



## JAIME

Jaime was the first to spy the inn. The main building hugged the south shore where the river bent, its long low wings outstretched along the water as if to embrace travelers sailing downstream. The lower story was grey stone, the upper whitewashed wood, the roof slate. He could see stables as well, and an arbor heavy with vines. “No smoke from the chimneys,” he pointed out as they approached. “Nor lights in the windows.”

“The inn was still open when last I passed this way,” said Ser Cleos Frey. “They brewed a fine ale. Perhaps there is still some to be had in the cellars.”

“There may be people,” Brienne said. “Hiding. Or dead.”

“Frightened of a few corpses, wench?” Jaime said.

She glared at him. “My name is—”

“—Brienne, yes. Wouldn’t you like to sleep in a bed for a night, Brienne? We’d be safer than on the open river, and it might be prudent to find what’s happened here.”

She gave no answer, but after a moment she pushed at the tiller to angle the skiff in toward the weathered wooden dock. Ser Cleos scrambled to take down the sail. When they bumped softly against the pier, he climbed out to tie them up. Jaime clambered after him, made awkward by his chains.

At the end of the dock, a flaking shingle swung from an iron post, painted with the likeness of a king upon his knees, his hands pressed

together in the gesture of fealty. Jaime took one look and laughed aloud. "We could not have found a better inn."

"Is this some special place?" the wench asked, suspicious.

Ser Cleos answered. "This is the Inn of the Kneeling Man, my lady. It stands upon the very spot where the last King in the North knelt before Aegon the Conqueror to offer his submission. That's him on the sign, I suppose."

"Torrhen had brought his power south after the fall of the two kings on the Field of Fire," said Jaime, "but when he saw Aegon's dragon and the size of his host, he chose the path of wisdom and bent his frozen knees." He stopped at the sound of a horse's whinny. "Horses in the stable. One at least." *And one is all I need to put the wench behind me.* "Let's see who's home, shall we?" Without waiting for an answer, Jaime went clinking down the dock, put a shoulder to the door, shoved it open . . .

. . . and found himself eye to eye with a loaded crossbow. Standing behind it was a chunky boy of fifteen. "Lion, fish, or wolf?" the lad demanded.

"We were hoping for capon." Jaime heard his companions entering behind him. "The crossbow is a coward's weapon."

"It'll put a bolt through your heart all the same."

"Perhaps. But before you can wind it again my cousin here will spill your entrails on the floor."

"Don't be scaring the lad, now," Ser Cleos said.

"We mean no harm," the wench said. "And we have coin to pay for food and drink." She dug a silver piece from her pouch.

The boy looked suspiciously at the coin, and then at Jaime's manacles. "Why's this one in irons?"

"Killed some crossbowmen," said Jaime. "Do you have ale?"

"Yes." The boy lowered the crossbow an inch. "Undo your swordbelts and let them fall, and might be we'll feed you." He edged around to peer through the thick, diamond-shaped windowpanes and see if any more of them were outside. "That's a Tully sail."

“We come from Riverrun.” Brienne undid the clasp on her belt and let it clatter to the floor. Ser Cleos followed suit.

A sallow man with a pocked doughy face stepped through the cellar door, holding a butcher’s heavy cleaver. “Three, are you? We got horsemeat enough for three. The horse was old and tough, but the meat’s still fresh.”

“Is there bread?” asked Brienne.

“Hardbread and stale oatcakes.”

Jaime grinned. “Now there’s an honest innkeep. They’ll all serve you stale bread and stringy meat, but most don’t own up to it so freely.”

“I’m no innkeep. I buried him out back, with his women.”

“Did you kill them?”

“Would I tell you if I did?” The man spat. “Likely it were wolves’ work, or maybe lions, what’s the difference? The wife and I found them dead. The way we see it, the place is ours now.”

“Where is this wife of yours?” Ser Cleos asked.

The man gave him a suspicious squint. “And why would you be wanting to know that? She’s not here . . . no more’n you three will be, unless I like the taste of your silver.”

Brienne tossed the coin to him. He caught it in the air, bit it, and tucked it away.

“She’s got more,” the boy with the crossbow announced.

“So she does. Boy, go down and find me some onions.”

The lad raised the crossbow to his shoulder, gave them one last sullen look, and vanished into the cellar.

“Your son?” Ser Cleos asked.

