The Interesting Narrative of the Life of ...

by stayseated

Summary

A day in the life of Drogo. Set in the Kodachrome/Monochrome universe. (Man pain, Mod AU)

Notes

OMFG, a modest number of people asked for this. So here is it. Part one. It will take place all in a day. I gave myself this restriction so this story will not go a BILLION CHAPTERS. Hehe. :P
He can feel Jaime’s eyes trained on him carefully — the conversation Jaime and Brienne had been having before he walked into the kitchen falls to a hush. Drogo nudges past them to dump a glass of water in the sink. He had kept it next to his bedside — a lifelong habit. Sometimes he wakes up in the middle of the night thirsty. Sometimes water helps to temper the intensity of morning-after hangovers.

“Good morning,” Jaime says. “Sleep well?”

“Like a baby,” Drogo says.

“Liar.”

“Oh my gosh,” Pia says, flopping down in the vacant seat next to Drogo, having only just woken up. “I am so sad this is our last full day together. I feel like it was just yesterday that we all arrived.” She sighs dreamily. “Wasn’t that an amazing wedding? I loved her dress — she was such a beautiful bride. I loved the beach part in the morning. Oh my God, I just wanted to die because it was so freaking cute and romantic! I loved the cake-cutting and how people were like, ‘Give her cake! Put that cake in her mouth’ and he was like, oh my God, okay, fine. But he was like, actually really into it and he was so gentle and so careful not to get cake on her face even though people were trying to get him to smash that cake in her face — and I just about died over the way he looked at her. They are just so freaking in love and adorable!” Pia’s hair is in disarray and they can hear the toilet flushing in the distance before Peck materializes in the kitchen and starts fiddling around with the coffee machine. “Oh my gosh, and I loved the choreographed dancing, too!” She flips her phone over on the kitchen table, unlocks it, and starts flicking through it. “I took these pictures but I dunno — it might’ve been too dark. But I love that sort of stuff! Guys, remember when flash mobs at weddings were all the rage a few years ago? Whatever happened to that? Oh ew, Jaime, can you cook that some more?” She innocently looks up at Jaime, who is holding a hot nonstick frying pan and pointing an irritated glare down at her.

He tensely says, “I don’t even know how you can eat eggs over hard and not want to kill yourself.” He huffs and just scoops the overcooked egg onto her plate anyway. “Just eat it, P. Remember that one time you wanted me to cook your steak well done and our friendship almost like, died on the spot? Didn’t you learn from that?”
“Uh, yeah,” Brienne interrupts, before raising her glass of orange juice to her mouth. “She learned that you are kind of a pretentious douchebag when it comes to food.”

Drogo snorts. “Just kind of?”

Jaime gives him a shit-eating grin. “Says the guy who constantly hurts Daven’s feelings by boycotting and protesting all of Daven’s favorite foods.”

“Oh my God,” Drogo mutters, pushing around the scrambled eggs on his plate. “Daven’s food is stuff a kid would eat.”

“He made a salad for me once,” Jaime says, flopping down in the last vacant seat with his own steaming plate. “And he was like, ‘Bro! This is the best salad ever!’ and I was like, ‘Fuck you, man! I can already tell your salad is gonna be crazy.’ And guess what? It was.” Jaime smoothly slices his butter knife through his not-fully congealed, sunny-side-up egg.

“Jaime,” Brienne says, with a smile creeping over her face. “You literally tell this story all the time.”

“Because it blows my fucking mind. That Dav was selling his Mandarin orange, Jello, whipped cream, and coconut flakes bullshit as a salad!”

“Guy’s a million feet tall,” Peck cuts in. “And strong as an ox. He must need the calories.”

When he woke up this morning, the impact and the implications of the previous night immediately flooded his mind. He can identify the way he feels as shame or embarrassment, but it’s a feeling that he tries to completely avoid giving a clear name to. He has always hated being embarrassed. It’s not something he’s psychoanalyzed. No one likes to be embarrassed. Some people — not him — are impervious to it. But he hates feeling like the whole fucking world is laughing at him, or worse — that the whole fucking world pities him.

“Why don’t you text her, too?” Jaime says encouragingly to Brienne, running a piece of toast over the egg yolk remnants on his plate. Both of his elbows are on the kitchen table, and he’s slyly nudging Brie, lightly bumping the side of his body into hers.
“Honey,” she says tightly, going a little rigid. It’s their dynamic — something Drogo has seen before countless of times. “You’ve already sent him like, five million text messages this morning. He hasn’t answered you. They’re probably still sleeping. Or he’s straight up ignoring you. And that’s his prerogative. Just give them some time.”

“Fine,” Jaime mutters, picking up his phone. “I’ll text Missy myself.”

Brienne snatches his phone out of his hand. “Will you *stop*? You are being really annoying right now.”

“I hate it when people don’t return my texts! Everyone knows this about me!” he snipes, reaching for his phone, which she pulls out of his reach. He nearly smacked her in the face with his grab. “I also hate it when people take my phone away from me.”

“You know what people hate?” she pushes out. “*You.* When you get like *this.*”

In response, Jaime’s face cracks wide open into a grin, and he starts to laugh, his shoulders bouncing with the effort of suppressing it. Drogo can hear Pia quietly muttering something in response to the bickering. He can hear the chair scrape against the floor as Jaime gets up from his seat, clearing away his and Brienne’s plates.

“Drogo!” Jaime says from the kitchen sink, hollering at him from across the room over the sound of running water. “Will you call Missandei and see where they’re at?”

He doesn’t speak to Missandei on the phone very often. Her voice sounds disembodied and a little tinny — also breathy and soft and feminine — and he hears Grey in the background murmuring something indecipherable to her — a fact that makes Drogo want to hang up on her right away because it sounds like he caught them at a personal — and inconvenient — moment.

Before he can say something else, she tells Drogo that they just woke up. She tells him that they definitely got all of Jaime’s texts — irritation flaring in her tone. She tells him to fucking give them another half an hour because Grey wants to shower. She also tells him that they are starving and there had better be food ready when they get there.

After he hangs up, he turns to Jaime’s expectant face and he says, “They’re getting ready.”
There’s a slight hiccup and a pause, when Pia gets to the last glass and he tells her that he’d just like orange juice. She curls inward a bit, acting sheepish — freezes with the thick green bottle clutched between her hands — and she apologizes to him. She tells him she wasn’t thinking. He generally bypasses the awkwardness and the heavy silence and tells her that it’s fine, picking up the stemless champagne glass so that he can pour the orange juice into it himself.

There is still tension in the room when they all clink glasses and say cheers.

Addam feels a little greasy and smells like sunscreen when they hug hello. “Hey, man —”

“Is it time to go to the zoo yet!” Pippa screams, jumping up and down excitedly.

“Baby,” Addam says wearily, addressing his daughter. “You were very rude just now. Daddy was trying to talk to your Uncle Drogo, and you just interrupted us. Can you just give us a second to finish talking before I answer your question?”

She nods — staring over at Drogo with these wide and shy eyes. They don’t see each other very much — just a few times a year. She has had this element of being starstruck when she is around him and the rest of the guys — it’s a new development. He remembers what she was like a few years ago — she was bolder and louder.

Addam clears his throat, turning his attention back to Drogo. “So, how are you feeling?”

“Daddy! It’s been a second! Can we go to the zoo!”

