

Arranged Misery

a *Game of Thrones* fanfic

by **Rodo**

THE RED KEEP loomed over the *Saucy Maid* as she pulled into the harbor of King's Landing. Oberynd Martell wanted to hurl, and not because of the smell. King's Landing and the Blackwater stank as much as ever, but that didn't surprise him much. No, it was what awaited him in the Keep that soured his mood, even though he'd had the entire trip from Sunspear to prepare. Still, he would face his certain doom standing at the prow of a ship, rather than hiding in a cabin. He had a reputation to protect.

"I see our arrival has already been anticipated," Jon Arryn remarked when they neared the quay. The old falcon had good eyes, Oberynd had to admit, at least for a man of his age. He had spotted the white cloak himself only moments before.

She had sent Arthur Dayne, Oberynd saw when he descended the plank, and he couldn't help but scowl. The man was a Dornishman. They used to play together in the Water Gardens when they were children. He should have protected Elia, who should have been Queen of the Seven Kingdoms, not a little northern harlot. And did he have to take the girl to Dorne, of all places?

"My prince, my Lord Hand," Arthur greeted them, in his typical calm manner that used to enrage Oberynd so a lifetime ago and that hadn't lost its charm. "Her Grace the Queen Regent has sent me to accompany you to the Red Keep."

"Couldn't she have sent someone else?" The woman was really determined to make him hate her even more, it seemed.

"My condolences on your loss, my prince," Arthur told him, as if he hadn't just been insulted. "I regret the death of Princess Elia deeply. And that of her children even more."

"And yet you weren't here to protect them," Oberynd said.

“No, I was not,” Arthur Dayne admitted. “I was where my Prince ordered me to be.”

With his new mistress and his new babe, whom the thrice cursed son of a donkey had loved more than the wife and children he already had, who had meant more to Oberyne than almost everyone in the world. And now they were dead, all three of them. It was little consolation that the new Queen Regent had sent the skulls of their murderers to Dorne along with the bones of his beloved sister, while her children lay beneath the Sept of Baelor, as Targaryens should.

“I think we can continue this conversation on the way to the Keep, yes?” Jon Arryn asked, fixing both of them with a look that implied that they were no more than little boys in his eyes. Unruly little boys, who had had an argument where all the dockhands and sailors and spies could hear them. Oberyne exchanged a glance with Arthur, then inclined his head.

“Very well. After all, I cannot wait to meet my betrothed,” he drawled, practically spitting out the last word.



Oberyne was led through the Red Keep towards the royal quarters, past bare walls and scorched tiles. It was clear that the servants were hard at work fixing what the sack of King’s Landing had done, just as the citizens of the capital were tearing down ruined buildings in the city below. It had been bad, he could see that now, and he wondered what terrors his sister and her children had suffered in their last moments. Little Aegon would have been too small to realize what was happening, but Rhaenys had been three. She would have been terrified.

The Queen Regent awaited them in her solar. She was bent over her desk – one that had once belonged to her late *husband*, Oberyne remembered – and frowned at a roll of parchment when she looked up. She didn’t smile, but simply acknowledged them with a nod, then shoved the parchment to the side the same way Oberyne’s eleven-year-old daughter did when she grew frustrated during her lessons. She was barely more than a child, he thought, yet again cursing his brother for talking him into this. She wasn’t even that pretty, with her long face and girlish figure.

“Prince Oberyne,” Lyanna Targaryen said coolly. “I wished to speak with you.”

“Why?” he asked, genuinely curious. She seemed almost as enthusiastic about

the match as he was. It would be best if they just got the whole affair over with and ignored each other for the rest of their lives, he thought. Oberynd had met plenty of couples who would benefit from such an arrangement. He'd just never considered that it might one day be an option for him; he had never seriously entertained the thought that he would marry at all.

"Well, we should talk about our impending marriage, should we not? And come to an agreement?"

Oberynd shrugged.

"I will leave you to it then, Your Grace, my lord," Jon Arryn said. "I have no doubt I have paperwork to catch up on and I would like to see my wife."

