



## JAIME

Harrenhal's bathhouse was a dim, steamy, low-ceilinged room filled with great stone tubs. When they led Jaime in, they found Brienne seated in one of them, scrubbing her arm almost angrily.

"Not so hard, wench," he called. "You'll scrub the skin off." She dropped her brush and covered her teats with hands as big as Gregor Clegane's. The pointy little buds she was so intent on hiding would have looked more natural on some ten-year-old than they did on her thick muscular chest.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded.

"Lord Bolton insists I sup with him, but he neglected to invite my fleas." Jaime tugged at his guard with his left hand. "Help me out of these stinking rags." One-handed, he could not so much as unlace his breeches. The man obeyed grudgingly, but he obeyed. "Now leave us," Jaime said when his clothes lay in a pile on the wet stone floor. "My lady of Tarth doesn't want the likes of you scum gaping at her teats." He pointed his stump at the hatchet-faced woman attending Brienne. "You too. Wait without. There's only the one door, and the wench is too big to try and shinny up a chimney."

The habit of obedience went deep. The woman followed his guard out, leaving the bathhouse to the two of them. The tubs were large enough to hold six or seven, after the fashion of the Free Cities, so Jaime climbed in with the wench, awkward and slow. Both his eyes were open, though the right remained somewhat swollen, despite Qyburn's leeches. Jaime felt a

hundred and nine years old, which was a deal better than he had been feeling when he came to Harrenhal.

Brienne shrunk away from him. “There are other tubs.”

“This one suits me well enough.” Gingerly, he immersed himself up to the chin in the steaming water. “Have no fear, wench. Your thighs are purple and green, and I’m not interested in what you’ve got between them.” He had to rest his right arm on the rim, since Qyburn had warned him to keep the linen dry. He could feel the tension drain from his legs, but his head spun. “If I faint, pull me out. No Lannister has ever drowned in his bath and I don’t mean to be the first.”

“Why should I care how you die?”

“You swore a solemn vow.” He smiled as a red flush crept up the thick white column of her neck. She turned her back to him. “Still the shy maiden? What is it that you think I haven’t seen?” He groped for the brush she had dropped, caught it with his fingers, and began to scrub himself desultorily. Even that was difficult, awkward. *My left hand is good for nothing.*

Still, the water darkened as the caked dirt dissolved off his skin. The wench kept her back to him, the muscles in her great shoulders hunched and hard.

“Does the sight of my stump distress you so?” Jaime asked. “You ought to be pleased. I’ve lost the hand I killed the king with. The hand that flung the Stark boy from that tower. The hand I’d slide between my sister’s thighs to make her wet.” He thrust his stump at her face. “No wonder Renly died, with you guarding him.”

She jerked to her feet as if he’d struck her, sending a wash of hot water across the tub. Jaime caught a glimpse of the thick blonde bush at the juncture of her thighs as she climbed out. She was much hairier than his sister. Absurdly, he felt his cock stir beneath the bathwater. *Now I know I have been too long away from Cersei.* He averted his eyes, troubled by his body’s response. “That was unworthy,” he mumbled. “I’m a maimed man, and bitter. Forgive me, wench. You protected me as well as any man could have, and better than most.”

She wrapped her nakedness in a towel. “Do you mock me?”

That pricked him back to anger. “Are you as thick as a castle wall? That was an apology. I am tired of fighting with you. What say we make a truce?”

“Truces are built on trust. Would you have me trust—”

“The Kingslayer, yes. The oathbreaker who murdered poor sad Aerys Targaryen.” Jaime snorted. “It’s not Aerys I rue, it’s Robert. ‘I hear they’ve named you Kingslayer,’ he said to me at his coronation feast. ‘Just don’t think to make it a habit.’ And he laughed. Why is it that no one names Robert oathbreaker? He tore the realm apart, yet *I* am the one with shit for honor.”

“Robert did all he did for love.” Water ran down Brienne’s legs and pooled beneath her feet.

“Robert did all he did for pride, a cunt, and a pretty face.” He made a fist . . . or would have, if he’d had a hand. Pain lanced up his arm, cruel as laughter.

“He rode to save the realm,” she insisted.

*To save the realm.* “Did you know that my brother set the Blackwater Rush afire? Wildfire will burn on water. Aerys would have bathed in it if he’d dared. The Targaryens were all mad for fire.” Jaime felt light-headed. *It is the heat in here, the poison in my blood, the last of my fever. I am not myself.* He eased himself down until the water reached his chin. “Soiled my white cloak . . . I wore my gold armor that day, but . . .”