Drogo can see Addam’s flinch. He can see Addam resisting the urge to swear or snap back at his kid.

He was probably too young to remember the first time Bharbo left the house and disappeared for days on end. But he’s done the math in the sense that he knows his mom was only 20 years old when she married Bharbo, and Bharbo was 27 years old. His mother gave birth to him the following year.
Drogo is 31 years old right now. He can clearly remember how he felt, what he knew, what his experiences were, at ages 20 and 27. He repeats to himself a lot — that there was no shitting way he could’ve been married at age 20 — not even age 27. There was no fucking way he was ready to be someone’s father at those ages either. He’s not even ready to be married now. He keeps pushing the concept off as something to do later.

When he tries to negotiate with his anger, he reminds himself that youth inspires mistakes and it inspires short-sightedness. He watches Addam lean down to talk to his daughter like she is just about an adult and that level of agency seems nice in an abstract way. In a more visceral way, it makes Drogo tense and kind of pissed — for reasons he doesn’t understand. Things do not always lay out in a straight line. Shitty fathers and absent fathers are a dime a dozen. Addam is a good father.

“So,” he says, pitching his voice low so that only Addam can hear. “Are we going to the zoo?”

Addam sighs in disbelief — as he glances to where Pippa is playing with Jaime. “It’s fucking Christie, and it’s that fucking asshole Christie’s been seeing. They think this shit is so fucking hilarious and clever, and they encourage it in her. And I’m fucking helpless as my kid develops these asshole traits.”

His personal adolescent history goes like this: He was a good kid until he wasn’t.

One day, a switch flipped in him, and gone was the scrawny little guy with an aversion to girls and an obsession with collecting superhero figurines. Replacing that kid was this muscular and moody teenager who piqued the interest of the girls in his class, who was athletically gifted. It was the only thing he and Bharbo ever came close to relating on.

The first time he was suspended from school was because he spat in his teacher’s face. The details are hazy now — he can’t even recall how she had made him feel, to have inspired that action from him. He just remembers how angry and heartbroken his mother was when she left work early to have a nervous meeting with the school principal. And then there were the ensuing weeks of pleading, of negotiation. And of his deafness.

The first time he was expelled was when he realized that people’s good graces are finite. People
thought they could save him until he decided that they really couldn’t.

Even then, he knew his father was a shitty, violent father. But even so, he was 13 when he walked in on his mom in an intimate moment with Lydia — who he thought was just a friend. And it wasn’t sexual. Lydia was just hugging and consoling his mom. His mom’s distress was a common sight and he thought Lydia was a good neighbor. But something flipped in him that day. Somehow — maybe it was due to his young age — an anger manifested inside of him that day. He felt betrayed. For a long time, his narrative and his self-victimization was wrapped around the fact that there was a bad part of him that believed that his mom cheating on Bharbo was a more egregious crime than all of the other times Bharbo must have cheated on his mother — a bigger pain than all the times Bharbo had beat the crap out of them because they looked at him the wrong way. Drogo used to tell himself that he had higher expectations for his mother — that was why he was being unfair.

Jaime tells them that there are far too many of them to facilitate — thus, he had rented a boat, and they’re going to have another beach day. He tells them that he talked to Missandei’s brothers — unfortunately, they have to work — but they told him that the rest of them should spend the day at Proof Rock. The origin of the name has been lost.

The mention of work kind makes prickles of stress hit at the base of his skull — every day that he is not trying to make money is a day closer to abject poverty and another bout of failure.

He tries not to let himself think about that, though.

“Hey,” he says to her — to Dany — maybe fifteen minutes after she arrived at the rental house. It takes him that long to muster up the guts to talk to her. “Look,” he whispers under his breath. “Last night was really not cool.”

“Don’t worry about it,” she says breathily, breezing past him on her way to talk to Brienne. He can smell the waft of her perfume trailing behind her.

She is still pissed at him. She’s real pissed at him. He knows this much.

There’s a certain hypocrisy in Jaime that — for all of Jaime’s good traits — is something that Drogo
attributes to Jaime’s privilege. It’s not as if Jaime has never kept them all waiting before. In fact, punctuality is not particularly one of Jaime’s strengths. He is constantly “only five minutes” late to things — really, he is actually typically ten or fifteen minutes late to things but Jaime de-emphasizes the amount of time whenever he strikes out in protest, whenever any of them bring up his own chronic lateness. Jaime holds the view that there’s a five minute grace period and therefore, he is actually generally on time.

“Dude, where are they at?” Jaime grumbles, flicking his phone on to look at the time on the screen. “It’s been half an hour.”

“It’s okay,” Daven says soothingly. “It’s technically their honeymoon now.” He glances Kara, who is wedged in between Brienne and Dany on a loveseat. “They probably want some alone time before they, you know, spend the rest of the day with us.”

With his arms crossed, Jaime flicks his eyes heavenward, annoyed. “Yeah, I guess them f**king each other is more important than this ten o’clock meet time I have with the boat guy.”

“I mean, it’s kind of hard to compare the two things?” Tyrion says, his voice lilting in amusement.

“It’s Myr,” Drogo says gruffly. “People here are more relaxed with time anyway.” This is something he actually doesn’t know for sure, but Jaime is fucking aggravating.

Jaime ignores him. Instead, Jaime stares at the screen of his phone as he hammers out another text message.

Jaime had been a whisper, part of the chatter — and his name had been written down on a piece of paper with curling edges, clipped to a bulletin board that was in the locker room of Drogo’s second high school. His mom was so relieved when he found football. In the years since, there has been a rationalization of the past on her part. She likes to say that football gave him an outlet to release his male energies and his male aggressions. She likes to express regret that he hadn’t found it sooner. His version of this story is a little bit different — it sounds less like a faded legend and he comes off slightly more horrible and less like a victim of his circumstances.

Jaime was associated with the name of a school before Jaime ever manifested as an actual human being. For a long time, Jaime was also a mirror into some alternate reality, one in which his mother didn’t have five kids with an abuser, one in which his skin color wasn’t this thing that constantly telegraphed his inferiority to other people.

The thing was, in the weeks and maybe months after that one game with King’s Landing High, his coaches and his teammates ultimately expressed their complete lack of surprise at Blackface being used as an intimidation tactic, as a distraction tactic — that kids would think to do that, that the adults in their lives would condone it. In the ensuing months, Drogo and his teammates and their coaches fucking wasted a lot of practice time just being so fucking distracted by discussions of mob mentality and of ignorance and of intentions versus actions and of acts versus the people who carried them out.
He used to get distracted — with rage — over the knowledge that for all of the time they were spending trying not to completely lose their shit in rage — King’s Landing High probably didn’t give one single other thought to him. People like that don’t keep themselves awake at night trying to come up with weakass reasons why the entire world isn’t fucking hopeless.

It would’ve been stupid for him to be shocked when confronted with the shittiness of other people, with the latent bigotry that exists in all of them. He doesn’t know why he always manages to be at least a little surprised, every time.

He remembers Missy saying they are going to be hungry when they arrive — so he heads to the stove and pulls out all of the breakfast stuff again. The carton of eggs is a mess — Jaime just cracked open eggs and left the shells in the carton. It’s one of those things where, if called out on it, Jaime would say it is all biodegradable. It’s all meant to go into yard waste anyway. Jaime constantly has answers for every inconsiderate thing he does.

