

Game of Victims and Monsters: Representation of Sexual and Female Violence in *A Song of Ice and Fire* and *Game of Thrones*

All extracts come from: George R. R. Martin, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Books 1-5, Haper Voyager, 2012, Ebook Edition.

Please, note the extracts are for your personal use only for the purpose of online classes.

Description of the course:

Despite its enormous popularity among both readers and viewers, George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* and its TV adaptation *Game of Thrones* have sparked a significant amount of criticism about the amount of violence, including sexual abuse, they contain. The narrative has become notorious for its graphic representation of violence and accumulation of vivid and gruesome details, which raises questions about their function for the narrative: are they employed to shock the readers/viewers or do they draw our attention to wider social or political concerns? In this seminar, I propose to focus on female characters only, examining them as both victims and perpetrators of violence. Examining the most prominent women of the series (e.g., Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister, Sansa and Arya Stark, Brienne of Tarth, and Asha Greyjoy), we will discuss the trope of violence against women and by women, offering insight into the problems of victimization and exploitation of women on the one hand and their contribution to the perpetuation of the cycles of cruelty and brutality on the other.

0. INTRODUCTION

Before the course, read the following interviews with George R. R. Martin:

<https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/05/02/george-r-r-martin-on-game-of-thrones-and-sexual-violence/>

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2011-09-21/john-hodgman-interviews-george-rr-martin>

- a) What are his inspirations? How does his universe differ from other fantasy settings?
- b) How does he justify his reliance on the tropes of violence in *A Song of Ice and Fire*?
- c) How convincing do you find this explanation?

I. SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The following passages features the scenes describing rape, threats of rape, or other forms of abuse. While reading, think about the following questions:

1. What is the function of the scene in the narrative? Is it meant to add “realism” to Martin’s universe? Is it used for the development of characters? Which ones?
2. Whose point of view orients the narration? Does it have any effect on readers/viewers?
3. What do the scenes tell us about the position of men and women in the society of Martin’s narrative?
4. Does the scene conform with or challenges certain stereotypes or “rape myths” that are present in contemporary society?
5. If the scene featured in the HBO *Game of Thrones*, was it presented in a similar way or was it altered? How do the changes affect the perception of the scene?
6. Can you think about any other scenes that depicted sexual violence?

LAYNA

And then Ser Gregor returned, earlier than expected, driving a herd of goats this time in place of a herd of prisoners. She heard he’d lost four men in one of Lord Beric’s night raids, but those Arya hated returned unscathed and took up residence on the second floor of the Wailing Tower. Weese saw that they were well supplied with drink. “They always have a good thirst, that lot,” he grumbled. “Weasel, go up and ask if they’ve got any clothes that need mending, I’ll have the women see to it.”

Arya ran up her well-scrubbed steps. No one paid her any mind when she entered. Chiswyck was seated by the fire with a horn of ale to hand, telling one of his funny stories. She dared not interrupt, unless she wanted a bloody lip.

“After the Hand’s tourney, it were, before the war come,” Chiswyck was saying. “We were on our ways back west, seven of us with Ser Gregor. Raff was with me, and young Joss Stilwood, he’d squired for Ser in the lists. Well, we come on this pisswater river, running high on account there’d been rains. No way to ford, but there’s an alehouse near, so there we repair. Ser rousts the brewer and tells him to keep our horns full till the waters fall, and you should see the man’s pig eyes shine at the sight o’ silver. So he’s fetching us ale, him and his daughter, and poor thin stuff it is, no more’n brown piss, which don’t make me any happier, nor Ser neither. And all the time this brewer’s saying how glad he is to have us, custom being slow on account o’ them rains. The fool won’t shut his yap, not him, though Ser is saying not a word, just brooding on the Knight o’ Pansies and that bugger’s trick he played. You can see how tight his mouth sits, so me and the other lads we know better’n to say a squeak to him, but this brewer he’s got to talk, he even asks how m’lord fared in the jousting. Ser just gave him this look.” Chiswyck cackled, quaffed his ale, and wiped the foam away with the back of his hand. “Meanwhile, this daughter of his has been fetching and pouring, a fat little thing, eighteen or so—”

“Thirteen, more like,” Raff the Sweetling drawled.

“Well, be that as it may, she’s not much to look at, but Eggon’s been drinking and gets to touching her, and might be I did a little touching meself, and Raff’s telling young Stilwood that he ought t’drag the girl upstairs and make hisself a man, giving the lad courage as it were. Finally Joss reaches up under her skirt, and she shrieks and drops her flagon and goes running off to the kitchen. Well, it would have ended right there, only what does the old fool do but he goes to *Ser* and asks him to make us leave the girl alone, him being an anointed knight and all such.

“Ser Gregor, he wasn’t paying no mind to none of our fun, but now he *looks*, you know how he does, and he commands that the girl be brought before him. Now the old man has to drag her out of the kitchen, and no one to blame but hisself. Ser looks her over and says, ‘So this is the whore you’re so concerned for,’ and this besotted old fool says, ‘My Layna’s no whore, ser,’ right to Gregor’s face. Ser, he never blinks, just says, ‘She is now,’ tosses the old man another silver, rips the dress off the wench and takes her right there on the table in front of her da, her flopping and wiggling like a rabbit and making these noises. The look on the old man’s face, I laughed so hard ale was coming out me nose. Then this boy hears the noise, the son I figure, and comes rushing up from the cellar, so Raff has to stick a dirk in his belly. By then, Ser’s done, so he goes back to his drinking and we all have a turn. Tobbot, you know how he is, he flops her over and goes in the back way. The girl was done fighting by the time I had her, maybe she’d decided she liked it after all, though to tell the truth I wouldn’t have minded a little wiggling. And now here’s the best bit ... when it’s all done, Ser tells the old man that he wants his change. The girl wasn’t worth a silver, he says ... and damned if that old man didn’t fetch a fistful of coppers, beg m’lord’s pardon, and *thank him for the custom!*”

The men all roared, none louder than Chiswyck himself, who laughed so hard at his own story that snot dribbled from his nose down into his scraggy grey beard. Arya stood in the shadows of the stairwell and watched him. She crept back down to the cellars without saying a word. When Weese found that she hadn’t asked about the clothes, he yanked down her breeches and caned her until blood ran down her thighs, but Arya closed her eyes and thought of all the sayings Syrio had taught her, so she scarcely felt it.

(*A Clash of Kings*, ch. 30)

BRIENNE

Brienne was always bound beside him. She lay there in her bonds like a big dead cow, saying not a word. *The wench has built a fortress inside herself. They will rape her soon enough, but behind her walls they cannot touch her.* But Jaime’s walls were gone. They had taken his hand, they had taken his *sword hand*, and without it he was nothing. The other was no good to him. Since the time he could walk, his left arm had been his shield arm, no more. It was his right hand that made him a knight; his right arm that made him a man.

One day, he heard Urswyck say something about Harrenhal, and remembered that was to be their destination. That made him laugh aloud, and *that* made Timeon slash his face with a long thin whip. The cut bled, but beside his hand he scarcely felt it. “Why did you laugh?” the wench asked him that night, in a whisper.