“Gold armor?” Her voice sounded far off, faint.

He floated in heat, in memory. “After dancing griffins lost the Battle of the Bells, Aerys exiled him.” *Why am I telling this absurd ugly child?* “He had finally realized that Robert was no mere outlaw lord to be crushed at whim, but the greatest threat House Targaryen had faced since Daemon Blackfyre. The king reminded Lewyn Martell gracelessly that he held Elia and sent him to take command of the ten thousand Dornishmen coming up the kingsroad. Jon Darry and Barristan Selmy rode to Stoney Sept to rally what they could of griffins’ men, and Prince Rhaegar returned from the south and persuaded his father to swallow his pride and summon my father. But no raven returned from Casterly Rock, and that made the king even more afraid. He saw traitors everywhere, and Varys was always there to

point out any he might have missed. So His Grace commanded his alchemists to place caches of wildfire all over King's Landing. Beneath Baelor's Sept and the hovels of Flea Bottom, under stables and storehouses, at all seven gates, even in the cellars of the Red Keep itself.

"Everything was done in the utmost secrecy by a handful of master pyromancers. They did not even trust their own acolytes to help. The queen's eyes had been closed for years, and Rhaegar was busy marshaling an army. But Aerys's new mace-and-dagger Hand was not utterly stupid, and with Rossart, Belis, and Garigus coming and going night and day, he became suspicious. Chelsted, that was his name, Lord Chelsted." It had come back to him suddenly, with the telling. "I'd thought the man craven, but the day he confronted Aerys he found some courage somewhere. He did all he could to dissuade him. He reasoned, he jested, he threatened, and finally he begged. When that failed he took off his chain of office and flung it down on the floor. Aerys burnt him alive for that, and hung his chain about the neck of Rossart, his favorite pyromancer. The man who had cooked Lord Rickard Stark in his own armor. And all the time, I stood by the foot of the Iron Throne in my white plate, still as a corpse, guarding my liege and all his sweet secrets.

"My Sworn Brothers were all away, you see, but Aerys liked to keep me close. I was my father's son, so he did not trust me. He wanted me where Varys could watch me, day and night. So I heard it all." He remembered how Rossart's eyes would shine when he unrolled his maps to show where *the substance* must be placed. Garigus and Belis were the same. "Rhaegar met Robert on the Trident, and you know what happened there. When the word reached court, Aerys packed the queen off to Dragonstone with Prince Viserys. Princess Elia would have gone as well, but he forbade it. Somehow he had gotten it in his head that Prince Lewyn must have betrayed Rhaegar on the Trident, but he thought he could keep Dorne loyal so long as he kept Elia and Aegon by his side. *The traitors want my city, I heard him tell Rossart, but I'll give them naught but ashes. Let Robert be king over charred bones and cooked meat.* The Targaryens never bury their dead, they burn them. Aerys meant to have the greatest funeral pyre of them all. Though if truth be told, I do not believe he truly expected to die. Like Aerion Brightfire before him, Aerys thought the fire would transform him .

. . that he would rise again, reborn as a dragon, and turn all his enemies to ash.

“Ned Stark was racing south with Robert’s van, but my father’s forces reached the city first. Pycelle convinced the king that his Warden of the West had come to defend him, so he opened the gates. The one time he *should* have heeded Varys, and he ignored him. My father had held back from the war, brooding on all the wrongs Aerys had done him and determined that House Lannister should be on the winning side. The Trident decided him.

“It fell to me to hold the Red Keep, but I knew we were lost. I sent to Aerys asking his leave to make terms. My man came back with a royal command. ‘*Bring me your father’s head, if you are no traitor.*’ Aerys would have no yielding. Lord Rossart was with him, my messenger said. I knew what *that* meant.

“When I came on Rossart, he was dressed as a common man-at-arms, hurrying to a postern gate. I slew him first. Then I slew Aerys, before he could find someone else to carry his message to the pyromancers. Days later, I hunted down the others and slew them as well. Belis offered me gold, and Garigus wept for mercy. Well, a sword’s more merciful than fire, but I don’t think Garigus much appreciated the kindness I showed him.”