The gas stove clicks a few times before fire brings it to life. There are only two eggs left, so he drops two pieces of bread into the toaster, padding the protein with carbs.

“Yo! That smells amazing,” Tyrion says. “Can I get at some of that?”

“Sorry, man,” he responds. “There ain’t much left, and this is for the happy couple. If it’s alright with King Jaime, maybe we can stop somewhere to stock up on the way to the boat. Or will that put us unforgivably behind schedule?”

He hears Jaime scoff — they all constantly give each other shit — but he knows that Jaime detected the bitterness in his tone.
He nudges the nonstick frying pan off of the heat, turns off the stove, and smears his greasy right hand over the seat of his pants before reaching over to snatch his phone off of a small pile of plastic wrappers and food scraps. He typically doesn’t have Jaime’s or Dany’s awful tendency of being a slave to his phone — but lately, it’s been an irritating habit of his. Lately, it’s been a distraction and narrow tunnel to the outside.

His eyes reads over Salma’s short text. She’s just tepidly responding to his reminders that Lydia’s nameday is a month away and Salma needs to remember to buy Lydia a gift and set aside a weekend to return home. She’s just thanking him for the reminders. It sounds bland. It’s hard to pick out tone in text messages.

There’s perhaps a certain irony in the fact that he is, easily, the closest with his youngest sister. Perhaps the age difference between them is great enough that it doesn’t occur to her that she should resent him so much more for his controlling nature, despite the fact that he is not actually her father. Perhaps her status as the youngest and her having the oppressive presence of six older people focusing all of their guiding attention on her has made her softer on such things. Perhaps she’s actually a little emotionally delayed, being the youngest, and it’s only a matter of time before she can’t stand him either.

Tyrion’s fist only narrowly misses his brother’s head, as Tyrion stretches widely and yawns exaggeratedly. Jaime lifts his hand up to block Tyrion’s knuckles from his face, lightly chuckling before deepening his voice and going, “Goddammit, Tyrion,” in a low drone.

Apparently it’s an inside joke, because Tyrion’s face breaks out in a flash of a smile — just a split second of brightness — before he rights himself and flattens his expression again. “Sorry, Dad,” he murmurs. “I’m sorry I inconvenienced you by existing so loudly.”

“It’s fine,” Jaime throws back automatically. “I take partial blame. I should’ve drowned you in a bucket before other people grew somewhat attached to you. My fault.”

“None of us are perfect, Dad,” Tyrion says soothingly.

Jaime’s face breaks out into a wide smile, his eyes laserling these fond holes into Tyrion’s face.
“Least of all you,” he says.

“Guys,” Sandor interrupts. “I know you both have a lot of fun with this bit, but it only makes the rest of us pretty uncomfortable.”

Jhiqui breezes past him, talking a mile a minute, when he opens the door for them. Her husband trails behind, holding her oversized purse and a paper cup of coffee, shooting Drogo an apologetic look after his wife doesn’t acknowledge Drogo.

Drogo has generally gathered that Jhiqui has not told her husband that she had a one night stand with some random guy that they keep running into with alarming regularity. Either that or Nick is the coolest motherfucker on the planet. Either that or that guy has some motherfucking self-confidence.

“Oh my God, I’m so itchy,” Jhiqui says, scraping her long nails roughly against the backs of her thighs, over her black leggings. “God, Jesus. Why did I put on these tights? God, I think I’ve become slightly allergic to alcohol after having Arqo. I’m getting hives on my legs. God.”

“Hon,” Nick says. “You’re getting hives because you’re scratching yourself too much.”

In many ways, Jhiqui actually reminds him of his sisters — maybe of Adilah the most — because they are both loud and brash. It’s a little bent and sometimes his mind wanders and he tries to remember if he made this observation about her when they first met. He also chalks it all up to a shared heritage. They are all Dothraki. There is something innate and intrinsic and unique and individualistic in it all.

He has these awful memories of her. He has these memories that kind of flood him with guilt. He just has no talent or any capacity to deal properly with other people’s vulnerability. Maybe that’s why Dany initially appealed to him. She is bulletproof. Maybe — maybe he doesn’t actually know anything with any sort of accuracy. He just mostly does his best to push out the things that are horrible and sad, out of his head.

Jhiqui always looks so proud now, when he runs into her. He means that she overflows with an large amount of pride. Maybe that is the thing that reminds him of Alidah.

“Where are Missandei and Bitchface?” Jhiqui asks, seated at the dining table, taking her husband’s advice and vigorously rubbing the backs of her thighs with her palms instead of her nails. “Running late?”

“Could you not?” Addam says, clamping his hands over Pippa’s squirming head. “Can you clean it up?” He rolls his eyes. “You have a kid now, too.”

Jhiqui grins, casting her eyes to Nick, who swallows his sip of coffee uncomfortably, before he reluctantly says, “We’re raising our son in a transparent household. So when it comes time for him to ask questions about words or concepts — we’ll just talk to him about it. I mean, we’re just going to
field a lot of questions with this kid, period. He’s . . . half-Dothraki.”

It’s hard to tell whether Nick is just parroting back his wife’s point of view, or if his wife is slightly mocking him for his earnestness. Drogo doesn’t know either of them well enough to hazard a guess.

A milestone of his life is the one time he broke down — really broke down — in front of his father. He was maybe fourteen years old — maybe a little older. Probably not younger because he remembers these observations and these lies of flattery people were feeding him at the time. The adults in his life kind of cooed over him and told him that he was becoming a man. It must’ve done all sorts of things to his ego and his brain — inflated his sense of self.

For a long time, he operated under the really childish misunderstanding that their father didn’t know what he was doing. For a long time, Drogo assumed that his father didn’t actually know how much he was actually hurting all of them and — if he was somehow shown the way — then he’d stop.

Another intersection of guilt:

All of the times in his youth that he angrily blamed and humiliated his mom — to her face — for all the ways that he thought she was lacking as a mother and as a wife and woman. All the times that Bharbo abandoned them and left them to fend for themselves, she stayed and had to deal with her son’s angry confusion.

He used to slam drawers so hard that they cracked and the handles came off — this tangible evidence of his impending manhood, probably. And he used to tell her that they were living in the fucking hell they were stuck in because she was weak and pathetic and couldn’t do anything right to protect them. In his angriest moments, he also used to tell her that she shouldn’t be surprised that she got beat — because she was so weak and pathetic so of course she got beat. They used to scream at each other across the house. She used to look at him with such a sense of betrayal and — sometimes — fear. He used to demand that she be a better mother. In her angriest moments, she used to accuse him of being a mirror image of his father.

Grey and Missandei are taking longer than the half-hour Missandei stated. He has their plate of food in the oven, staying warm and slowly drying out into shittiness. He’s been awkwardly defending this
stupid fucking plate from the advances of Tyrion and Jhiqui, who keep making a case for snoozing and losing. He keeps hovering in the kitchen, floating from countertop to countertop because he’s too wired to sit and relax.

“Dude —”

“Stop it!” Brienne snaps, flashing her irritated face at Jaime. “We get it! You’re impatient, and they’re late. But there’s nothing you can do about it, so let it go.”

“Ruh roh,” Pia says. “Please don’t fight, guys.”