“Just a boy the wife and me took in. We had two sons, but the lions killed one and the other died of the flux. The boy lost his mother to the Bloody Mummings. These days, a man needs someone to keep watch while he sleeps.” He waved the cleaver at the tables. “Might as well sit.”

The hearth was cold, but Jaime picked the chair nearest the ashes and stretched out his long legs under the table. The clink of his chains accompanied his every movement. *An irritating sound. Before this is done,*

*I'll wrap these chains around the wench's throat, see how she likes them then.*

The man who wasn't an innkeep charred three huge horse steaks and fried the onions in bacon grease, which almost made up for the stale oatcakes. Jaime and Cleos drank ale, Brienne a cup of cider. The boy kept his distance, perching atop the cider barrel with his crossbow across his knees, cocked and loaded. The cook drew a tankard of ale and sat with them. "What news from Riverrun?" he asked Ser Cleos, taking him for their leader.

Ser Cleos glanced at Brienne before answering. "Lord Hoster is failing, but his son holds the fords of the Red Fork against the Lannisters. There have been battles."

"Battles everywhere. Where are you bound, ser?"

"King's Landing." Ser Cleos wiped grease off his lips.

Their host snorted. "Then you're three fools. Last I heard, King Stannis was outside the city walls. They say he has a hundred thousand men and a magic sword."

Jaime's hands wrapped around the chain that bound his wrists, and he twisted it taut, wishing for the strength to snap it in two. *Then I'd show Stannis where to sheathe his magic sword.*

"I'd stay well clear of that kingsroad, if I were you," the man went on. "It's worse than bad, I hear. Wolves and lions both, and bands of broken men preying on anyone they can catch."

"Vermin," declared Ser Cleos with contempt. "Such would never dare to trouble armed men."

"Begging your pardon, ser, but I see one armed man, traveling with a woman and a prisoner in chains."

Brienne gave the cook a dark look. *The wench does hate being reminded that she's a wench*, Jaime reflected, twisting at the chains again. The links were cold and hard against his flesh, the iron implacable. The manacles had chafed his wrists raw.

"I mean to follow the Trident to the sea," the wench told their host. "We'll find mounts at Maidenpool and ride by way of Duskendale and

Rosby. That should keep us well away from the worst of the fighting.”

Their host shook his head. “You’ll never reach Maidenpool by river. Not thirty miles from here a couple boats burned and sank, and the channel’s been silting up around them. There’s a nest of outlaws there preying on anyone tries to come by, and more of the same downriver around the Skipping Stones and Red Deer Island. And the lightning lord’s been seen in these parts as well. He crosses the river wherever he likes, riding this way and that way, never still.”

“And who is this lightning lord?” demanded Ser Cleos Frey.

“Lord Beric, as it please you, ser. They call him that ’cause he strikes so sudden, like lightning from a clear sky. It’s said he cannot die.”

*They all die when you shove a sword through them*, Jaime thought. “Does Thoros of Myr still ride with him?”

“Aye. The red wizard. I’ve heard tell he has strange powers.”

*Well, he had the power to match Robert Baratheon drink for drink, and there were few enough who could say that*. Jaime had once heard Thoros tell the king that he became a red priest because the robes hid the winestains so well. Robert had laughed so hard he’d spit ale all over Cersei’s silken mantle. “Far be it from me to make objection,” he said, “but perhaps the Trident is not our safest course.”

“I’d say that’s so,” their cook agreed. “Even if you get past Red Deer Island and don’t meet up with Lord Beric and the red wizard, there’s still the ruby ford before you. Last I heard, it was the Leech Lord’s wolves held the ford, but that was some time past. By now it could be lions again, or Lord Beric, or anyone.”

“Or no one,” Brienne suggested.

“If m’lady cares to wager her skin on that I won’t stop her . . . but if I was you, I’d leave this here river, cut overland. If you stay off the main roads and shelter under the trees of a night, hidden as it were . . . well, I still wouldn’t want to go with you, but you might stand a mummer’s chance.”

The big wench was looking doubtful. “We would need horses.”

“There are horses here,” Jaime pointed out. “I heard one in the stable.”

“Aye, there are,” said the innkeep, who wasn’t an innkeep. “Three of them, as it happens, but they’re not for sale.”

Jaime had to laugh. “Of course not. But you’ll show them to us anyway.”

Brienne scowled, but the man who wasn’t an innkeep met her eyes without blinking, and after a moment, reluctantly, she said, “Show me,” and they all rose from the table.