Then he shuffled out of the door, leaving Oberynd alone with his wife-to-be and her white-cloaked shadow that pretended not to be in the room. For a moment, he felt the almost unbearable urge to punch Arthur Dayne in his perfect face.

"Would you take a walk with me?" she inquired.

Oberynd offered her his arm out of reflex, and Queen Lyanna took it before proceeding to lead him out of her solar and deeper into the Red Keep, towards Maegor's Holdfast. Oberynd suspected where she was taking him, and bristled at the idea.

"I do not wish to marry you any more than you wish to marry me, Prince Oberynd, but I have to. For peace, and for my son. I only wish us not to be enemies, and for that, I think we need to be honest with each other," she told him.

Oberynd dared a look at her overly honest, childish face. He wanted to sulk, but sulking had stopped suiting him when his voice changed. "Like you were honest with my sister when you ran away with her husband?" he questioned sharply, hoping to catch her on the wrong foot.

But Queen Lyanna didn't take offense. She didn't seem chastised either. "I do not know for certain what happened between my husband and his other wife, but Rhaegar told me that he had talked with Elia about his desire to take a second wife, and that they shared friendship but not love. What I can tell you, however, is that I never wanted to usurp your sister's place. She would have been a better queen than I am, and I wish it were her son sitting on the Iron Throne, not mine."

"And yet you didn't hesitate to place him there the first chance you got," Oberynd countered. They had heard stories in Dorne, stories of a young lady providing proof of her marriage to Prince Rhaegar while flanked by her guardsmen and her brother, thwarting Tywin Lannister's plans to make his

daughter a queen once and for all. Well, the Old Lion got his son back in exchange, even if it cost him a couple of minor bannermen.

“Of course I didn’t,” Lyanna snorted. “Had I not put my son on the throne, he would be dead. Even now there are people in this very keep who would rather sit Prince Viserys on the throne, a full blooded Targaryen who wasn’t born of a questionable marriage. But even if I let them take the throne from my son, he would still be a threat to them as long as he lived. Which wouldn’t be long.”

She stopped for a moment. They had reached the doors of what had been Rhaenys’ nursery, which was now guarded by Oswell Whent, and Oberyn could hear the happy gurgling of an infant inside.

“You have children yourself, don’t you? You must understand why I would do anything to protect him. And you surely wouldn’t condone anybody hurting him. Not after what happened to his brother and sister.”

Oberyn felt his throat close up. She was right, damn her. He understood her position perfectly. And while he hated her for what had happened to his sister, he didn’t bear the little boy any ill will. After a moment’s hesitation, he reached for the door.

Inside the nursery, he saw a young woman play with an infant that was trying his very best to crawl towards a little red ball embroidered with dragons. In the corner lounged a black cat that eyed the ball curiously. The woman was Dornish, by her looks, and Oberyn wondered how she had ended up in this cursed place.

“Prince Oberyn, may I introduce you to His Grace, King Aemon, First of his Name,” Lyanna Stark proclaimed, the pride in her son saturating every word.

The boy looked nothing like his father, Oberyn thought. Nothing at all like the handsome Silver Prince with his purple eyes and pale hair. In fact, he looked exactly like his mother, which was not exactly an unfortunate look, but not a fortunate one either. He looked like a Stark. It was even more apparent when Lyanna took the boy from his nurse and placed him on her lap, where he happily tried to grab her necklace.

“I must admit I’m curious,” he mused. “Why did you name him Aemon? An admirer of the Dragonknight?”

Lyanna merely raised an eyebrow. “He needed a Targaryen name. And Rhaegar was so sure he would be a girl, so he never even talked to me about names for a boy. I first thought about naming him after his father, or Jaehaerys, after two good kings. But I didn’t want him to be even more burdened by his father’s legacy

growing up, or the legacy of other kings before him. I thought a lot about other names on the way back here. Daemon, Aegor, Aelor, Aerion ... they all have their own history. In the end, I thought Aemon might suit him best.”