The water had grown cool. When Jaime opened his eyes, he found himself staring at the stump of his sword hand. *The hand that made me Kingslayer.* The goat had robbed him of his glory and his shame, both at once. *Leaving what? Who am I now?*

The wench looked ridiculous, clutching her towel to her meager teats with her thick white legs sticking out beneath. “Has my tale turned you speechless? Come, curse me or kiss me or call me a liar. *Something.*”

“If this is true, how is it no one knows?”

“The knights of the Kingsguard are sworn to keep the king’s secrets. Would you have me break my oath?” Jaime laughed. “Do you think the noble Lord of Winterfell wanted to hear my feeble explanations? Such an *honorable* man. He only had to look at me to judge me guilty.” Jaime lurched to his feet, the water running cold down his chest. “By what right

does the wolf judge the lion? *By what right?*” A violent shiver took him, and he smashed his stump against the rim of the tub as he tried to climb out.

Pain shuddered through him . . . and suddenly the bathhouse was spinning. Brienne caught him before he could fall. Her arm was all gooseflesh, clammy and chilled, but she was strong, and gentler than he would have thought. *Gentler than Cersei*, he thought as she helped him from the tub, his legs wobbly as a limp cock. “*Guards!*” he heard the wench shout. “The Kingslayer!”

*Jaime*, he thought, *my name is Jaime*.

The next he knew, he was lying on the damp floor with the guards and the wench and Qyburn all standing over him looking concerned. Brienne was naked, but she seemed to have forgotten that for the moment. “The heat of the tubs will do it,” Maester Qyburn was telling them. *No, he’s not a maester, they took his chain*. “There’s still poison in his blood as well, and he’s malnourished. What have you been feeding him?”

“Worms and piss and grey vomit,” offered Jaime.

“Hardbread and water and oat porridge,” insisted the guard. “He don’t hardly eat it, though. What should we do with him?”

“Scrub him and dress him and carry him to Kingspyre, if need be,” Qyburn said. “Lord Bolton insists he will sup with him tonight. The time is growing short.”

“Bring me clean garb for him,” Brienne said, “I’ll see that he’s washed and dressed.”

The others were all too glad to give her the task. They lifted him to his feet and sat him on a stone bench by the wall. Brienne went away to retrieve her towel, and returned with a stiff brush to finish scrubbing him. One of the guards gave her a razor to trim his beard. Qyburn returned with roughspun smallclothes, clean black woolen breeches, a loose green tunic, and a leather jerkin that laced up the front. Jaime was feeling less dizzy by then, though no less clumsy. With the wench’s help he managed to dress himself. “Now all I need is a silver looking glass.”

The Bloody Maester had brought fresh clothing for Brienne as well; a stained pink satin gown and a linen undertunic. “I am sorry, my lady. These

were the only women's garments in Harrenhal large enough to fit you."

It was obvious at once that the gown had been cut for someone with slimmer arms, shorter legs, and much fuller breasts. The fine Myrish lace did little to conceal the bruising that mottled Brienne's skin. All in all, the garb made the wench look ludicrous. *She has thicker shoulders than I do, and a bigger neck*, Jaime thought. *Small wonder she prefers to dress in mail*. Pink was not a kind color for her either. A dozen cruel japes leaped into his head, but for once he kept them there. Best not to make her angry; he was no match for her one-handed.

Qyburn had brought a flask as well. "What is it?" Jaime demanded when the chainless maester pressed him to drink.

"Licorice steeped in vinegar, with honey and cloves. It will give you some strength and clear your head."

"Bring me the potion that grows new hands," said Jaime. "That's the one I want."

"Drink it," Brienne said, unsmiling, and he did.

It was half an hour before he felt strong enough to stand. After the dim wet warmth of the bathhouse, the air outside was a slap across the face. "M'lord will be looking for him by now," a guard told Qyburn. "Her too. Do I need to carry him?"

"I can still walk. Brienne, give me your arm."

Clutching her, Jaime let them herd him across the yard to a vast draughty hall, larger even than the throne room in King's Landing. Huge hearths lined the walls, one every ten feet or so, more than he could count, but no fires had been lit, so the chill between the walls went bone-deep. A dozen spearmen in fur cloaks guarded the doors and the steps that led up to the two galleries above. And in the center of that immense emptiness, at a trestle table surrounded by what seemed like acres of smooth slate floor, the Lord of the Dreadfort waited, attended only by a cupbearer.

"My lord," said Brienne, when they stood before him.

Roose Bolton's eyes were paler than stone, darker than milk, and his voice was spider soft. "I am pleased that you are strong enough to attend me, ser. My lady, do be seated." He gestured at the spread of cheese, bread,

cold meat, and fruit that covered the table. “Will you drink red or white? Of indifferent vintage, I fear. Ser Amory drained Lady Whent’s cellars nearly dry.”