“Harrenhal was where they gave me the white cloak,” he whispered back. “Whent’s great tourney. He wanted to show us all his big castle and his fine sons. I wanted to show them too.

I was only fifteen, but no one could have beaten me that day. Aerys never let me joust.” He laughed again. “He sent me away. But now I’m coming back.”

They heard the laugh. That night it was Jaime who got the kicks and punches. He hardly felt them either, until Rorge slammed a boot into his stump, and then he fainted.

It was the next night when they finally came, three of the worst; Shagwell, noseless Rorge, and the fat Dothraki Zollo, the one who’d cut his hand off. Zollo and Rorge were arguing about who would go first as they approached; there seemed to be no question but that the fool would be going last. Shagwell suggested that they should both go first, and take her front and rear. Zollo and Rorge liked that notion, only then they began to fight about who would get the front and who the rear.

They will leave her a cripple too, but inside, where it does not show. “Wench,” he whispered as Zollo and Rorge were cursing one another, “let them have the meat, and you go far away. It will be over quicker, and they’ll get less pleasure from it.”

“They’ll get no pleasure from what I’ll give them,” she whispered back, defiant.

Stupid stubborn brave bitch. She was going to get herself good and killed, he knew it. *And what do I care if she does? If she hadn’t been so pigheaded, I’d still have a hand.* Yet he heard himself whisper, “Let them do it, and go away inside.” That was what he’d done, when the Starks had died before him, Lord Rickard cooking in his armor while his son Brandon strangled himself trying to save him. “Think of Renly, if you loved him. Think of Tarth, mountains and seas, pools, waterfalls, whatever you have on your Sapphire Isle, think ...”

But Rorge had won the argument by then. “You’re the ugliest woman I ever seen,” he told Brienne, “but don’t think I can’t make you uglier. You want a nose like mine? Fight me, and you’ll get one. And two eyes, that’s too many. One scream out o’ you, and I’ll pop one out and make you eat it, and then I’ll pull your fucking teeth out one by one.”

“Oh, do it, Rorge,” pleaded Shagwell. “Without her teeth, she’ll look just like my dear old mother.” He cackled. “And I *always* wanted to fuck my dear old mother up the arse.”

Jaime chuckled. “There’s a funny fool. I have a riddle for you, Shagwell. Why do you care if she screams? Oh, wait, I know.” He shouted, “*SAPPHIRES*,” as loudly as he could.

Cursing, Rorge kicked at his stump again. Jaime howled. *I never knew there was such agony in the world*, was the last thing he remembered thinking. It was hard to say how long he was gone, but when the pain spit him out, Urswyck was there, and Vargo Hoat himself. “Thee’th not to be touched,” the goat screamed, spraying spittle all over Zollo. “Thee hath to be a maid, you foolth! Thee’th worth a bag of thapphireth!” And from then on, every night Hoat put guards on them, to protect them from his own.

Two nights passed in silence before the wench finally found the courage to whisper, “Jaime? Why did you shout out?”

“Why did I shout ‘*sapphires*,’ you mean? Use your wits, wench. Would this lot have cared if I shouted ‘*rape*’?”

“You did not need to shout at all.”

“You’re hard enough to look at *with* a nose. Besides, I wanted to make the goat say ‘thapphireth.’” He chuckled. “A good thing for you I’m such a liar. An honorable man would have told the truth about the Sapphire Isle.”

“All the same,” she said. “I thank you, ser.”

His hand was throbbing again. He ground his teeth and said, “A Lannister pays his debts. That was for the river, and those rocks you dropped on Robin Ryger.”

DAENERYS

Daenerys Targaryen wed Khal Drogo with fear and barbaric splendor in a field beyond the walls of Pentos, for the Dothraki believed that all things of importance in a man's life must be done beneath the open sky.

Drogo had called his *khalasar* to attend him and they had come, forty thousand Dothraki warriors and uncounted numbers of women, children, and slaves. Outside the city walls, they camped with their vast herds, raising palaces of woven grass, eating everything in sight, and making the good folk of Pentos more anxious with every passing day.

"My fellow magisters have doubled the size of the city guard," Illyrio told them over platters of honey duck and orange snap peppers one night at the manse that had been Drogo's. The *khal* had joined his *khalasar*, his estate given over to Daenerys and her brother until the wedding.

"Best we get Princess Daenerys wedded quickly before they hand half the wealth of Pentos away to sellswords and bravos," Ser Jorah Mormont jested. The exile had offered her brother his sword the night Dany had been sold to Khal Drogo; Viserys had accepted eagerly. Mormont had been their constant companion ever since.

Magister Illyrio laughed lightly through his forked beard, but Viserys did not so much as smile. "He can have her tomorrow, if he likes," her brother said. He glanced over at Dany, and she lowered her eyes. "So long as he pays the price."

Illyrio waved a languid hand in the air, rings glittering on his fat fingers. "I have told you, all is settled. Trust me. The *khal* has promised you a crown, and you shall have it."

"Yes, but when?"

"When the *khal* chooses," Illyrio said. "He will have the girl first, and after they are wed he must make his procession across the plains and present her to the *dosh khaleen* at Vaes Dothrak. After that, perhaps. If the omens favor war."

Viserys seethed with impatience. "I piss on Dothraki omens. The Usurper sits on my father's throne. How long must I wait?"

Illyrio gave a massive shrug. "You have waited most of your life, great king. What is another few months, another few years?"

Ser Jorah, who had traveled as far east as Vaes Dothrak, nodded in agreement. "I counsel you to be patient, Your Grace. The Dothraki are true to their word, but they do things in their own time. A lesser man may beg a favor from the *khal*, but must never presume to berate him."

Viserys bristled. "Guard your tongue, Mormont, or I'll have it out. I am no lesser man, I am the rightful Lord of the Seven Kingdoms. The dragon does not beg."

Ser Jorah lowered his eyes respectfully. Illyrio smiled enigmatically and tore a wing from the duck. Honey and grease ran over his fingers and dripped down into his beard as he nibbled at the tender meat. *There are no more dragons*, Dany thought, staring at her brother, though she did not dare say it aloud.

Yet that night she dreamt of one. Viserys was hitting her, hurting her. She was naked, clumsy with fear. She ran from him, but her body seemed thick and ungainly. He struck her again. She stumbled and fell. "You woke the dragon," he screamed as he kicked her. "You woke the dragon, you woke the dragon." Her thighs were slick with blood. She closed her eyes and whimpered. As if in answer, there was a hideous *ripping* sound and the crackling of some great fire. When she looked again, Viserys was gone, great columns of flame rose all around, and in the midst of them was the dragon. It turned its great head slowly. When its

molten eyes found hers, she woke, shaking and covered with a fine sheen of sweat. She had never been so afraid ...

... until the day of her wedding came at last.