“We’re not fighting!” Jaime snipes, throwing his hand out. “We’re just talking.”

“No, of course you’re just talking,” Pia says placatingly. On someone else, the words would sound super sarcastic and passive aggressive — which is actually a tone that Jaime responds well to. But the words coming from Pia — they sound brainlessly soothing.

“Dude,” Jaime says testily, orienting his attention to Pia. “Don’t do that. Don’t talk to me like that.”

Brienne sighs. “Jaime, babe —”

“Oh my God,” Tyrion says loudly. “Can we vote him off the island already?”

“You know what!” Doreah says cheerfully, immediately descending into peals of giggles. “In a few hours, we can actually do that! We can actually vote him off the island!”

“Oh my God,” Tyrion says, as a grin spreads over his face. “Doreah, you stupid genius, you’re right!”

Doreah tosses him a look. “Okay, rude. And thanks!”

“Guys,” Tyrion says. “Find some paper and a marker. We need it for the ceremony later.”

“You know what?” Jaime says, using Sandor’s knee to push himself off the couch, scrambling after his brother, who disappeared into a bedroom to rifle intrusively through luggage. “I am into this. Let’s find some paper. We’re gonna do video confessionals, too.”

He can overhear Pippa getting smart with Daven. Daven must’ve said something to her that she didn’t like — must have set some sort of boundary or limit — because Drogo overhears Pippa loudly whisper to Daven that Daven is not her dad, so she doesn’t have to do what he says.

Honestly, it is really cute and comical, the serious tone coming out of such a pint-size little thing. But then Addam rushes back into the room — the toilet is still flushing behind him — and he’s pointing a finger at Pippa. He doesn’t find her as funny as Drogo does — probably because of the different context. And Addam’s saying, “Guess what? When I’m not around — he is your dad. You better
listen to your Uncle Daven, okay?"

"O-kay," she returns sullenly, breaking eye-contact with everyone.

Apparently satisfied, Addam disappears back into the bathroom to wash his hands.

The elongated sense of anticipation makes them all bounce in their seats when they hear the ancient truck crunch its way into the driveway before the engine shuts off.

“Oh, hell yes,” Jaime says, immediately shooting out of his seat to run to the front door. He yanks the door open before Grey and Missy even make it to the stoop. Drogo can’t see them with Jaime blocking the doorway, but he hears Jaime say, “You’re late.”

He hears Grey’s low voice quietly say, “Sorry,” and it’s really just years of friendship and other years of navigating around an angry asshole’s ever-shifting moods that Drogo can pick out the subtleties. Grey is pissed at Jaime. He pushes past Jaime and looks a little bit stunned — when he sees the crowd that has gathered in the living room. “Sorry, guys,” he repeats, frowning. “I didn’t realize everyone was waiting.”

“It’s okay. Really, it is,” Brienne whispers to him, smiling, casting careful glances at Jaime’s back.

They hear Jaime break his hug with Missandei in a scoff. They hear him loudly saying, “No shit, he’s moody. When is he not moody?”

“Why are you moody?” Missy asks.

“Oh my God,” Tyrion says. “We have been having so much fun this morning. We are so glad you guys are now here to have fun with us.”

He honestly feels like a fucking dipshit. Dany won’t even look at him. Clea just poked him in the shoulder in a friendly way and innocently asked him why he’s so quiet this morning — and it completely caught him off guard and it felt like everyone was just fucking staring at him. He faltered and he awkwardly told her that he’s not being quiet. And then he backtracked when he realized that his response was just fucking weak. So he carelessly went with an old standby and, without thinking, he told her he doesn’t feel great because he’s a little hungover.
It’s not completely a lie. He doesn’t feel one-hundred. But it is the most fucking excruciating truth. It made the room throb in tension. Probably because everyone started reliving the other night.

If he were Jaime, he could make some winning joke about having the most insane and the most public meltdown at a friend’s wedding. And it’d go over well. And it’d dispel the awkwardness in the room. But he’s not Jaime.

When he was younger, he used to be able to play dumb a lot. His memory gets hazy when he drinks — that’s another frightening similarity he has with Bharbo — he tends to forget details when he drinks. When he was younger, his friends used to tell him war stories of what happened at a party, what happened with a girl. He used to laugh along and adopt the new information as part of his story — but uneasily. Sometimes he just couldn’t remember.

It must’ve been a defense mechanism. Or his denial was just so strong. Now — in his older age — he actually remembers the night before with such stark clarity. He remembers how he felt in the moment. He remembers all the things he cannot put into words because the thought of doing that just makes him feel so awful and pathetic. And he said enough.

“Hungry?” he says softly — too softly. He’s almost sure that neither of them hear him, until Missandei swivels her body around at the sound of the oven opening.

“Whoa!” she says. “We’re so hungry, actually! We didn’t have any time to grab a bite between getting up and dropping Momo 2.0 off at Grandma’s. Drogo!”

He winces at her effusive tone. “No big deal. I know you said on the phone —”

“Yeah,” she says, walking over to put her hand on his arm. “Thank you.”

“Missy,” Jhiqui says. “He’s actually been guarding that plate all morning for you guys. I’m starving, too. But he’s heartless.”

In his life, he has often been the cause of a girl’s anguished tears. In many cases, he generally knows why he is the cause of crying, even as he’s confused and simultaneously fed up by it. He remembers all of the door-breaking fights with his sisters, whenever he got angry with them and told them go back into the fucking house to change out of their rape-me clothes. Their overblown and wild responses to his natural protectiveness was bewildering when they were in their teens. His mom used to attribute it to hormones — painting this picture of women going batshit in adulthood as some biological rite of passage. He used to feel comparatively so much more even and logical — with his extreme rage. He used to be so assured in his own rightness that it was easy to do the things he did — such as buy new door knobs and take their privacy away — and to demand the things he did from them — such as get permission from him every time they leave the house.

In this way, Dany was and is very different from what he knew and knows of women.
Maybe he couldn’t have ever foreseen it, the way that red hot anger cools into a quiet and latent bitterness and resentment. He’s starting to fear that this is always going to be how it ends.

There is one time that he made a girl cry, and it just knocked him back a step because it was so out of left field. That girl was Missandei. She was displaying how hurt she was by him so transparently — and he was so confused and felt so bad over it — even as he fought to figure out where he went wrong. At some point in life, when he wasn’t paying attention, he stopped looking at her like she was a target that he was psychotically trying to get naked and into his friend’s bed. At some point in life, she became this person that he became invested in, in a way that was separate from Grey. It used to be this stupid point of pride back in high school and college — that he didn’t have any actual friends who were girls. He remembers how his debate with Missandei dipped from contentious and strong, just plummeted to sad and disappointing. She was disappointed in him. And it made him feel so awful.

He hates every moment of this. He hates that he can’t unsee the way Grey ambles over and wordlessly hops on the counter next to him because all of the seats in the house are taken. Jaime’s grumbling on keeping a schedule has quieted a little bit — and he hates that, too — the way Jaime has adjusted to him. He hates the perceptive and purposeful way that Missandei rambles out loud to Grey, to herself, and to them, as she efficiently slices through the eggs with a fork and shoves them into her mouth. She’s telling them that she didn’t realize that they had such a defined start-time. She and Grey thought their plans were up in the air, so it was a surprise to get all of Jaime’s texts in the morning. She tells them it’s really no big deal and stuff, but they feel bad that everyone has been waiting for them. She asks Grey if he agrees with her, if he also thinks that the eggs are amazing and the toast is amazing — as if it’s hard to make eggs and toast. She keeps talking through her mouthful as if on a mission — Grey’s condemningly silent as he eats — and Drogo hates that, too.