“I trust you killed him for it.” Jaime slid into the offered seat quickly, so Bolton could not see how weak he was. “White is for Starks. I’ll drink red like a good Lannister.”

“I would prefer water,” said Brienne.

“Elmar, the red for Ser Jaime, water for the Lady Brienne, and hippocras for myself.” Bolton waved a hand at their escort, dismissing them, and the men beat a silent retreat.

Habit made Jaime reach for his wine with his right hand. His stump rocked the goblet, splattering his clean linen bandages with bright red spots and forcing him to catch the cup with his left hand before it fell, but Bolton pretended not to notice his clumsiness. The northman helped himself to a prune and ate it with small sharp bites. “Do try these, Ser Jaime. They are most sweet, and help move the bowels as well. Lord Vargo took them from an inn before he burnt it.”

“My bowels move fine, that goat’s no lord, and your prunes don’t interest me half so much as your intentions.”

“Regarding you?” A faint smile touched Roose Bolton’s lips. “You are a perilous prize, ser. You sow dissension wherever you go. Even here, in my happy house of Harrenhal.” His voice was a whisker above a whisper. “And in Riverrun as well, it seems. Do you know, Edmure Tully has offered a thousand golden dragons for your recapture?”

*Is that all?* “My sister will pay ten times as much.”

“Will she?” That smile again, there for an instant, gone as quick. “Ten thousand dragons is a formidable sum. Of course, there is Lord Karstark’s offer to consider as well. He promises the hand of his daughter to the man who brings him your head.”

“Leave it to your goat to get it backward,” said Jaime.

Bolton gave a soft chuckle. “Harrion Karstark was captive here when we took the castle, did you know? I gave him all the Karhold men still with me and sent him off with Glover. I do hope nothing ill befell him at Duskendale



. . . else Alys Karstark would be all that remains of Lord Rickard's progeny." He chose another prune. "Fortunately for you, I have no need of a wife. I wed the Lady Walda Frey whilst I was at the Twins."

"Fair Walda?" Awkwardly, Jaime tried to hold the bread with his stump while tearing it with his left hand.

"Fat Walda. My lord of Frey offered me my bride's weight in silver for a dowry, so I chose accordingly. Elmar, break off some bread for Ser Jaime."

The boy tore a fist-sized chunk off one end of the loaf and handed it to Jaime. Brienne tore her own bread. "Lord Bolton," she asked, "it's said you mean to give Harrenhal to Vargo Hoat."

"That was his price," Lord Bolton said. "The Lannisters are not the only men who pay their debts. I must take my leave soon in any case. Edmure Tully is to wed the Lady Roslin Frey at the Twins, and my king commands my attendance."

"*Edmure* weds?" said Jaime. "Not Robb Stark?"

"His Grace King Robb is wed." Bolton spit a prune pit into his hand and put it aside. "To a Westerling of the Crag. I am told her name is Jeyne. No doubt you know her, ser. Her father is your father's bannerman."

"My father has a good many bannermen, and most of them have daughters." Jaime groped one-handed for his goblet, trying to recall this Jeyne. The Westerlings were an old house, with more pride than power.

"This cannot be true," Brienne said stubbornly. "King Robb was sworn to wed a Frey. He would never break faith, he—"

"His Grace is a boy of sixteen," said Roose Bolton mildly. "And I would thank you not to question my word, my lady."

Jaime felt almost sorry for Robb Stark. *He won the war on the battlefield and lost it in a bedchamber, poor fool.* "How does Lord Walder relish dining on trout in place of wolf?" he asked.

"Oh, trout makes for a tasty supper." Bolton lifted a pale finger toward his cupbearer. "Though my poor Elmar is bereft. He was to wed Arya Stark, but my good father of Frey had no choice but to break the betrothal when King Robb betrayed him."

“Is there word of Arya Stark?” Brienne leaned forward. “Lady Catelyn had feared that . . . is the girl still alive?”

“Oh, yes,” said the Lord of the Dreadfort.

“You have certain knowledge of that, my lord?”

Roose Bolton shrugged. “Arya Stark was lost for a time, it was true, but now she has been found. I mean to see her returned safely to the north.”

“Her and her sister both,” said Brienne. “Tyrion Lannister has promised us both girls for his brother.”