The ceremony began at dawn and continued until dusk, an endless day of drinking and feasting and fighting. A mighty earthen ramp had been raised amid the grass palaces, and there Dany was seated beside Khal Drogo, above the seething sea of Dothraki. She had never seen so many people in one place, nor people so strange and frightening. The horselords might put on rich fabrics and sweet perfumes when they visited the Free Cities, but out under the open sky they kept the old ways. Men and women alike wore painted leather vests over bare chests and horsehair leggings cinched by bronze medallion belts, and the warriors greased their long braids with fat from the rendering pits. They gorged themselves on horseflesh roasted with honey and peppers, drank themselves blind on fermented mare's milk and Illyrio's fine wines, and spat jests at each other across the fires, their voices harsh and alien in Dany's ears.

Viserys was seated just below her, splendid in a new black wool tunic with a scarlet dragon on the chest. Illyrio and Ser Jorah sat beside him. Theirs was a place of high honor, just below the *khal's* own bloodriders, but Dany could see the anger in her brother's lilac eyes. He did not like sitting beneath her, and he fumed when the slaves offered each dish first to the *khal* and his bride, and served him from the portions they refused. He could do nothing but nurse his resentment, so nurse it he did, his mood growing blacker by the hour at each insult to his person.

Dany had never felt so alone as she did seated in the midst of that vast horde. Her brother had told her to smile, and so she smiled until her face ached and the tears came unbidden to her eyes. She did her best to hide them, knowing how angry Viserys would be if he saw her crying, terrified of how Khal Drogo might react. Food was brought to her, steaming joints of meat and thick black sausages and Dothraki blood pies, and later fruits and sweetgrass stews and delicate pastries from the kitchens of Pentos, but she waved it all away. Her stomach was a roil, and she knew she could keep none of it down.

There was no one to talk to. Khal Drogo shouted commands and jests down to his bloodriders, and laughed at their replies, but he scarcely glanced at Dany beside him. They had no common language. Dothraki was incomprehensible to her, and the *khal* knew only a few words of the bastard Valyrian of the Free Cities, and none at all of the Common Tongue of the Seven Kingdoms. She would even have welcomed the conversation of Illyrio and her brother, but they were too far below to hear her.

So she sat in her wedding silks, nursing a cup of honeyed wine, afraid to eat, talking silently to herself. *I am blood of the dragon*, she told herself. *I am Daenerys Stormborn, Princess of Dragonstone, of the blood and seed of Aegon the Conqueror.*

The sun was only a quarter of the way up the sky when she saw her first man die. Drums were beating as some of the women danced for the *khal*. Drogo watched without expression, but his eyes followed their movements, and from time to time he would toss down a bronze medallion for the women to fight over.

The warriors were watching too. One of them finally stepped into the circle, grabbed a dancer by the arm, pushed her down to the ground, and mounted her right there, as a stallion mounts a mare. Illyrio had told her that might happen. "The Dothraki mate like the animals in their herds. There is no privacy in a *khalasar*, and they do not understand sin or shame as we do."

Dany looked away from the coupling, frightened when she realized what was happening, but a second warrior stepped forward, and a third, and soon there was no way to avert her

eyes. Then two men seized the same woman. She heard a shout, saw a shove, and in the blink of an eye the *arakhs* were out, long razor-sharp blades, half sword and half scythe. A dance of death began as the warriors circled and slashed, leaping toward each other, whirling the blades around their heads, shrieking insults at each clash. No one made a move to interfere.

It ended as quickly as it began. The *arakhs* shivered together faster than Dany could follow, one man missed a step, the other swung his blade in a flat arc. Steel bit into flesh just above the Dothraki's waist, and opened him from backbone to belly button, spilling his entrails into the dust. As the loser died, the winner took hold of the nearest woman—not even the one they had been quarreling over—and had her there and then. Slaves carried off the body, and the dancing resumed.

Magister Illyrio had warned Dany about this too. “A Dothraki wedding without at least three deaths is deemed a dull affair,” he had said. Her wedding must have been especially blessed; before the day was over, a dozen men had died.

As the hours passed, the terror grew in Dany, until it was all she could do not to scream. She was afraid of the Dothraki, whose ways seemed alien and monstrous, as if they were beasts in human skins and not true men at all. She was afraid of her brother, of what he might do if she failed him. Most of all, she was afraid of what would happen tonight under the stars, when her brother gave her up to the hulking giant who sat drinking beside her with a face as still and cruel as a bronze mask.

I am the blood of the dragon, she told herself again.

When at last the sun was low in the sky, Khal Drogo clapped his hands together, and the drums and the shouting and feasting came to a sudden halt. Drogo stood and pulled Dany to her feet beside him. It was time for her bride gifts.

And after the gifts, she knew, after the sun had gone down, it would be time for the first ride and the consummation of her marriage. Dany tried to put the thought aside, but it would not leave her. She hugged herself to try to keep from shaking.

Her brother Viserys gifted her with three handmaids. Dany knew they had cost him nothing; Illyrio no doubt had provided the girls. Irri and Jhiqui were copper-skinned Dothraki with black hair and almond-shaped eyes, Doreah a fair-haired, blue-eyed Lysene girl. “These are no common servants, sweet sister,” her brother told her as they were brought forward one by one. “Illyrio and I selected them personally for you. Irri will teach you riding, Jhiqui the Dothraki tongue, and Doreah will instruct you in the womanly arts of love.” He smiled thinly. “She’s very good, Illyrio and I can both swear to that.”

Ser Jorah Mormont apologized for his gift. “It is a small thing, my princess, but all a poor exile could afford,” he said as he laid a small stack of old books before her. They were histories and songs of the Seven Kingdoms, she saw, written in the Common Tongue. She thanked him with all her heart.

Magister Illyrio murmured a command, and four burly slaves hurried forward, bearing between them a great cedar chest bound in bronze. When she opened it, she found piles of the finest velvets and damasks the Free Cities could produce ... and resting on top, nestled in the soft cloth, three huge eggs. Dany gasped. They were the most beautiful things she had ever seen, each different than the others, patterned in such rich colors that at first she thought they were crusted with jewels, and so large it took both of her hands to hold one. She lifted it delicately, expecting that it would be made of some fine porcelain or delicate enamel, or even blown glass, but it was much heavier than that, as if it were all of solid stone. The surface of the shell was covered with tiny scales, and as she turned the egg between her fingers, they shimmered like polished metal in the light of the setting sun. One egg was a deep green, with burnished bronze flecks that came and went depending on how Dany turned it. Another was

pale cream streaked with gold. The last was black, as black as a midnight sea, yet alive with scarlet ripples and swirls. “What are they?” she asked, her voice hushed and full of wonder.

“Dragon’s eggs, from the Shadow Lands beyond Asshai,” said Magister Illyrio. “The eons have turned them to stone, yet still they burn bright with beauty.”

“I shall treasure them always.” Dany had heard tales of such eggs, but she had never seen one, nor thought to see one. It was a truly magnificent gift, though she knew that Illyrio could afford to be lavish. He had collected a fortune in horses and slaves for his part in selling her to Khal Drogo.

The *khal*’s bloodriders offered her the traditional three weapons, and splendid weapons they were. Haggio gave her a great leather whip with a silver handle, Cohollo a magnificent *arakh* chased in gold, and Qotho a double-curved dragonbone bow taller than she was. Magister Illyrio and Ser Jorah had taught her the traditional refusals for these offerings. “This is a gift worthy of a great warrior, O blood of my blood, and I am but a woman. Let my lord husband bear these in my stead.” And so Khal Drogo too received his “bride gifts.”