The stables had not been mucked out in a long while, from the smell of them. Hundreds of fat black flies swarmed amongst the straw, buzzing from stall to stall and crawling over the mounds of horse dung that lay everywhere, but there were only the three horses to be seen. They made an unlikely trio; a lumbering brown plow horse, an ancient white gelding blind in one eye, and a knight’s palfrey, dapple grey and spirited. “They’re not for sale at any price,” their alleged owner announced.

“How did you come by these horses?” Brienne wanted to know.

“The dray was stabled here when the wife and me come on the inn,” the man said, “along with the one you just ate. The gelding come wandering up one night, and the boy caught the palfrey running free, still saddled and bridled. Here, I’ll show you.”

The saddle he showed them was decorated with silver inlay. The saddlecloth had originally been checkered pink and black, but now it was mostly brown. Jaime did not recognize the original colors, but he recognized bloodstains easily enough. “Well, her owner won’t be coming to claim her anytime soon.” He examined the palfrey’s legs, counted the gelding’s teeth. “Give him a gold piece for the grey, if he’ll include the saddle,” he advised Brienne. “A silver for the plow horse. He ought to pay us for taking the white off his hands.”

“Don’t speak discourteously of your horse, ser.” The wench opened the purse Lady Catelyn had given her and took out three golden coins. “I will pay you a dragon for each.”

He blinked and reached for the gold, then hesitated and drew his hand back. “I don’t know. I can’t ride no golden dragon if I need to get away. Nor eat one if I’m hungry.”

“You can have our skiff as well,” she said. “Sail up the river or down, as you like.”

“Let me have a taste o’ that gold.” The man took one of the coins from her palm and bit it. “Hm. Real enough, I’d say. Three dragons *and* the skiff?”

“He’s robbing you blind, wench,” Jaime said amiably.

“I’ll want provisions too,” Brienne told their host, ignoring Jaime. “Whatever you have that you can spare.”

“There’s more oatcakes.” The man scooped the other two dragons from her palm and jingled them in his fist, smiling at the sound they made. “Aye, and smoked salt fish, but that will cost you silver. My beds will be costing as well. You’ll be wanting to stay the night.”

“No,” Brienne said at once.

The man frowned at her. “Woman, you don’t want to go riding at night through strange country on horses you don’t know. You’re like to blunder into some bog or break your horse’s leg.”

“The moon will be bright tonight,” Brienne said. “We’ll have no trouble finding our way.”

Their host chewed on that. “If you don’t have the silver, might be some coppers would buy you them beds, and a coverlet or two to keep you warm. It’s not like I’m turning travelers away, if you get my meaning.”

“That sounds more than fair,” said Ser Cleos.

“The coverlets is fresh washed, too. My wife saw to that before she had to go off. Not a flea to be found neither, you have my word on that.” He jingled the coins again, smiling.

Ser Cleos was plainly tempted. “A proper bed would do us all good, my lady,” he said to Brienne. “We’d make better time on the morrow once refreshed.” He looked to his cousin for support.

“No, coz, the wench is right. We have promises to keep, and long leagues before us. We ought ride on.”

“But,” said Cleos, “you said yourself—”

“Then.” *When I thought the inn deserted.* “Now I have a full belly, and a moonlight ride will be just the thing.” He smiled for the wench. “But unless you mean to throw me over the back of that plow horse like a sack of flour, someone had best do something about these irons. It’s difficult to ride with your ankles chained together.”

Brienne frowned at the chain. The man who wasn’t an innkeep rubbed his jaw. “There’s a smithy round back of the stable.”

“Show me,” Brienne said.

“Yes,” said Jaime, “and the sooner the better. There’s far too much horse shit about here for my taste. I would hate to step in it.” He gave the wench a sharp look, wondering if she was bright enough to take his meaning.

He hoped she might strike the irons off his wrists as well, but Brienne was still suspicious. She split the ankle chain in the center with a half-dozen sharp blows from the smith’s hammer delivered to the blunt end of a steel chisel. When he suggested that she break the wrist chain as well, she ignored him.

“Six miles downriver you’ll see a burned village,” their host said as he was helping them saddle the horses and load their packs. This time he directed his counsel at Brienne. “The road splits there. If you turn south, you’ll come on Ser Warren’s stone towerhouse. Ser Warren went off and died, so I couldn’t say who holds it now, but it’s a place best shunned. You’d do better to follow the track through the woods, south by east.”