“Can I have a bite of your toast?” Tyrion asks, as if reading from some pre-established script.

“No,” Missy says, also reading from the same script.

“Lame.”

“I saw a burger drive-thru in town,” Tysha says helpfully. “Maybe we can stop on the way out?”

“Now, there’s an idea,” Tyrion says.
“Hey,” she says quietly to him, catching him at a moment when everyone else is inattentive. She’s rubbing her hands up and down her arms as if cold — but there’s no way she can be cold in this blistering heat. “How are you this morning?”

He fucking loves everyone’s sympathy. He says, “I’m fine.”

She lightly laughs. “Okay. Sure. Whatever.”

He sighs. “Thanks for checking in.”

Missandei stares at him for a pensive moment. “I owe you a pep talk.”

He reaches out and presses his palm into her shoulder. Because she makes him so tired. She must make Grey so tired all the time, too. “Maybe not now?” he says hopefully.

She smiles. “Sure. Later.”

Despite his best efforts, he neatly bumps into Dany on the way out of the door. She grimaces out a smile and casts him a glance as he pauses and lets her go in front of him. She has the cooler that they found in the garage in her arms. It’s not loaded yet so it’s light, but he finds he has to fight his natural instinct to take it from her, to carry it for her.

In the course of his life, people keep telling him what this kind of love is. Other kinds of love — he understands. He understands familial love. He knows what it means and how it feels and how truthful it is — he would do fucking anything for his moms and his sisters. Even when they don’t want him to do anything for them.

He doesn’t know how to translate this devotion to someone else. He doesn’t even know if he should. When he tried, with her, God, she really hated it. But he doesn’t know any other way.
When he first saw Dany — she was sitting on Grey and Missandei’s couch. He was — of course — drunk, and as his eyes drifted down her low-cut top in the span of a microsecond, he confirmed to himself that she was indeed fucking scorching hot. He also told himself that she wasn’t really his type — he wasn’t really ever into short, skinny white girls. He likes a certain body type, a certain thickness that stops well short of obesity. He likes a meaty ass, big tits, and a small waist. Missandei has described his type with a patronizing roll of her eyes and a predictable insult. She used to tell him that the women he went after weren’t real. He used to tell her that they were plenty real to him. He used to chuck up her attitude about it as some girl power thing — as some defensive woman-with-something-to-prove type of situation. He used to joke with her that even she was a tad too thin for him — a thinly veiled compliment-insult that even she struggled not to smile over sometimes.

That aimless kind of banter — that type of say-nothing conversation is something he has never engaged in with Brienne. He knows better. Missandei is fair game because of how she looks. He used to look upon Brienne, and he used to vaguely tell himself that Jaime must have a type — this secret, horrible thought he has never voiced out loud. He used to pride himself on being prudent enough to never voice it out loud, just like he knew never to reference a woman’s weight, just like he knew to never trust a girl when she told him to help her not overeat. He knows Jaime would’ve fucking kill him over his honesty — or something worse.

Truthfully he didn’t think he had anything in common with Brienne for the longest time — for years. To him, she just existed.

He remembers complimenting Dany on her driving ability — the night that they met. He stopped short of telling her that she drives like a man. He remembers her grunt over the soft hum of the idling car at a stoplight, at an intersection.

When she plainly invited herself up to his apartment — he was so surprised by her forwardness that he blurted out to her that he isn’t the relationship type. He might have been warning her off, in this way that was devoid of self-awareness. He told her he is not a good guy — not the sort of guy one brings home to Mom and Dad. How the script goes is that she was supposed to tell him that she doesn’t believe the things he is saying about himself — of course he is a good guy. He’s just misunderstood.

She said none of those things. She just stared back at him steadily in the darkened car. She asked him if he wanted to have sex with her or not.

“Okay, so Dany will drive her ridiculous Kia Rio to the docks —”
“Hey, this Rio seats four people,” Dany says evenly to Jaime. “And I did not anticipate needing to transport people in my rental when I got it.”

“The docks, Jaime? What are you? A character in a detective noir —”

“It’s the fucking docks!” Jaime says testily, shooting a look at his brother. “What else are you supposed to call it? The marina?”

Addam whistles loudly, trying to redirect the attention. “Okay, so we’re meeting at the docks —”

“I’m stopping for a fucking burger.”

“Oh shit,” Daven says. “Can you get me something, too, T?”

“Two double-double bacons with cheese, duh,” Tyrion says. “Christ, my chest hurts just thinking about it.”

“Dude, can you guys stop swearing in front of my kid? Can I also get a regular burger, no mayo — and a kids’ meal, too? Apple slices, not fries.”

“Dad —”

“Chill, kid —”

“No, Dad, I don’t want a Happy Meal. I want a number one.”

“What? Pips, a number one doesn’t come with a toy.”

“Dad — I know.”

“Tyrion, are they still serving breakfast? Can I just get an order of hashbrowns and an orange juice? I don’t eat meat.”

“Oh my God!” Tyrion shouts, covering his ears dramatically. “I hate you all! Please text Tysha your orders so that we can get it all straight! Please send her one text and one text only. We will then meet you at the docks with all of your bullcrap!” And then he looks at Pia. “No they’re not still serving breakfast. Breakfast ends at friggin’ ten o’clock, genius.”

Drogo instinctively averts his eyes when he catches a glimpse of Grey leaning in to say goodbye to Missandei — the general intensity of it a bit overblown because it’s just a fifteen-minute drive. But then again, they did just get married all legitimately. He can hear Clea and Doreah’s dreamy sighs from a few yards away. It’s not that public displays make him uncomfortable — he has far more tolerance than Jaime does — it’s more that displays from Grey feel deeply personal. To look at it is like staring into the ass hole of the sun. It burns, and it is mind-melting.

Drogo squeezes out a generic brand Rolaid onto his palm and tosses it back, grinding down the chalky tablet in between his molars. His stomach has been churning uncomfortably — he has no appetite this morning. His stomach feels bloated with bile and vestiges of alcohol. He’s brushed his teeth multiple times, but he can still taste it on his tongue. It’s almost as if he can still inhale the
vapors. It gives him the shivers. And it makes him feel a lot of regret.

A hand falls on his back — Grey’s — as his bud ducks through the sliding door of Addam’s rented minivan.

On his part, he actually thought that Grey was a little bit odd — and pretty closeted — when they first met. Grey caught Drogo at a pivotal moment in life. He was eighteen years old. He was freshly removed from his situation at home — the first time in life he was afforded space from his chaotic family dynamic. As such, he suffered from extreme guilt over being the oldest, over being the only son, over escaping, over abandoning the people he loved to an uncertain future. He called his mom and Lydia obsessively that first week of school. He knows that they believed it to be general homesickness, and they both told him to stop calling and to give college a real shot — so worried they were that he’d go down this predictable trajectory of trying and failing and succumbing to their general inevitable lot in life. So many sentences in his family start with, “People like us . . .” Sometimes, they give up before they can even really start. That’s always been something that he fights against.