That seemed to amuse the Lord of the Dreadfort. “My lady, has no one told you? Lannisters lie.”

“Is that a slight on the honor of my House?” Jaime picked up the cheese knife with his good hand. “A rounded point, and dull,” he said, sliding his thumb along the edge of the blade, “but it will go through your eye all the same.” Sweat beaded his brow. He could only hope he did not look as feeble as he felt.

Lord Bolton’s little smile paid another visit to his lips. “You speak boldly for a man who needs help to break his bread. My guards are all around us, I remind you.”

“All around us, and half a league away.” Jaime glanced down the vast length of the hall. “By the time they reach us, you’ll be as dead as Aerys.”

“’Tis scarcely chivalrous to threaten your host over his own cheese and olives,” the Lord of the Dreadfort scolded. “In the north, we hold the laws of hospitality sacred still.”

“I’m a captive here, not a guest. Your goat cut off my hand. If you think some prunes will make me overlook that, you’re bloody well mistaken.”

That took Roose Bolton aback. “Perhaps I am. Perhaps I ought to make a wedding gift of you to Edmure Tully . . . or strike your head off, as your sister did for Eddard Stark.”

“I would not advise it. Casterly Rock has a long memory.”

“A thousand leagues of mountain, sea, and bog lie between my walls and your rock. Lannister enmity means little to Bolton.”

“Lannister friendship could mean much.” Jaime thought he knew the game they were playing now. *But does the wench know as well?* He dare not look to see.

“I am not certain you are the sort of friends a wise man would want.” Roose Bolton beckoned to the boy. “Elmar, carve our guests a slice off the roast.”

Brienne was served first, but made no move to eat. “My lord,” she said, “Ser Jaime is to be exchanged for Lady Catelyn’s daughters. You must free us to continue on our way.”

“The raven that came from Riverrun told of an escape, not an exchange. And if you helped this captive slip his bonds, you are guilty of treason, my lady.”

The big wench rose to her feet. “I serve Lady Stark.”

“And I the King in the North. Or the King Who Lost the North, as some now call him. Who never wished to trade Ser Jaime back to the Lannisters.”

“Sit down and eat, Brienne,” Jaime urged, as Elmar placed a slice of roast before him, dark and bloody. “If Bolton meant to kill us, he wouldn’t be wasting his precious prunes on us, at such peril to his bowels.” He stared at the meat and realized there was no way to cut it, one-handed. *I am worth less than a girl now*, he thought. *The goat’s evened the trade, though I doubt Lady Catelyn will thank him when Cersei returns her whelps in like condition.* The thought made him grimace. *I will get the blame for that as well, I’ll wager.*

Roose Bolton cut his meat methodically, the blood running across his plate. “Lady Brienne, will you sit if I tell you that I hope to send Ser Jaime on, just as you and Lady Stark desire?”

“I . . . you’d send us on?” The wench sounded wary, but she sat. “That is good, my lord.”

“It is. However, Lord Vargo has created me one small . . . difficulty.” He turned his pale eyes on Jaime. “Do you know why Hoat cut off your hand?”

“He enjoys cutting off hands.” The linen that covered Jaime’s stump was spotted with blood and wine. “He enjoys cutting off feet as well. He doesn’t seem to need a reason.”

“Nonetheless, he had one. Hoat is more cunning than he appears. No man commands a company such as the Brave Companions for long unless he has some wits about him.” Bolton stabbed a chunk of meat with the point of his dagger, put it in his mouth, chewed thoughtfully, swallowed. “Lord Vargo abandoned House Lannister because I offered him Harrenhal, a reward a thousand times greater than any he could hope to have from Lord Tywin. As a stranger to Westeros, he did not know the prize was poisoned.”

“The curse of Harren the Black?” mocked Jaime.

“The curse of Tywin Lannister.” Bolton held out his goblet and Elmar refilled it silently. “Our goat should have consulted the Tarbecks or the Reynes. They might have warned him how your lord father deals with betrayal.”

“There are no Tarbecks or Reynes,” said Jaime.

“My point precisely. Lord Vargo doubtless hoped that Lord Stannis would triumph at King’s Landing, and thence confirm him in his possession of this castle in gratitude for his small part in the downfall of House Lannister.” He gave a dry chuckle. “He knows little of Stannis Baratheon either, I fear. That one might have given him Harrenhal for his service . . . but he would have given him a noose for his crimes as well.”

“A noose is kinder than what he’ll get from my father.”