“We shall,” she answered. “You have my thanks.”

*More to the point, he has your gold.* Jaime kept the thought to himself. He was tired of being disregarded by this huge ugly cow of a woman.

She took the plow horse for herself and assigned the palfrey to Ser Cleos. As threatened, Jaime drew the one-eyed gelding, which put an end to any thoughts he might have had of giving his horse a kick and leaving the wench in his dust.

The man and the boy came out to watch them leave. The man wished them luck and told them to come back in better times, while the lad stood silent, his crossbow under his arm. “Take up the spear or maul,” Jaime told



him, “they’ll serve you better.” The boy stared at him distrustfully. *So much for friendly advice.* He shrugged, turned his horse, and never looked back.

Ser Cleos was all complaints as they rode out, still in mourning for his lost featherbed. They rode east, along the bank of the moonlit river. The Red Fork was very broad here, but shallow, its banks all mud and reeds. Jaime’s mount plodded along placidly, though the poor old thing had a tendency to want to drift off to the side of his good eye. It felt good to be mounted once more. He had not been on a horse since Robb Stark’s archers had killed his destrier under him in the Whispering Wood.

When they reached the burned village, a choice of equally unpromising roads confronted them; narrow tracks, deeply rutted by the carts of farmers hauling their grain to the river. One wandered off toward the southeast and soon vanished amidst the trees they could see in the distance, while the other, straighter and stonier, arrowed due south. Brienne considered them briefly, and then swung her horse onto the southern road. Jaime was pleasantly surprised; it was the same choice he would have made.

“But this is the road the innkeep warned us against,” Ser Cleos objected.

“He was no innkeep.” She hunched gracelessly in the saddle, but seemed to have a sure seat nonetheless. “The man took too great an interest in our choice of route, and those woods . . . such places are notorious haunts of outlaws. He may have been urging us into a trap.”

“Clever wench.” Jaime smiled at his cousin. “Our host has friends down that road, I would venture. The ones whose mounts gave that stable such a memorable aroma.”

“He may have been lying about the river as well, to put us on these horses,” the wench said, “but I could not take the risk. There will be soldiers at the ruby ford and the crossroads.”

*Well, she may be ugly but she’s not entirely stupid.* Jaime gave her a grudging smile.

The ruddy light from the upper windows of the stone towerhouse gave them warning of its presence a long way off, and Brienne led them off into the fields. Only when the stronghold was well to the rear did they angle back and find the road again.

Half the night passed before the wench allowed that it might be safe to stop. By then all three of them were drooping in their saddles. They sheltered in a small grove of oak and ash beside a sluggish stream. The wench would allow no fire, so they shared a midnight supper of stale oatcakes and salt fish. The night was strangely peaceful. The half-moon sat overhead in a black felt sky, surrounded by stars. Off in the distance, some wolves were howling. One of their horses whickered nervously. There was no other sound. *The war has not touched this place*, Jaime thought. He was glad to be here, glad to be alive, glad to be on his way back to Cersei.

"I'll take the first watch," Brienne told Ser Cleos, and Frey was soon snoring softly.

Jaime sat against the bole of an oak and wondered what Cersei and Tyrion were doing just now. "Do you have any siblings, my lady?" he asked.

Brienne squinted at him suspiciously. "No. I was my father's only s—child."

Jaime chuckled. "*Son*, you meant to say. Does he think of you as a son? You make a queer sort of daughter, to be sure."

Wordless, she turned away from him, her knuckles tight on her sword hilt. *What a wretched creature this one is*. She reminded him of Tyrion in some queer way, though at first blush two people could scarcely be any more dissimilar. Perhaps it was that thought of his brother that made him say, "I did not intend to give offense, Brienne. Forgive me."

"Your crimes are past forgiving, Kingslayer."

"That name again." Jaime twisted idly at his chains. "Why do I enrage you so? I've never done you harm that I know of."

"You've harmed others. Those you were sworn to protect. The weak, the innocent . . ."

". . . the king?" It always came back to Aerys. "Don't presume to judge what you do not understand, wench."

"My name is—"

"—Brienne, yes. Has anyone ever told you that you're as tedious as you are ugly?"

“You will not provoke me to anger, Kingslayer.”

“Oh, I might, if I cared enough to try.”

“Why did you take the oath?” she demanded. “Why don the white cloak if you meant to betray all it stood for?”