At eighteen, he was still haunted by the memories of stabbing Bharbo and kicking that deadbeat abusive asshole out of the house. At the time — he didn’t think so, and he was unaware. At the time, he felt a discrepancy between his apparent age and his advanced wisdom. He had been the man of his house for a long time, by that point. It’s a story that his mother had made mythical. And he bought into it.

At the time, he found every fucking other person he met at white-people college to be completely obnoxious and completely young. He hid his disdain for them and congratulated himself on his ability to compartmentalize — he told himself this talent in him will lead him straight to the top. He’d play their fucking games better than they do. He used to smile in their faces, and he joined their teams and their clubs and made himself as unthreatening in class as he could. Because that was how the game was played. He was single-minded about his goals.

These days, he sometimes envies how vastly simpler it all was. He misses that sense of surety. But what he doesn’t miss is youthful idiocy. What he doesn’t miss is the blaring short-sightedness.

In hindsight, he probably latched onto Grey based on some real superficialities. The guy wasn’t white — automatic points. The guy was also insanely quiet, thus, easy to talk to — or easy to talk at. The guy was athletic — thus, they had activities to do together that didn’t involve talking. The guy knew how to party — which turned out to be due to a latent drug addiction, but yeah. Grey had all the makings of an ideal hang-buddy — and, for a freak while — he was a friend that Drogo was trying not to let crush too hard on him because he himself wasn’t gay, and it’s real fucking awkward when one friend tries to initiate something with another friend and the other friend isn’t feeling it. He used to tell himself that he really didn’t want to be one of those asshole meatheads from his high school who said fucking pathetic homophobic bullshit about his mother. He used to tell himself that he was way too fucking old to still be getting in fights over that sort of bigoted bullshit, as if eighteen was an age that was too old for anything.

There was a shameful swatch of time freshman year when he no-homo’ed a lot around Grey because he was such a fucking young dickhole. Because he was honestly so uncomfortable with it. Every
time he said it, in the back of his mind he knew his mom and Lydia somewhere — somehow — knew about it and were not proud of him. That was why he eventually stopped saying it.

But it was a weird time, one in which he honestly just really needed a friend because he missed his family badly — a time in which he was perpetually scared that said friend would try to make out with him or grab his ass or his dick all random. He supposes that the incredible build-up of the awareness of his own stupidity and of his own insulting assumptions was kind of the impetus behind his enthusiasm — when he realized that Grey was actually really, really hopelessly hung up on Missandei — and was actually totally, completely not in love with him. Drogo felt like such a shits show over the relief he felt — over what it meant — that he doubled-up on his own shittiness and generally attacked the Missandei problem as if it was a math equation. That’s actually what he used to call it in his head — the Missandei problem.

The problem was this:

How does one get a guy with virtually no fucking game with women when he wasn’t high out of his mind to intersect with a hot girl whose desperate love sickness and apparent Daddy issues bled out from her every pore?

It seemed like an easy enough problem to solve.

But then he learned about the situation that Grey grew up in. But then he learned that Missandei’s issues weren’t really Daddy issues.

Jaime stretches out widely in the impossibly tight space of the minivan — yawning and fanning his arms out, fist lightly hitting the glass window, gently swiping Sandor’s head before he settles and rests his arm across Grey’s shoulders, rests his hand on Sandor’s neck. It’s like watching an eighth-grader put his very first moves on a girl in a dark movie theater, during their first unsupervised PG-13 flick.

Sour fucking grapes. He knows that he is being such a fucking little bitch about this stupid shit again.

Sandor is huge and the seats are made for average-sized people. Grey is condensed tightly in the middle, awkwardly leaning into Jaime because the familiarity is stronger there. Drogo can feel the suction of his thighs plastered against Daven’s and Peck’s — and it’s something they are all generally putting up with — for the short drive.

Pippa’s sitting shotgun, and her dad is driving. Drogo supposes that’s why he sees Jaime sneak his phone out to type out a message — that’s why Grey’s phone buzzes immediately afterward. He can only guess what Jaime had written when he sees Grey immediately stiffens in his seat, knocking Jaime’s arm off his shoulders. He sees Grey raise his glowing phone to Jaime’s face — teeth bared — and a silent what the fuck gets dropped.

Jaime just snickers and rolls his body away as best as he can in the tight space as Grey shoves at his shoulder. His breathy laughs get pushed into the window as he forces out a soft, “Oh, you shy now? Come on, we’re all friends here.”

“Got something you guys want to share with the rest of the class?” Daven says from beside him.
Addam has been griping about the seating choice — Daven blocks the entire view of the back window.

“I was just asking him why he was so late to meet us this morning.”

“Don’t even start this again,” Sandor says in exasperation.

“No no, Sandy. You don’t get it. I mean — I was asking him why he was so late.”

“I still don’t get it.” Sandor grunts. “Is he pregnant or something? All of your stupid inside jokes are exhausting.”

“They wouldn’t be so inside if you would just move back home.”

“I ain’t moving back just so I can join your racquetball squad.”

“Uncle Grey, you’re pregnant?” Her voice comes out as an unbearably adorable squeak.

He breaks out of the claustrophobic minivan with a fair bit of dramatics, his shoes and his weight hitting the asphalt with a thump. He sees Dany casually leaning against the red Kia with Missandei, Brienne, and Kara. Her eyes flick up to meet his for a brief moment — she nods before she goes back to her conversation.

At age twenty, during a camping trip with the guys — they had all sat themselves around a burning, too-hot fire that Daven had enthusiastically made. They were drinking Everclear that a senior on the team bought for them. This was before they met Sandor — before he schooled them on why it’s not ever a good idea to drink Everclear. But Drogo and Grey sort of prided themselves on being poor college students of color. They sort of made a stink about it, and guilt-tripped Addam, Daven, and Jaime down into the dredges.

They went around in a circle, drunkenly slurring about first times. He made the brutal mistake of going first — and going bombastically. A story — about a fifteen-year-old older woman and a hot tub and lack of supervision — was kind of fueled on by alcohol and rose-colored glasses. He basically told a story about his conquest and how fucking bad he thought he already was — at thirteen.

This memory is embarrassing in hindsight. Addam and Daven followed suit, followed his lead. He remembers loudly falling over in his chair laughing — over a whispered confession, over Addam’s admission that it was love and it was special.

Now, he cringes when he thinks of the lie Jaime breezily told — a random girl, a random school
dance, a random stairwell, an appropriate age. He actually remembers lightly giving Jaime shit because he thought seventeen was too old to have had his cherry popped.

Now, he blames himself over Grey’s general denial — Grey had refused to participate. He just sucked up all of the laughter and all of the jokes into his vortex of a bad mood. It was perhaps the first time that Drogo can remember — that Grey did that. It would later become a repeating pattern.

Drogo had asked Grey what his problem was — and had gotten a non-answer. And then Drogo remembers this stupid retarded light bulb going off in his head. And — like he had all of the answers already — he assuredly said something like, oh my God, you’re still a fucking virgin!

And then there was the lack of confirmation, and the lack of denial. There was just anger and silence. And he was real drunk — because he laughed and he mocked and he said that he must’ve hit the nail right on the head.

Now — he often thinks back to that awful memory. And he feels the distance between them — and he’s so fucking stupid and inept — because he knows why it’s there. He knows why it’s there, yet he cannot help but try to constantly rectify — and constantly just fuck it all up, despite his good intentions.