Other gifts she was given in plenty by other Dothraki: slippers and jewels and silver rings for her hair, medallion belts and painted vests and soft furs, sandsilks and jars of scent, needles and feathers and tiny bottles of purple glass, and a gown made from the skin of a thousand mice. “A handsome gift, *Khaleesi*,” Magister Illyrio said of the last, after he had told her what it was. “Most lucky.” The gifts mounted up around her in great piles, more gifts than she could possibly imagine, more gifts than she could want or use.

And last of all, Khal Drogo brought forth his own bride gift to her. An expectant hush rippled out from the center of the camp as he left her side, growing until it had swallowed the whole *khalasar*. When he returned, the dense press of Dothraki gift-givers parted before him, and he led the horse to her.

She was a young filly, spirited and splendid. Dany knew just enough about horses to know that this was no ordinary animal. There was something about her that took the breath away. She was grey as the winter sea, with a mane like silver smoke.

Hesitantly, she reached out and stroked the horse’s neck, ran her fingers through the silver of her mane. Khal Drogo said something in Dothraki and Magister Illyrio translated. “Silver for the silver of your hair, the *khal* says.”

“She’s beautiful,” Dany murmured.

“She is the pride of the *khalasar*,” Illyrio said. “Custom decrees that the *khaleesi* must ride a mount worthy of her place by the side of the *khal*.”

Drogo stepped forward and put his hands on her waist. He lifted her up as easily as if she were a child and set her on the thin Dothraki saddle, so much smaller than the ones she was used to. Dany sat there uncertain for a moment. No one had told her about this part. “What should I do?” she asked Illyrio.

It was Ser Jorah Mormont who answered. “Take the reins and ride. You need not go far.”

Nervously, Dany gathered the reins in her hands and slid her feet into the short stirrups. She was only a fair rider; she had spent far more time traveling by ship and wagon and palanquin than by horseback. Praying that she would not fall off and disgrace herself, she gave the filly the lightest and most timid touch with her knees.

And for the first time in hours, she forgot to be afraid. Or perhaps it was for the first time ever.

The silver-grey filly moved with a smooth and silken gait, and the crowd parted for her, every eye upon them. Dany found herself moving faster than she had intended, yet somehow it was exciting rather than terrifying. The horse broke into a trot, and she smiled. Dothraki scrambled to clear a path. The slightest pressure with her legs, the lightest touch on the reins,

and the filly responded. She sent it into a gallop, and now the Dothraki were hooting and laughing and shouting at her as they jumped out of her way. As she turned to ride back, a firepit loomed ahead, directly in her path. They were hemmed in on either side, with no room to stop. A daring she had never known filled Daenerys then, and she gave the filly her head.

The silver horse leapt the flames as if she had wings.

When she pulled up before Magister Illyrio, she said, "Tell Khal Drogo that he has given me the wind." The fat Pentoshi stroked his yellow beard as he repeated her words in Dothraki, and Dany saw her new husband smile for the first time.

The last sliver of sun vanished behind the high walls of Pentos to the west just then. Dany had lost all track of time. Khal Drogo commanded his bloodriders to bring forth his own horse, a lean red stallion. As the *khal* was saddling the horse, Viserys slid close to Dany on her silver, dug his fingers into her leg, and said, "Please him, sweet sister, or I swear, you will see the dragon wake as it has never woken before."

The fear came back to her then, with her brother's words. She felt like a child once more, only thirteen and all alone, not ready for what was about to happen to her.

They rode out together as the stars came out, leaving the *khalasar* and the grass palaces behind. Khal Drogo spoke no word to her, but drove his stallion at a hard trot through the gathering dusk. The tiny silver bells in his long braid rang softly as he rode. "I am the blood of the dragon," she whispered aloud as she followed, trying to keep her courage up. "I am the blood of the dragon. I am the blood of the dragon." The dragon was never afraid.

Afterward, she could not say how far or how long they had ridden, but it was full dark when they stopped at a grassy place beside a small stream. Drogo swung off his horse and lifted her down from hers. She felt as fragile as glass in his hands, her limbs as weak as water. She stood there helpless and trembling in her wedding silks while he secured the horses, and when he turned to look at her, she began to cry.

Khal Drogo stared at her tears, his face strangely empty of expression. "No," he said. He lifted his hand and rubbed away the tears roughly with a callused thumb.

"You speak the Common Tongue," Dany said in wonder.

"No," he said again.

Perhaps he had only that word, she thought, but it was one word more than she had known he had, and somehow it made her feel a little better. Drogo touched her hair lightly, sliding the silver-blond strands between his fingers and murmuring softly in Dothraki. Dany did not understand the words, yet there was warmth in the tone, a tenderness she had never expected from this man.

He put his finger under her chin and lifted her head, so she was looking up into his eyes. Drogo towered over her as he towered over everyone. Taking her lightly under the arms, he lifted her and seated her on a rounded rock beside the stream. Then he sat on the ground facing her, legs crossed beneath him, their faces finally at a height. "No," he said.

"Is that the only word you know?" she asked him.

Drogo did not reply. His long heavy braid was coiled in the dirt beside him. He pulled it over his right shoulder and began to remove the bells from his hair, one by one. After a moment, Dany leaned forward to help. When they were done, Drogo gestured. She understood. Slowly, carefully, she began to undo his braid.

It took a long time. All the while he sat there silently, watching her. When she was done, he shook his head, and his hair spread out behind him like a river of darkness, oiled and gleaming. She had never seen hair so long, so black, so thick.

Then it was his turn. He began to undress her.

His fingers were deft and strangely tender. He removed her silks one by one, carefully, while Dany sat unmoving, silent, looking at his eyes. When he bared her small breasts, she could not help herself. She averted her eyes and covered herself with her hands. “No,” Drogo said. He pulled her hands away from her breasts, gently but firmly, then lifted her face again to make her look at him. “No,” he repeated.

“No,” she echoed back at him.

He stood her up then and pulled her close to remove the last of her silks. The night air was chilly on her bare skin. She shivered, and gooseflesh covered her arms and legs. She was afraid of what would come next, but for a while nothing happened. Khal Drogo sat with his legs crossed, looking at her, drinking in her body with his eyes.

After a while he began to touch her. Lightly at first, then harder. She could sense the fierce strength in his hands, but he never hurt her. He held her hand in his own and brushed her fingers, one by one. He ran a hand gently down her leg. He stroked her face, tracing the curve of her ears, running a finger gently around her mouth. He put both hands in her hair and combed it with his fingers. He turned her around, massaged her shoulders, slid a knuckle down the path of her spine.

It seemed as if hours passed before his hands finally went to her breasts. He stroked the soft skin underneath until it tingled. He circled her nipples with his thumbs, pinched them between thumb and forefinger, then began to pull at her, very lightly at first, then more insistently, until her nipples stiffened and began to ache.