*Why?* What could he say that she might possibly understand? “I was a boy. Fifteen. It was a great honor for one so young.”

“That is no answer,” she said scornfully.

*You would not like the truth.* He had joined the Kingsguard for love, of course.

Their father had summoned Cersei to court when she was twelve, hoping to make her a royal marriage. He refused every offer for her hand, preferring to keep her with him in the Tower of the Hand while she grew older and more womanly and ever more beautiful. No doubt he was waiting for Prince Viserys to mature, or perhaps for Rhaegar’s wife to die in childbed. Elia of Dorne was never the healthiest of women.

Jaime, meantime, had spent four years as squire to Ser Sumner Crakehall and earned his spurs against the Kingswood Brotherhood. But when he made a brief call at King’s Landing on his way back to Casterly Rock, chiefly to see his sister, Cersei took him aside and whispered that Lord Tywin meant to marry him to Lysa Tully, had gone so far as to invite Lord Hoster to the city to discuss dower. But if Jaime took the white, he could be near her always. Old Ser Harlan Grandison had died in his sleep, as was only appropriate for one whose sigil was a sleeping lion. Aerys would want a young man to take his place, so why not a roaring lion in place of a sleepy one?

“Father will never consent,” Jaime objected.

“The king won’t ask him. And once it’s done, Father can’t object, not openly. Aerys had Ser Ilyn Payne’s tongue torn out just for boasting that it was the Hand who truly ruled the Seven Kingdoms. The captain of the Hand’s guard, and yet Father dared not try and stop it! He won’t stop this, either.”

“But,” Jaime said, “there’s Casterly Rock . . .”

“Is it a rock you want? Or me?”

He remembered that night as if it were yesterday. They spent it in an old inn on Eel Alley, well away from watchful eyes. Cersei had come to him dressed as a simple serving wench, which somehow excited him all the more. Jaime had never seen her more passionate. Every time he went to sleep, she woke him again. By morning Casterly Rock seemed a small price to pay to be near her always. He gave his consent, and Cersei promised to do the rest.

A moon's turn later, a royal raven arrived at Casterly Rock to inform him that he had been chosen for the Kingsguard. He was commanded to present himself to the king during the great tourney at Harrenhal to say his vows and don his cloak.

Jaime's investiture freed him from Lysa Tully. Elsewise, nothing went as planned. His father had never been more furious. He could not object openly—Cersei had judged that correctly—but he resigned the Handship on some thin pretext and returned to Casterly Rock, taking his daughter with him. Instead of being together, Cersei and Jaime just changed places, and he found himself alone at court, guarding a mad king while four lesser men took their turns dancing on knives in his father's ill-fitting shoes. So swiftly did the Hands rise and fall that Jaime remembered their heraldry better than their faces. The horn-of-plenty Hand and the dancing griffins Hand had both been exiled, the mace-and-dagger Hand dipped in wildfire and burned alive. Lord Rossart had been the last. His sigil had been a burning torch; an unfortunate choice, given the fate of his predecessor, but the alchemist had been elevated largely because he shared the king's passion for fire. *I ought to have drowned Rossart instead of gutting him.*

Brienne was still awaiting his answer. Jaime said, "You are not old enough to have known Aerys Targaryen . . ."

She would not hear it. "Aerys was mad and cruel, no one has ever denied that. He was still king, crowned and anointed. And you had sworn to protect him."

"I know what I swore."

"And what you did." She loomed above him, six feet of freckled, frowning, horse-toothed disapproval.

“Yes, and what *you* did as well. We’re both kingslayers here, if what I’ve heard is true.”

“I never harmed Renly. I’ll kill the man who says I did.”

“Best start with Cleos, then. And you’ll have a deal of killing to do after that, the way he tells the tale.”

“*Lies*. Lady Catelyn was there when His Grace was murdered, she saw. There was a shadow. The candles guttered and the air grew cold, and there was blood—”

“Oh, very good.” Jaime laughed. “Your wits are quicker than mine, I confess it. When they found me standing over my dead king, I never thought to say, ‘No, no, it wasn’t me, it was a shadow, a terrible cold shadow.’” He laughed again. “Tell me true, one kingslayer to another—did the Starks pay you to slit his throat, or was it Stannis? Had Renly spurned you, was that the way of it? Or perhaps your moon’s blood was on you. Never give a wench a sword when she’s bleeding.”