He dumbly gives her his arm for balance — just because he happens to be in her vicinity and she happened to reach out. Her hand is warm on his skin — also small and slight — and it’s like a punch to the stomach. He’s trying to parse out this awful feeling. He’s trying to figure out if he feels wretched because he has lost his pride and he’s the kind of person that really depends on his pride — or if it’s because he actually loves this difficult person, and this is what heartbreak is all about.

She sighs, and she teeters on her wedge sandals — she squeezes his arm tighter. Through gritted teeth, she says, “This is ridiculous.” He doesn’t know if he’s referring to the state of the boat — the rust and the squeaking — or if she’s referring to their boat captain, a loud, flamboyant bleach blond who blares out sexual ambiguity — but Drogo knows better than to even hazard a fucking guess these days — or if Dany is referring to just everything in general.

“Try and have a little fun with it,” he tells her. He used to tell her this all the time.

She kind of hides her smile in the curtain of her hair. Her white blouse flutters in the breeze. His stomach lurches — as his other hand shoves into his pocket to look for the roll of antacids.
The smell of beef tallow, cheese, and sauteed onions hits his nose, and it makes him regret not putting in an order with Tyrion. He watches out of his peripheral vision, as Tyrion combs through paper bags, as Tysha scrolls through her text messages and occasionally points to a bundle in Tyrion's hand and tells him who it belongs to.

Drogo’s palate is something that he fights to hold onto. Whenever he goes home to visit his mom and eats her home cooking, he gets this renewed sense of self, of who he is, and what it means to be Dothraki. It’s an identity that fits like a well-worn glove that he wears with pride. It always makes him hyper-aware that in King’s Landing, people don’t seem to understand that he is Dothraki. He is everything wonderful and flawed about it. Everything life decision he makes pivots around this sense of self. And sometimes he loses grasp on it, the longer he is away from it.

He is something wholly different than Grey and Missandei. Their cultures as they knew it were wiped out in one fell, historical swoop. Their cultures submitted, suffered, and adapted under colonization. Dothraki refused to be colonized. That is something deep and intrinsic to him — a refusal to succumb. Dothraki also is a culture of slow degradation. The thing is that they all die and they all become extinct. Grey and Missandei lost it all in an instant. Drogo has been watching the slow death of their way his entire life. He continues to helplessly watch the decline.

He gets told why a lot — by Lina. She is the second youngest, and it’s likely that she is the smartest. She has assimilated the most. She can’t speak Dothraki worth shit. She is working her first job out of college at a nonprofit. She’s young enough that she has no shame talking to him like he’s stupid and old-fashioned sometimes. He’s learned a lot so he tries not to think about it too much — he tries not to be Bharbo, a person whose mood would flip based on how much respect he perceived he was getting. But Drogo and Lina fight sometimes, when she confidently tells him that the Dothraki culture is dying because a culture steeped in pervasive misogyny stands no chance in this world. Maybe she’s not wrong, but her self-satisfaction over their impending extinction makes him angry sometimes.

She likes to bitterly remind him that he’s a man. She says it like he has a disease. Sometimes he wants to spread his arms out wide and ask her to tell him just how the fuck he has actually benefitted from being male. He has worked as a waiter for most of his adult life. He cannot even afford to buy a new car, so he still drives that same piece of shit he had in high school — back when it was already a piece of shit. His education has been worthless. And he’s getting older.

Maybe he can’t love Dany because she’s not Dothraki. To love her is to give up too much of himself. He used to assume that when he was finally done fucking around, he’d settle down with a nice Dothraki girl and they’d have nice Dothraki babies that they’d teach the language and culture to. There’s a strong instinct in him to preserve their way of life. Maybe he is just fucking terrible, and he doesn’t love Dany because she cannot have children.
Jaime inadvertently rented a party boat, and they carry their somber and tense moods onto this boat. Addam is busy fussing with his daughter, clipping her into a smelly lifejacket even though she insists that she doesn’t need one, taking her up on the second level deck to show her the view of the water. Daven and Sandor sit quietly and obediently as the engine starts up. Jaime is glaring these unimpressed daggers at this tanned shirtless man named Captain Jorge who is giving him some good-natured shit for being late. Jorge is laughing and telling Jaime that he is a Myr man now. Over the rumble engine, Nick is shouting, “What? A merman?” as he looks quizzically at Jaime.

And Grey is lurking around in the one darkened corner of the boat, standing awkwardly set apart from everyone else. Across from Drogo, the women collectively break out into these peals of laughter, as they settle themselves on the nose of the boat, some leaning dangerously against the railing. Dany is smiling.

Captain Jorge pulls out a microphone and flicks it on. They all wince as they get hit with this screeching feedback. “Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for joining me, your Captain Jorge and first mate Cuba Gooding Jr.” — Drogo blinks hard at that — “on the SS Love Boat. I understand we have newlyweds on board.” There is the high-pitched sound of squealing there — mostly concentrated in Jhiqui’s corner. It makes Jorge laugh and break character for a moment before he lightly admonishes her by pointing a finger at her. “You’re trouble,” he says. Then addressing the rest of them, “But before we get some drinks out to all you beautiful people, I have to tell you about safety precautions.”

Shit gets fucking weird again, when shots of tequila, salt, and limes get passed around from a round tray — Cuba Gooding Jr. is actually a young skinny guy with a thin mustache and a sardonic smile — and Drogo has to politely decline. Jorge fucking balks at him out loud — into the microphone — and he inquires to the rest of the boat why Drogo is in such a bad mood. He tries to start a clap revolution, as if applauding would inspire Drogo to give up his alcohol fast. There is no clapping. The boat is just austere and quiet. Jorge figures out quick that he made a wrong turn somewhere, and he goes back to his safe space, which is flirting mercilessly with Missandei, who is embarrassed by the attention and constantly casting these careful looks at Grey as a result. If he and Grey were on less awkward terms, Drogo would offer to go over there and just scare the shit out of Jorge for Grey. But he feels really stupidly shy at the moment.

Drogo’s smile is strained, when Jaime clears his throat and says, “Okay, well bottoms up, I guess,” as he holds up his shot glass of tequila.

The rest of the guys chorus out, “Cheers,” and then it is done, and they are back to the quiet, as the rest of the boat throbs out another Pitbull song.
He supposes that they were doomed from the start, because they were never on equal footing. He must’ve always been hyper aware of this on some level, because he was always trying to prove his disengagement to her. She was different from other women in the sense that she was just not that impressed with him — none of him. He is used to a certain effect that he solicits. He is used to how women make him feel like such a man, with their bodies and their large eyes and their neediness for him. He’s used to that kind of power. And she — well, she fucking gave him cab fare. And every time something like that would happen, he’d rage about it within himself. He would then congratulate himself for not starting a fight and not hitting her in his rage because he is not like his father — and then he would swear that he was too fucking good for this shit. He’d tell himself that she just had some fucking gall because she is fucking white. And then he’d swear her off and he’d tell himself that he could do so much fucking better than someone who looked down her nose at him.

And she’d beckon. He was still a man, so he still responded. And then he’d have a relapse. And then he’d hate himself for his weaknesses. That’s his pattern — he is always under the threat of a relapse. He might be genetically predisposed to this.