“By now he has come to the same realization. With Stannis broken and Renly dead, only a Stark victory can save him from Lord Tywin’s vengeance, but the chances of that grow perishingly slim.”

“King Robb has won every battle,” Brienne said stoutly, as stubbornly loyal of speech as she was of deed.

“Won every battle, while losing the Freys, the Karstarks, Winterfell, and the north. A pity the wolf is so young. Boys of sixteen always believe they are immortal and invincible. An older man would bend the knee, I’d think. After a war there is always a peace, and with peace there are pardons . . . for the Robb Starks, at least. Not for the likes of Vargo Hoat.” Bolton gave him a small smile. “Both sides have made use of him, but neither will shed a tear at his passing. The Brave Companions did not fight in the Battle of the Blackwater, yet they died there all the same.”

“You’ll forgive me if I don’t mourn?”

“You have no pity for our wretched doomed goat? Ah, but the gods must . . . else why deliver *you* into his hands?” Bolton chewed another chunk of meat. “Karhold is smaller and meaner than Harrenhal, but it lies well beyond the reach of the lion’s claws. Once wed to Alys Karstark, Hoat might be a lord in truth. If he could collect some gold from your father so much the better, but he would have delivered you to Lord Rickard no matter how much Lord Tywin paid. His price would be the maid, and safe refuge.

“But to sell you he must keep you, and the riverlands are full of those who would gladly steal you away. Glover and Tallhart were broken at Duskendale, but remnants of their host are still abroad, with the Mountain slaughtering the stragglers. A thousand Karstarks prowl the lands south and east of Riverrun, hunting you. Elsewhere are Darry men left lordless and lawless, packs of four-footed wolves, and the lightning lord’s outlaw bands. Dondarrion would gladly hang you and the goat together from the same tree.” The Lord of the Dreadfort sopped up some of the blood with a chunk of bread. “Harrenhal was the only place Lord Vargo could hope to hold you safe, but here his Brave Companions are much outnumbered by my own men, and by Ser Aenys and his Freys. No doubt he feared I might return you to Ser Edmure at Riverrun . . . or worse, send you on to your father.

“By maiming you, he meant to remove your sword as a threat, gain himself a grisly token to send to your father, and diminish your value to me. For he is my man, as I am King Robb’s man. Thus his crime is mine, or may seem so in your father’s eyes. And therein lies my . . . small difficulty.” He gazed at Jaime, his pale eyes unblinking, expectant, chill.

*I see.* “You want me to absolve you of blame. To tell my father that this stump is no work of yours.” Jaime laughed. “My lord, send me to Cersei, and I’ll sing as sweet a song as you could want, of how gently you treated me.” Any other answer, he knew, and Bolton would give him back to the goat. “Had I a hand, I’d write it out. How I was maimed by the sellsword my own father brought to Westeros, and saved by the noble Lord Bolton.”

“I will trust to your word, ser.”

*There’s something I don’t often hear.* “How soon might we be permitted to leave? And how do you mean to get me past all these wolves and

brigands and Karstarks?”

“You will leave when Qyburn says you are strong enough, with a strong escort of picked men under the command of my captain, Walton. Steelshanks, he is called. A soldier of iron loyalty. Walton will see you safe and whole to King’s Landing.”

“Provided Lady Catelyn’s daughters are delivered safe and whole as well,” said the wench. “My lord, your man Walton’s protection is welcome, but the girls are *my* charge.”

The Lord of the Dreadfort gave her an uninterested glance. “The girls need not concern you any further, my lady. The Lady Sansa is the dwarf’s wife, only the gods can part them now.”

“His wife?” Brienne said, appalled. “The Imp? But . . . he swore, before the whole court, in sight of gods and men . . .”

*She is such an innocent.* Jaime was almost as surprised, if truth be told, but he hid it better. *Sansa Stark, that ought to put a smile on Tyrion’s face.* He remembered how happy his brother had been with his little crofter’s daughter . . . for a fortnight.

“What the Imp did or did nor swear scarcely matters now,” said Lord Bolton. “Least of all to you.” The wench looked almost wounded. Perhaps she finally felt the steel jaws of the trap when Roose Bolton beckoned to his guards. “Ser Jaime will continue on to King’s Landing. I said nothing about you, I fear. It would be unconscionable of me to deprive Lord Vargo of both his prizes.” The Lord of the Dreadfort reached out to pick another prune. “Were I you, my lady, I should worry less about Starks and rather more about sapphires.”