He stopped then, and drew her down onto his lap. Dany was flushed and breathless, her heart fluttering in her chest. He cupped her face in his huge hands and she looked into his eyes. “No?” he said, and she knew it was a question.

She took his hand and moved it down to the wetness between her thighs. “Yes,” she whispered as she put his finger inside her.

(A *Game of Thrones*, chapter 11)

JEYN POOL

(this storyline has been transferred to Sansa in the TV show)

The hearth was caked with cold black ash, the room unheated but for candles. Every time a door opened their flames would sway and shiver. The bride was shivering too. They had dressed her in white lambswool trimmed with lace. Her sleeves and bodice were sewn with freshwater pearls, and on her feet were white doeskin slippers—pretty, but not warm. Her face was pale, bloodless.

A face carved of ice, Theon Greyjoy thought as he draped a fur-trimmed cloak about her shoulders. *A corpse buried in the snow*. “My lady. It is time.” Beyond the door, the music called them, lute and pipes and drum.

The bride raised her eyes. Brown eyes, shining in the candlelight. “I will be a good wife to him, and t-true. I ... I will please him and give him sons. I will be a better wife than the real Arya could have been, he’ll see.”

Talk like that will get you killed, or worse. That lesson he had learned as Reek. “You are the real Arya, my lady. Arya of House Stark, Lord Eddard’s daughter, heir to Winterfell.” Her name, she had to know her *name*. “Arya Underfoot. Your sister used to call you Arya Horseface.”

“It was me made up that name. Her face was long and horsey. Mine isn’t. I was pretty.” Tears spilled from her eyes at last. “I was never beautiful like Sansa, but they all said I was pretty. Does Lord Ramsay think I am pretty?”

“Yes,” he lied. “He’s told me so.”

“He knows who I am, though. Who I really am. I see it when he looks at me. He looks so angry, even when he smiles, but it’s not my fault. They say he likes to hurt people.”

“My lady should not listen to such ... lies.”

“They say that he hurt you. Your hands, and ...”

His mouth was dry. “I ... I deserved it. I made him angry. You must not make him angry. Lord Ramsay is a ... a sweet man, and kindly. Please him, and he will be good to you. Be a good wife.”

“Help me.” She clutched at him. “Please. I used to watch you in the yard, playing with your swords. You were so handsome.” She squeezed his arm. “If we ran away, I could be your wife, or your ... your whore ... whatever you wanted. You could be my man.”

Theon wrenched his arm away from her. “I’m no ... I’m no one’s man.” *A man would help her.* “Just ... just be Arya, be his wife. Please him, or ... just please him, and stop this talk about being someone else.” *Jeyne, her name is Jeyne, it rhymes with pain.* The music was growing more insistent. “It is time. Wipe those tears from your eyes.” *Brown eyes. They should be grey. Someone will see. Someone will remember.* “Good. Now smile.”

The girl tried. Her lips, trembling, twitched up and froze, and he could see her teeth. *Pretty white teeth*, he thought, *but if she angers him, they will not be pretty long.* When he pushed the door open, three of the four candles fluttered out. He led the bride into the mist, where the wedding guests were waiting.

“Why me?” he had asked when Lady Dustin told him he must give the bride away.

“Her father is dead and all her brothers. Her mother perished at the Twins. Her uncles are lost or dead or captive.”

“She has a brother still.” *She has three brothers still*, he might have said. “Jon Snow is with the Night’s Watch.”

“A half-brother, bastard-born, and bound to the Wall. You were her father’s ward, the nearest thing she has to living kin. It is only fitting that you give her hand in marriage.”

The nearest thing she has to living kin. Theon Greyjoy had grown up with Arya Stark. Theon would have known an imposter. If he was seen to accept Bolton’s feigned girl as Arya, the northern lords who had gathered to bear witness to the match would have no grounds to question her legitimacy. Stout and Slate, Whoresbane Umber, the quarrelsome Ryswells, Hornwood men and Cerywn cousins, fat Lord Wyman Manderly ... not one of them had known Ned Stark’s daughters half so well as he. And if a few entertained private doubts, surely they would be wise enough to keep those misgivings to themselves.

They are using me to cloak their deception, putting mine own face on their lie. That was why Roose Bolton had clothed him as a lord again, to play his part in this mummer’s farce. Once that was done, once their false Arya had been wedded and bedded, Bolton would have no more use for Theon Turncloak. “Serve us in this, and when Stannis is defeated we will discuss how best to restore you to your father’s seat,” his lordship had said in that soft voice of his, a voice made for lies and whispers. Theon never believed a word of it. He would dance this dance for them because he had no choice, but afterward ... *He will give me back to Ramsay then*, he thought, *and Ramsay will take a few more fingers and turn me into Reek once more.* Unless the gods were good, and Stannis Baratheon descended on Winterfell and put all of them to the sword, himself included. That was the best he could hope for.

It was warmer in the godswood, strange to say. Beyond its confines, a hard white frost gripped Winterfell. The paths were treacherous with black ice, and hoarfrost sparkled in the moonlight on the broken panes of the Glass Gardens. Drifts of dirty snow had piled up against the walls, filling every nook and corner. Some were so high they hid the doors behind them. Under the snow lay grey ash and cinders, and here and there a blackened beam or a pile of bones adorned with scraps of skin and hair. Icicles long as lances hung from the battlements and fringed the towers like an old man's stiff white whiskers. But inside the godswood, the ground remained unfrozen, and steam rose off the hot pools, as warm as baby's breath.

The bride was garbed in white and grey, the colors the true Arya would have worn had she lived long enough to wed. Theon wore black and gold, his cloak pinned to his shoulder by a crude iron kraken that a smith in Barrowton had hammered together for him. But under the hood, his hair was white and thin, and his flesh had an old man's greyish undertone. *A Stark at last*, he thought. Arm in arm, the bride and he passed through an arched stone door, as wisps of fog stirred round their legs. The drum was as tremulous as a maiden's heart, the pipes high and sweet and beckoning. Up above the treetops, a crescent moon was floating in a dark sky, half-obscured by mist, like an eye peering through a veil of silk.

Theon Greyjoy was no stranger to this godswood. He had played here as a boy, skipping stones across the cold black pool beneath the weirwood, hiding his treasures in the bole of an ancient oak, stalking squirrels with a bow he made himself. Later, older, he had soaked his bruises in the hot springs after many a session in the yard with Robb and Jory and Jon Snow. In amongst these chestnuts and elms and soldier pines he had found secret places where he could hide when he wanted to be alone. The first time he had ever kissed a girl had been here. Later, a different girl had made a man of him upon a ragged quilt in the shade of that tall grey-green sentinel.

He had never seen the godswood like this, though—grey and ghostly, filled with warm mists and floating lights and whispered voices that seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere. Beneath the trees, the hot springs steamed. Warm vapors rose from the earth, shrouding the trees in their moist breath, creeping up the walls to draw grey curtains across the watching windows.