For a moment Jaime thought Brienne might strike him. *A step closer, and I’ll snatch that dagger from her sheath and bury it up her womb*. He gathered a leg under him, ready to spring, but the wench did not move. “It is a rare and precious gift to be a knight,” she said, “and even more so a knight of the Kingsguard. It is a gift given to few, a gift you scorned and soiled.”

*A gift you want desperately, wench, and can never have*. “I earned my knighthood. Nothing was given to me. I won a tourney mêlée at thirteen, when I was yet a squire. At fifteen, I rode with Ser Arthur Dayne against the Kingswood Brotherhood, and he knighted me on the battlefield. It was that white cloak that soiled me, not the other way around. So spare me your envy. It was the gods who neglected to give you a cock, not me.”

The look Brienne gave him then was full of loathing. *She would gladly hack me to pieces, but for her precious vow*, he reflected. *Good. I’ve had enough of feeble pieties and maidens’ judgments*. The wench stalked off without saying a word. Jaime curled up beneath his cloak, hoping to dream of Cersei.

But when he closed his eyes, it was Aerys Targaryen he saw, pacing alone in his throne room, picking at his scabbed and bleeding hands. The

fool was always cutting himself on the blades and barbs of the Iron Throne. Jaime had slipped in through the king's door, clad in his golden armor, sword in hand. *The golden armor, not the white, but no one ever remembers that. Would that I had taken off that damned cloak as well.*

When Aerys saw the blood on his blade, he demanded to know if it was Lord Tywin's. "I want him dead, the traitor. I want his head, you'll bring me his head, or you'll burn with all the rest. All the traitors. Rossart says they are *inside the walls!* He's gone to make them a warm welcome. Whose blood? *Whose?*"

"Rossart's," answered Jaime.

Those purple eyes grew huge then, and the royal mouth drooped open in shock. He lost control of his bowels, turned, and ran for the Iron Throne. Beneath the empty eyes of the skulls on the walls, Jaime hauled the last dragonking bodily off the steps, squealing like a pig and smelling like a privy. A single slash across his throat was all it took to end it. *So easy*, he remembered thinking. *A king should die harder than this.* Rossart at least had tried to make a fight of it, though if truth be told he fought like an alchemist. *Queer that they never ask who killed Rossart . . . but of course, he was no one, lowborn, Hand for a fortnight, just another mad fancy of the Mad King.*

Ser Elys Westerling and Lord Crakehall and others of his father's knights burst into the hall in time to see the last of it, so there was no way for Jaime to vanish and let some braggart steal the praise or blame. It would be blame, he knew at once when he saw the way they looked at him . . . though perhaps that was fear. Lannister or no, he was one of Aerys's seven.

"The castle is ours, ser, and the city," Roland Crakehall told him, which was half true. Targaryen loyalists were still dying on the serpentine steps and in the armory, Gregor Clegane and Amory Lorch were scaling the walls of Maegor's Holdfast, and Ned Stark was leading his northmen through the King's Gate even then, but Crakehall could not have known that. He had not seemed surprised to find Aerys slain; Jaime had been Lord Tywin's son long before he had been named to the Kingsguard.

"Tell them the Mad King is dead," he commanded. "Spare all those who yield and hold them captive."

“Shall I proclaim a new king as well?” Crakehall asked, and Jaime read the question plain: Shall it be your father, or Robert Baratheon, or do you mean to try to make a new dragonking? He thought for a moment of the boy Viserys, fled to Dragonstone, and of Rhaegar’s infant son Aegon, still in Maegor’s with his mother. *A new Targaryen king, and my father as Hand. How the wolves will howl, and the storm lord choke with rage.* For a moment he was tempted, until he glanced down again at the body on the floor, in its spreading pool of blood. *His blood is in both of them,* he thought. “Proclaim who you bloody well like,” he told Crakehall. Then he climbed the Iron Throne and seated himself with his sword across his knees, to see who would come to claim the kingdom. As it happened, it had been Eddard Stark.

*You had no right to judge me either, Stark.*

In his dreams the dead came burning, gowned in swirling green flames. Jaime danced around them with a golden sword, but for every one he struck down two more arose to take his place.

Brienne woke him with a boot in the ribs. The world was still black, and it had begun to rain. They broke their fast on oatcakes, salt fish, and some blackberries that Ser Cleos had found, and were back in the saddle before the sun came up.