He has so many rationalizations for that period in his life. He had gained weight. He had no fucking job. He was bussing it everywhere because of a DUI. He was one wrong move from being incarcerated for something stupid, probably. His mental state was one where he was always trying to prove he hadn’t changed at all and that he still had it. The girls kept getting younger and younger because they don’t know as much when they are younger — he used to tell himself that they were hotter and more sexually adventurous when they were younger. Honestly, his peers were probably becoming more and more like Missandei. He used to tell himself they were just kind of in a different place in life — ready to settle down — always hankering to settle down — always hankering to have babies because of that biological clock. He has this theory that he gravitated to something different because he was at a low point in his life.

Every time he fucked up with Dany — every time he ruined their time together because he got so angry with her he couldn’t see straight — because she said something that felt vaguely disrespectful and set him off — instead of apologizing for it and retreating like how he expected — she’d stubbornly refused to see how she had fucked with him. She used to leave telling him to call her again after he grew the fuck up. He used to go fucking nuts over that. And then he used to fall into old patterns and just binge drink for a night as he called her a fucking heartless bitch in his head.

His mom used to tell all of them that they had to be careful in who they picked to be with. She drew from her mistakes in life and told them all to be very judicious and to find husbands and wives who will treat them well. When Lydia moved in, he wouldn’t talk or acknowledge her for months.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Grey mutters, as he watches Jorge look down Missandei’s cleavage, down her chest, which she doesn’t notice because her head is tipped back and a stream of shitty tequila goes down her throat from Jorge’s heavy hand.
“Do you want me to go talk to that assturd?” Jaime says.

“Yeah, Bieber. Definitely go over there and embarrass my wife by fighting for her honor on my behalf.”

Jaime rolls his eyes. “Okay, so you’ll just continue to hang over here all fucking cranky and quiet. And we’ll just keep having all this fun we are having.”

Grey shrugs. “That has generally been my MO.”

“Honestly, it’s really Missy’s fault,” Tyrion calls out from his seat next to Sandor. “I mean, do you see what she’s wearing?” He looks serious about it — until he doesn’t. He cracks a smile and then starts laughing to himself, even as Grey continues staring stonily ahead into the water.

“I don’t have this problem with Brienne,” Jaime says. “Because she doesn’t dress herself all slutty like Missy does.” He’s saying that to bait Grey. Grey never takes the bait. “Or rather, her face and her body just bleed out a lot of red awkwardness, even when people tell her they like her bracelet. Flirting never gets that far. If it ever does, I never see it. So it’s all good with me.”

“I never see it with Ayla either,” Sandor cuts in. “But that’s probably because we hang out with the same five people in the dirt, day in, day out.”

Daven grins. “We get it, Sandy. Your life is super glamorous.”

“Dude,” Tyrion says, pushing the word at Grey’s back. “Are you having fun on your honeymoon? Is this everything you had hoped for and more?” And then to his brother, Tyrion says, “This boat is fucking ridiculous, Jaime. Ya fucked up.”

Pia saunters over to them, and she kind of messes with their tense and strained dynamic by plastering the side of her body to Peck. She’s standing and he’s sitting down. She smiles widely at all of them. And they all brace themselves for her. Then she says, “I was sent over here to broker peace! The ladies want to know why you’re all a bunch of sourpusses.”

After the boat smoothly hits the beach and these rusty ladders get pulled out by Cuba Gooding Jr., Jorge and Jaime talk off to the side. Jorge is asking for payment, which Jaime pulls out of his pocket. Drogo watches as Jaime doubtfully asks Jorge how he can be sure that Jorge will actually come back for them. How can they be sure Jorge is not going to abandon them on the island?
Jorge actually looks mildly offended. He puts his hand on Jaime’s arm and he gravely tells Jaime that Jaime needs to learn to trust people. Jaime looks like he wants to punch Jorge in the face for that life lesson.

Drogo crosses his arms over his chest, and he blinks and squints against the sun rays, which are shining directly into his eyes. Jhiqui is making fun of Grey for being uptight, because that’s one of her very favorite past times. She doesn’t seem to understand that it’s not that Grey isn’t capable of having fun — he just has to be in the right mood for it. Grey doesn’t seem to understand that the more he digs his feet in the sand and refuses to engage, the more he inspires people to keep harassing him.

“Does he really know how to dance?” Dany says, coming up from behind him.

Drogo is surprised by her sudden presence — and the fact that she’s willingly talking to him — but he tries not to let on. “I’ve heard rumors, mostly from Missy, but I have never actually seen it for myself.”

“Missandei is so biased, though,” Dany says. “Such is the nature of being in love with someone. You are blind to their flaws. Missandei probably also thinks he’s a great conversationalist.”

Drogo chokes on a laugh. “I can tell you confidently that she does not think that. I know this because she has bitched to me at length about how he sucks at talking sometimes.”

He can’t help but wonder if Dany’s making a dig at them — at him and her — and the fact that they were never able to move very far past each other’s flaws.

“I hate beaches,” Dany mutters.


She wrinkles her nose. “No,” she says. “Speaking of people who are bad conversationalists . . . I figured a book would not help me, in terms of being social with Missandei’s friends.”

He holds up his thumb and forefinger to her, keeping a modest amount of space in between the two. “Aren’t they kind of your friends, too, now?”

“Maybe Brienne,” Dany concedes.

Another difference between them is that he is much more social than she is. He used to want to go out with his friends all the time. She used to work all the time. He used to let her make him feel lazy and undisciplined. He used to get mad and not-so-subtly hint to her that she’s going to die alone with only her work to keep her warm at night, if she kept going the way she was going. And she used to astutely tell him to fuck off and to stop being such a passive-aggressive little asshole. He used to tell her that if he couldn’t be passive-aggressive, then he would have to be full-on aggressive. And that is something she just does not want to see. He said it as a warning, because he has seen the things he has seen. He kind of even said it with a certain amount of masculine pride. Dany is always so good.
at sniffing that sort of thing out. And she told him to fuck off again.

He used to tell her to stop posturing all the time like she’s always so big and bad and to allow herself to be vulnerable. She used to lose her mind over his hypocrisy. Drogo can faithfully recite the formula of their fights now. He can do it without much thought, because it’s second nature now. At some point there was the realization that neither of them were going to change — they each wanted different things out of life — she suggested that maybe he was just *too simple* for her and she was never going to be his fucking wife — and he resentfully said that maybe she is right and he is *too simple* for someone as impressive and important as she is. After that — there was nothing left. He was tired of fighting the same fight all the time. She was tired of fighting the same fight all the time. They just had to end it.

“My phone is already out of battery,” she says, holding up the thing in question. “I’m unplugged.”

“Whoa. Look at you. Are you going to be okay?”

She gives him a ghost of a smile. He’s referencing another theme of their fights. “Honestly? I’m a little scared. What if I fall down a hole or I get lost on the beach?”

“What if a velociraptor comes out of the forest and tries to bite your face off?”

“What if I need to remember the name of an actor who was in a movie I saw to win an argument — and I can’t *look it up*?”

“Okay, good try, but we know you don’t watch movies.”

“I have seen a movie. I have seen a flick or two once.”

He misses this though. He misses the banter that simultaneously is about a whole shit ton of nothing, but is really about all of the shit they have accumulated on each other.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](https://www.dropbyarchive.com) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!