There was a path of sorts, a meandering footpath of cracked stones overgrown with moss, half-buried beneath blown dirt and fallen leaves and made treacherous by thick brown roots pushing up from underneath. He led the bride along it. *Jeyne, her name is Jeyne, it rhymes with pain*. He must not think that, though. Should that name pass his lips, it might cost him a finger or an ear. He walked slowly, watching every step. His missing toes made him hobble when he hurried, and it would not do to stumble. Mar Lord Ramsay's wedding with a misstep, and Lord Ramsay might rectify such clumsiness by flaying the offending foot.

The mists were so thick that only the nearest trees were visible; beyond them stood tall shadows and faint lights. Candles flickered beside the wandering path and back amongst the trees, pale fireflies floating in a warm grey soup. It felt like some strange underworld, some timeless place between the worlds, where the damned wandered mournfully for a time before finding their way down to whatever hell their sins had earned them. *Are we all dead, then? Did Stannis come and kill us in our sleep? Is the battle yet to come, or has it been fought and lost?*

Here and there a torch burned hungrily, casting its ruddy glow over the faces of the wedding guests. The way the mists threw back the shifting light made their features seem bestial, half-human, twisted. Lord Stout became a mastiff, old Lord Locke a vulture, Whoresbane Umber a gargoyle, Big Walder Frey a fox, Little Walder a red bull, lacking only

a ring for his nose. Roose Bolton's own face was a pale grey mask, with two chips of dirty ice where his eyes should be.

Above their heads the trees were full of ravens, their feathers fluffed as they hunched on bare brown branches, staring down at the pageantry below. *Maester Luwin's birds.* Luwin was dead, and his maester's tower had been put to the torch, yet the ravens lingered. *This is their home.* Theon wondered what that would be like, to have a home.

Then the mists parted, like the curtain opening at a mummer show to reveal some new tableau. The heart tree appeared in front of them, its bony limbs spread wide. Fallen leaves lay about the wide white trunk in drifts of red and brown. The ravens were the thickest here, muttering to one another in the murderers' secret tongue. Ramsay Bolton stood beneath them, clad in high boots of soft grey leather and a black velvet doublet slashed with pink silk and glittering with garnet teardrops. A smile danced across his face. "Who comes?" His lips were moist, his neck red above his collar. "Who comes before the god?"

Theon answered. "Arya of House Stark comes here to be wed. A woman grown and flowered, trueborn and noble, she comes to beg the blessings of the gods. Who comes to claim her?"

"Me," said Ramsay. "Ramsay of House Bolton, Lord of the Hornwood, heir to the Dreadfort. I claim her. Who gives her?"

"Theon of House Greyjoy, who was her father's ward." He turned to the bride. "Lady Arya, will you take this man?"

She raised her eyes to his. *Brown eyes, not grey. Are all of them so blind?* For a long moment she did not speak, but those eyes were begging. *This is your chance,* he thought. *Tell them. Tell them now. Shout out your name before them all, tell them that you are not Arya Stark, let all the north hear how you were made to play this part.* It would mean her death, of course, and his own as well, but Ramsay in his wroth might kill them quickly. The old gods of the north might grant them that small boon.

"I take this man," the bride said in a whisper.

All around them lights glimmered through the mists, a hundred candles pale as shrouded stars. Theon stepped back, and Ramsay and his bride joined hands and knelt before the heart tree, bowing their heads in token of submission. The weirwood's carved red eyes stared down at them, its great red mouth open as if to laugh. In the branches overhead a raven *quorked*.

After a moment of silent prayer, the man and woman rose again. Ramsay undid the cloak that Theon had slipped about his bride's shoulders moments before, the heavy white wool cloak bordered in grey fur, emblazoned with the direwolf of House Stark. In its place he fastened a pink cloak, spattered with red garnets like those upon his doublet. On its back was the flayed man of the Dreadfort done in stiff red leather, grim and grisly.

Quick as that, it was done. Weddings went more quickly in the north. It came of not having priests, Theon supposed, but whatever the reason it seemed to him a mercy. Ramsay Bolton scooped his wife up in his arms and strode through the mists with her. Lord Bolton and his Lady Walda followed, then the rest. The musicians began to play again, and the bard Abel began to sing "Two Hearts That Beat as One." Two of his women joined their voices to his own to make a sweet harmony.

Theon found himself wondering if he should say a prayer. *Will the old gods hear me if I do?* They were not his gods, had never been his gods. He was ironborn, a son of Pyke, his god was the Drowned God of the islands ... but Winterfell was long leagues from the sea. It had been a lifetime since any god had heard him. He did not know who he was, or what he was, why he was still alive, why he had ever been born.

"Theon," a voice seemed to whisper.

His head snapped up. "Who said that?" All he could see were the trees and the fog that covered them. The voice had been as faint as rustling leaves, as cold as hate. *A god's voice, or a ghost's.* How many died the day that he took Winterfell? How many more the day he lost it? *The day that Theon Greyjoy died, to be reborn as Reek. Reek, Reek, it rhymes with shriek.*

Suddenly he did not want to be here.

Once outside the godswood the cold descended on him like a ravening wolf and caught him in its teeth. He lowered his head into the wind and made for the Great Hall, hastening after the long line of candles and torches. Ice crunched beneath his boots, and a sudden gust pushed back his hood, as if a ghost had plucked at him with frozen fingers, hungry to gaze upon his face.

Winterfell was full of ghosts for Theon Greyjoy.

This was not the castle he remembered from the summer of his youth. This place was scarred and broken, more ruin than redoubt, a haunt of crows and corpses. The great double curtain wall still stood, for granite does not yield easily to fire, but most of the towers and keeps within were roofless. A few had collapsed. The thatch and timber had been consumed by fire, in whole or in part, and under the shattered panes of the Glass Garden the fruits and vegetables that would have fed the castle during the winter were dead and black and frozen. Tents filled the yard, half-buried in the snow. Roose Bolton had brought his host inside the walls, along with his friends the Freys; thousands huddled amongst the ruins, crowding every court, sleeping in cellar vaults and under topless towers, and in buildings abandoned for centuries.

Plumes of grey smoke snaked up from the rebuilt kitchens and reroofed barracks keep. The battlements and crenellations were crowned with snow and hung with icicles. All the color had been leached from Winterfell until only grey and white remained. *The Stark colors.* Theon did not know whether he ought to find that ominous or reassuring. Even the sky was grey. *Grey and grey and greyer. The whole world grey, everywhere you look, everything grey except the eyes of the bride.* The eyes of the bride were brown. *Big and brown and full of fear.* It was not right that she should look to him for rescue. What had she been thinking, that he would whistle up a winged horse and fly her out of here, like some hero in the stories she and Sansa used to love? He could not even help himself. *Reek, Reek, it rhymes with meek.*

[...]

A hand grabbed his shoulder, five fingers hard as iron digging deep into his flesh. "You're wanted, Reek," said Sour Alyn, his breath foul with the smell from his rotten teeth. Yellow Dick and Damon Dance-for-Me were with him. "Ramsay says you're to bring his bride to his bed."

A shiver of fear went through him. *I played my part,* he thought. *Why me?* He knew better than to object, though.

