion sat silently for several minutes before replying. "Tommen is a good boy, an innocent. I'm sure that once he is separated from my sister he will be perfectly amenable. You should legitimise him as a Lannister and I would take him as my ward and heir."

The Dragon Queen made no reply so Tyrion took this as a sign to continue. "Myrcella is to be married to Trystane Martell next moon and from what I have heard they are very much in love. Allow them to remain married if they so wish and legitimise her as well. As much as the Dornish accept bastards, I think even they would struggle having a Waters as their princess."

"And if the Dornish don't want a Lannister married to their future ruler?"

"Most in Dorne hate my family. They saw Myrcella as wholly a Lannister even when they thought her father Robert Baratheon. She has survived 3 years in Dorne, the people obviously don't hate her. My niece has a way of charming people, a trait that I'm not sure from whom she inherited it."

Daenerys nodded for him to continue.

"My other niece is married to a Tyrell and already has given him a child. Joanna is far from perfect and dislikes me greatly but even I have to admit that annulling her marriage and proclaiming both her and her child bastards would be cruel. As far as I'm aware she is happy in her marriage so I see no reason for anything to change. She should remain a Tyrell and give Highgarden even more heirs."

"If I were Robert Baratheon or your father I would have all three executed just for existing, just as they did Rhaenys and Aegon." Anger seeped into her voice.

"Don't let your anger disrupt your judgement. You are not like those lesser men, you try to be a good Queen. A good Queen doesn't sentence children to death."

"Fine, imp. If they are agreeable to my decisions then I promise the children will have your desired
outcomes." She reluctantly sighed. Letting 3 Lannisters go without punishment wet against her better judgement but Daenerys had promised herself she would be a better and kinder ruler than those before, starting with the Lannister spawn.
"Mama!" A small child exclaimed, running through the gardens. She was running as fast as her four year old legs could carry her. Her gold curls were pinned back with a green ribbon, her locks trailing behind her. She was dressed finely, a green dress with gold thread scuffed the ground, the dress slightly too long for her figure. Dangling from one hand was a stuffed lion, or "Leo" as she had come to call it.

The little girl had spotted the strange men entering the castle from her spot next to a window with her septa. Ignoring the woman's complaints she had escaped her lessons and come to find her parents. She knew instantly that they didn't belong to her father, he didn't an army of dark-skinned foreigners.

Whilst she was too young to understand what was happening she knew that it was something important so her first instant was to find her mother and father.

She was so distracted by thoughts of the strange soldiers that she bumped into someone. The force knocked her backwards to the ground sharply. Trying not to cry the small child looked up at the obstruction.

Stood in front of her was a short man. He was much shorter than any adult she had ever met and he had a horrific scar across her face which she struggled to see past. He was dressed finely, like a Lord, but she didn't recognise him from her fathers regular visitors.

"You are rude!" She exclaimed, ignoring his outstretched hand to pull herself up. "You made Leo dirty."

The short man chuckled to himself. "Leo? Is he your toy?"

She scowled and puffed out her chest. "Leo is a brave and fierce lion. Call him a toy again and I will tell him to bite your head off."

"I'm sure I'll be able to handle myself against him."

Something about this stranger annoyed her, people didn't usually talk back at her, and especially not as rudely as her was.

"I've taught him well. He doesn't like strangers being mean to me, if I say to bite you he will." Her face was completely serious and she clutched Leo to her chest, his cloth claws pointed in the mans direction.

"I assume you are Lady Loren, I've heard a lot about you." The men shocked Loren, who didn't like being patronised.

It annoyed her that someone knew who she was whilst she was completely oblivious to his identity.

"Who are you?"

The strange man smiled sadly and touched her shoulder. "Come with me to see your parents and they will explain who I am."
Loren raised her foot and jabbed sharply at the man's leg. "No! Mother says not to talk to strangers."

She heard footsteps behind her so she turned to look. Stood there was her father and mother, who was holding baby Willas. Her mother seemed to be in complete shock, she passed the baby to her husband before speaking.

"Loren, come over here this instant. Get away from that man." Joanna seethed, clutching her daughter as she ran to her.

"Dear niece, I see you still blame me for your brother's death."

Niece? Loren thought in confusion. As far as she knew her mother only had 2 uncles. There was uncle Jaime, who was a soldier who uncle Tommen in Kings Landing and one of her Tyrell uncles who practically bored her to death.

"You were found guilty at the trial. You had the motive." Joanna spat bitterly, bringing up long forgotten memories.

"Trust me Joanna. Lots of people had a motive. Sadly your mother was unable to see past her own hatred."

"Why are you even here Tyrion?" She asked. "I could send for the guards and have you arrested and sent to Kings Landing immediately."

Tyrion took and step forward and shook his head. "I am happy to say that our beloved family is no longer in charge as of yesterday. I decided to deliver the news to you myself."

Distressed Joanna turned to her husband who placed a hand on her shoulder.

"What are you talking about?" Loras queried as he held his son to his chest.

"Queen Daenerys Targaryen has taken the throne with her three dragons. Those who opposed her quickly fell."

"If you've hurt Tommen you sick bastard I swear I will-"

"Your brother has not been harmed. The Queen promised him that if he surrendered then he wouldn't be harmed."

Breathing a sigh of relieved Joanna picked up her daughter.

"So what happens now?"

"You and your husband come with me to Kings Landing to pledge your allegiance. Your, Tommen and Myrcella have been declared bastards but the Queen has promised to legitimise you all as Lannisters if your swear to her. Tommen is now my ward and heir and Myrcella is to stay a Martell."

"You would betray your family that easily? For the power that this family never gave you." Joanna sounded disgusted, to betray one's family was the worst crime imaginable to her.

"No." Tyrion sighed, realising that he couldn't win this argument. "I did it for the respect that your family never gave me. Joffrey and your mother destroyed this kingdom to a point of no return. Westeros deserved better so I found better."
Unable to cope anymore Joanna took her children and walked away, back into the castle, leaving Tyrion and Loras alone.

"This has changed everything." Loras said, still in shock.

"Change for the better. I promise that you and your family will have a good life as long as you can control your wife."

"Nobody can control Joanna. I'll make sure he pledges allegiance, she listens to me."

Tyrion chuckled. "Then you're a better man than I."

Loras smiled and looked as the Targaryen soldiers came into view. "Here's to the new Queen."

The Lannister waved away the soldiers, pleased with how the situation had gone.

"Here's to a new Westeros."

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!