Lord Ramsay had already left the hall. His bride, forlorn and seemingly forgotten, sat hunched and silent beneath the banner of House Stark, clutching a silver goblet in both hands. Judging from the way she looked at him when he approached, she had emptied that goblet more than once. Perhaps she hoped that if she drank enough, the ordeal would pass her by. Theon knew better. "Lady Arya," he said. "Come. It is time you did your duty."

Six of the Bastard's boys accompanied them as Theon led the girl out the back of the hall and across the frigid yard to the Great Keep. It was up three flights of stone steps to Lord Ramsay's bedchamber, one of the rooms the fires had touched but lightly. As they climbed,

Damon Dance-for-Me whistled, whilst Skinner boasted that Lord Ramsay had promised him a piece of the bloody sheet as a mark of special favor.

The bedchamber had been well prepared for the consummation. All the furnishings were new, brought up from Barrowton in the baggage train. The canopy bed had a feather mattress and drapes of blood-red velvet. The stone floor was covered with wolfskins. A fire was burning in the hearth, a candle on the bedside table. On the sideboard was a flagon of wine, two cups, and a half wheel of veined white cheese.

There was a chair as well, carved of black oak with a red leather seat. Lord Ramsay was seated in it when they entered. Spittle glistened on his lips. "There's my sweet maid. Good lads. You may leave us now. Not you, Reek. You stay."

Reek, Reek, it rhymes with peek. He could feel his missing fingers cramping: two on his left hand, one on his right. And on his hip his dagger rested, sleeping in its leather sheath, but heavy, oh so heavy. *It is only my pinky gone on my right hand,* Theon reminded himself. *I can still grip a knife.* "My lord. How may I serve you?"

"You gave the wench to me. Who better to unwrap the gift? Let's have a look at Ned Stark's little daughter."

She is no kin to Lord Eddard, Theon almost said. *Ramsay knows, he has to know. What new cruel game is this?* The girl was standing by a bedpost, trembling like a doe. "Lady Arya, if you will turn your back, I must needs unlace your gown."

"No." Lord Ramsay poured himself a cup of wine. "Laces take too long. Cut it off her."

Theon drew the dagger. *All I need do is turn and stab him. The knife is in my hand.* He knew the game by then. *Another trap,* he told himself, remembering Kyra with her keys. *He wants me to try to kill him. And when I fail, he'll flay the skin from the hand I used to hold the blade.* He grabbed a handful of the bride's skirt. "Stand still, my lady." The gown was loose below the waist, so that was where he slid the blade in, slicing upward slowly, so as not to cut her. Steel whispered through wool and silk with a faint, soft sound. The girl was shaking. Theon had to grab her arm to hold her still. *Jeyne, Jeyne, it rhymes with pain.* He tightened his grip, as much as his maimed left hand would allow. "Stay still."

Finally the gown fell away, a pale tangle round her feet. "Her smallclothes too," Ramsay commanded. Reek obeyed.

When it was done the bride stood naked, her bridal finery a heap of white and grey rags about her feet. Her breasts were small and pointed, her hips narrow and girlish, her legs as skinny as a bird's. *A child.* Theon had forgotten how young she was. *Sansa's age. Arya would be even younger.* Despite the fire in the hearth, the bedchamber was chilly. Jeyne's pale skin was pebbled with gooseprickles. There was a moment when her hands rose, as if to cover her breasts, but Theon mouthed a silent *no* and she saw and stopped at once.

"What do you think of her, Reek?" asked Lord Ramsay.

"She ..."
What answer does he want? What was it the girl had said, before the godswood? *They all said that I was pretty.* She was not pretty now. He could see a spiderweb of faint thin lines across her back where someone had whipped her. "... she is beautiful, so ... so beautiful."

Ramsay smiled his wet smile. "Does she make your cock hard, Reek? Is it straining against your laces? Would you like to fuck her first?" He laughed. "The Prince of Winterfell should have that right, as all lords did in days of old. The first night. But you're no lord, are you? Only Reek. Not even a man, truth be told." He took another gulp of wine, then threw the cup across the room to shatter off a wall. Red rivers ran down across the stone. "Lady Arya. Get on the bed. Yes, against the pillows, that's a good wife. Now spread your legs. Let us see your cunt."

The girl obeyed, wordless. Theon took a step back toward the door. Lord Ramsay sat beside his bride, slid his hand along her inner thigh, then jammed two fingers up inside her. The girl let out a gasp of pain. “You’re dry as an old bone.” Ramsay pulled his hand free and slapped her face. “I was told that you’d know how to please a man. Was that a lie?”

“N-no, my lord. I was t-trained.”

Ramsay rose, the firelight shining on his face. “Reek, get over here. Get her ready for me.”

For a moment he did not understand. “I ... do you mean ... m’lord, I have no ... I ...”

“With your mouth,” Lord Ramsay said. “And be quick about it. If she’s not wet by the time I’m done disrobing, I will cut off that tongue of yours and nail it to the wall.”

Somewhere in the godswood, a raven screamed. The dagger was still in his hand.

He sheathed it.

Reek, my name is Reek, it rhymes with weak.

Reek bent to his task.

(*A Dance with Dragons*, ch. 37.)

CERSEI

Cersei was kneeling before the altar of the Mother. Joffrey’s bier had been laid out beneath the Stranger, who led the newly dead to the other world. The smell of incense hung heavy in the air, and a hundred candles burned, sending up a hundred prayers. *Joff’s like to need every one of them, too.*

His sister looked over her shoulder. “Who?” she said, then, “Jaime?” She rose, her eyes brimming with tears. “Is it truly you?” She did not come to him, however. *She has never come to me*, he thought. *She has always waited, letting me come to her. She gives, but I must ask.* “You should have come sooner,” she murmured, when he took her in his arms. “Why couldn’t you have come sooner, to keep him safe? My boy ...”

Our boy. “I came as fast I could.” He broke from the embrace, and stepped back a pace. “It’s war out there, Sister.”

“You look so thin. And your hair, your golden hair ...”

“The hair will grow back.” Jaime lifted his stump. *She needs to see.* “This won’t.”

Her eyes went wide. “The Starks ...”

“No. This was Vargo Hoat’s work.”

The name meant nothing to her. “Who?”

“The Goat of Harrenhal. For a little while.”

Cersei turned to gaze at Joffrey’s bier. They had dressed the dead king in gilded armor, eerily similar to Jaime’s own. The visor of the helm was closed, but the candles reflected softly off the gold, so the boy shimmered bright and brave in death. The candlelight woke fires in the rubies that decorated the bodice of Cersei’s mourning dress as well. Her hair fell to her shoulders, undressed and unkempt. “He killed him, Jaime. Just as he’d warned me. One day when I thought myself safe and happy he would turn my joy to ashes in my mouth, he said.”

“Tyrion said that?” Jaime had not wanted to believe it. Kingslaying was worse than kingslaying, in the eyes of gods and men. *He knew the boy was mine. I loved Tyrion. I was good to him.* Well, but for that one time ... but the Imp did not know the truth of that. *Or did he?* “Why would he kill Joff?”

“For a whore.” She clutched his good hand and held it tight in hers. “He *told* me he was going to do it. Joff knew. As he was dying, he *pointed* at his murderer. At our twisted little

monster of a brother.” She kissed Jaime’s fingers. “You’ll kill him for me, won’t you? You’ll avenge our son.”

Jaime pulled away. “He is still my brother.” He shoved his stump at her face, in case she failed to see it. “And I am in no fit state to be killing anyone.”

“You have another hand, don’t you? I am not asking you to best the Hound in battle. Tyrion is a *dwarf*, locked in a cell. The guards would stand aside for *you*.”

The thought turned his stomach. “I must know more of this. Of how it happened.”

“You shall,” Cersei promised. “There’s to be a trial. When you hear all he did, you’ll want him dead as much as I do.” She touched his face. “I was lost without you, Jaime. I was afraid the Starks would send me your head. I could not have borne that.” She kissed him. A light kiss, the merest brush of her lips on his, but he could feel her tremble as he slid his arms around her. “I am not whole without you.”

There was no tenderness in the kiss he returned to her, only hunger. Her mouth opened for his tongue. “No,” she said weakly when his lips moved down her neck, “not here. The septons ...”

“The Others can take the septons.” He kissed her again, kissed her silent, kissed her until she moaned. Then he knocked the candles aside and lifted her up onto the Mother’s altar, pushing up her skirts and the silken shift beneath. She pounded on his chest with feeble fists, murmuring about the risk, the danger, about their father, about the septons, about the wrath of gods. He never heard her. He undid his breeches and climbed up and pushed her bare white legs apart. One hand slid up her thigh and underneath her smallclothes. When he tore them away, he saw that her moon’s blood was on her, but it made no difference.

“Hurry,” she was whispering now, “quickly, *quickly*, now, do it now, do me now. Jaime Jaime Jaime.” Her hands helped guide him. “Yes,” Cersei said as he thrust, “my brother, sweet brother, yes, like that, yes, I have you, you’re home now, you’re home now, you’re *home*.” She kissed his ear and stroked his short bristly hair. Jaime lost himself in her flesh. He could feel Cersei’s heart beating in time with his own, and the wetness of blood and seed where they were joined.

But no sooner were they done than the queen said, “Let me up. If we are discovered like this ...”

Reluctantly, he rolled away and helped her off the altar. The pale marble was smeared with blood. Jaime wiped it clean with his sleeve, then bent to pick up the candles he had knocked over. Fortunately they had all gone out when they fell. *If the sept had caught fire I might never have noticed.*

“This was folly.” Cersei pulled her gown straight. “With Father in the castle ... Jaime, we must be careful.”

“I am sick of being careful. The Targaryens wed brother to sister, why shouldn’t we do the same? Marry me, Cersei. Stand up before the realm and say it’s me you want. We’ll have our own wedding feast, and make another son in place of Joffrey.”

She drew back. “That’s not funny.”

“Do you hear me chuckling?”

“Did you leave your wits at Riverrun?” Her voice had an edge to it. “Tommen’s throne derives from Robert, you know that.”

“He’ll have Casterly Rock, isn’t that enough? Let Father sit the throne. All I want is you.” He made to touch her cheek. Old habits die hard, and it was his right arm he lifted.

“You shall,” Cersei promised. “There’s to be a trial. When you hear all he did, you’ll want him dead as much as I do.” She touched his face. “I was lost without you, Jaime. I was afraid the Starks would send me your head. I could not have borne that.” She kissed him. A light

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"Do you hear me chuckling?"

"Did you leave your wits at Riverrun?" Her voice had an edge to it. "Tommen's throne derives from Robert, you know that."

"He'll have Casterly Rock, isn't that enough? Let Father sit the throne. All I want is you." He made to touch her cheek. Old habits die hard, and it was his right arm he lifted.

Cersei recoiled from his stump. "*Don't ... don't* talk like this. You're scaring me, Jaime. Don't be *stupid*. One wrong word and you'll cost us everything. What did they do to you?"

"They cut off my hand."

"No, it's more, you're *changed*." She backed off a step. "We'll talk later. On the morrow. I have Sansa Stark's maids in a tower cell, I need to question them ... you should go to Father."

"I crossed a thousand leagues to come to you, and lost the best part of me along the way. Don't tell me to leave."

"*Leave me*," she repeated, turning away.

Jaime laced up his breeches and did as she commanded. Weary as he was, he could not seek a bed. By now his lord father knew that he was back in the city.

(*A Storm of Swords*, Part 2, ch. 62)

II. VIOLENT WOMEN

In this part, we will focus both on the novels and on the TV show, as Martin's narrative remains unresolved.

1. Think about the following women who do not conform to the stereotypes of female passivity and victimization:
 - Brienne of Tarth
 - Asha Greyjoy
 - Arya Stark
 - Cersei Lannister
 - Daenerys Targaryen

Questions to consider:

- a) What is the trajectory of the development of these characters? (the milestones, the turning points, do they succeed or fail?)
 - b) How are they presented? Think about their appearance, sexuality, personality, etc.
 - c) What are their reasons for resorting to violence? Does it affect the way they are perceived?
 - d) What happens to them at the end of the (TV) narrative? How do you interpret such an resolution of action?
2. Read Paula Ruth Gilbert's article *Discourses of Female Violence and Societal Gender Stereotypes*.
 - a) According to the article, how are male and female violence perceived?
 - b) What are the typical assumptions and stereotypes about violent women according to the article? Can you think about any other examples?
 - c) Are Gilbert's points relevant for the representation of violent women in *A Song of Ice and Fire* and *Game of Thrones*? In what ways?

Further reading:

If you would like to learn more, here are some suggestions. If you have problems with finding access to any of these sources, please email me at sbszerszun@gmail.com and I will send you the digital version.

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- Cuklanz, Lisa M. "Mass Media Representation of Gendered Violence." *The Routledge Companion to Media And Gender*, edited by Cynthia Carter, Linda Steiner and Lisa McLaughlin, Routledge, 2014, pp. 32–41.
- Ferreday, Debra. "Game of Thrones, Rape Culture and Feminist Fandom." *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 30, no. 83, 2015, pp. 21–36. DOI: 10.1080/08164649.2014.998453.
- Genz, Stéphanie. "'I'm not going to fight them, I'm going to fuck them': Sexist Liberalism and Gender (a) Politics in Game of Thrones." *Women of Ice and Fire: Gender, Game of Thrones, and Multiple Media Engagements*, edited by Anne Gjelsvik and Rikke Schubart, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, pp. 243–266.
- Morrissey, Belinda. *When Women Kill: Questions of Agency and Subjectivity*. Routledge, 2003.
- Rohr, Zita Eva, Lisa Benz, eds. *Queenship and the Women of Westeros: Female Agency and Advice in Game of Thrones and A Song of Ice and Fire*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
- Tasker, Yvonne, and Lindsay Steenberg. "Women Warriors from Chivalry to Vengeance." *Women of Ice and Fire: Gender, Game of Thrones, and Multiple Media Engagements*, edited by Anne Gjelsvik and Rikke Schubart, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, pp. 171–192.
- Tolmie, Jane. "Medievalism and the Fantasy Heroine." *Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2006, pp. 145–158. DOI: 10.1080/09589230600720042.