Well, she could certainly have done worse, Oberyn would agree to that. “I still do not wish to be your husband.”

Lyanna smiled at that. “And I do not wish to be your wife. But I dare say we will make do with what the gods give us.”

“I have my daughters to think of as well.” Angry Obara, elegant Nymeria, polite Tyene and curious Sarella ... he wouldn’t live without them, and Lyanna Targaryen would have to accept that.

“Then bring them here. I think Aemon would love to have sisters to play with in a few years.”

“And do you expect me to be true to you, to not stray from your bed?” he asked. He doubted he could manage that. He’d always had healthy appetites and there was no woman in the world who could sate them all.

The Queen Regent just cocked her head. “Do you expect the same of me?”

Against his better judgment, Oberyn felt himself grin. Maybe this would not be as terrible as he thought. At least she was sensible, for a woman born north of Dorne, and she had bite. He was about to make a very lewd suggestion in hopes of shocking her at least somewhat when shouting reached their ears. Then the angry yells were joined by a shuffling of boots and soon a man burst into the nursery, red-faced and angry and obviously drunk.

Robert Baratheon had changed little since the tourney at Harrenhal. He was still as tall and broad and handsome and temperamental as he’d been then. He hadn’t coped well with losing a hand against Oberyn when they were playing cards. And he evidently wasn’t prepared to lose against him again.

“You!” the Lord of Storm’s End roared. “Face me like a man, you thieving, pox-faced bastard, and I’ll show you what I did to the last man who dared to touch the woman I love!”

Then he drew his sword in the most dramatic fashion, while Oberyn simply watched in astonishment. Arthur Dayne had no such hesitation. He drew Dawn in one elegant movement and stepped between Oberyn and Lord Baratheon.

“Drop the sword,” he growled. For once, Arthur truly seemed as dangerous as he was, and Oberyn remembered that he had perhaps loved Rhaegar even more than his own family.

“Robert, please,” begged Lord Arryn, who had joined them visibly out of breath. “There is no need for this.”

“There is every need! That snake thinks he can marry my Lyanna!”

“*Your* Lyanna?” Oberyndrawled. “I think you’ll find that currently she is nobody’s.”

Baratheon’s face darkened even further as he once again turned his full attention towards Oberynd. He was big, of course, and strong. And probably deceptively fast, Oberyndjudged. He would have to be careful with this one, and stay out of his reach as much as possible. One wrong move and he’d end up with his chest caved in like Rhaegar. And yet he felt elated at the thought of dueling this imbecile who had reportedly smiled when he saw the bodies of Oberynd’s niece and nephew.

“And I don’t need any of you to fight my battles for me either,” Lyanna snapped, reminding them that she was still in the room, with her baffled son staring at the sudden commotion. She was furious.

When Robert Baratheon saw the little boy, Oberynd saw revulsion flicker over his face, and yet he couldn’t take his eyes off the woman he loved. “Lyanna,” he began, but the Queen Regent didn’t let him finish.

“I told you many times already that I will not marry you, Robert. And I also explained to you the many reasons why I didn’t want to marry you in the first place, even before I had my son to think about. Now stop this nonsense at once.”

Robert blinked, then gestured into Oberynd’s direction with his sword. “You told me why you wouldn’t marry me, said I whored too much and drank too much. But he’s even worse, haven’t you heard of his reputation? If you can marry him, why can’t you marry me? I love you, Lyanna.”

Now this was getting pathetic, Oberynd thought, and clearly so did Arthur, since he lowered Dawn a bit, though he didn’t sheath it.

“Prince Oberynd is a libertine, that much is known,” Lyanna admitted. “And I have no illusions that he has feelings for me, or that he will ever change his ways. I don’t expect him to. But he will grant me the support of Dorne, and he doesn’t expect me to be any more true to him than he is to me. But that is only part of the reason why I can marry him and not you.” The Queen Regent tightened her grip on her son before continuing. “You look at my son as if he is the source of all evil, Robert. I could never marry a man who cannot at least accept my Aemon.”

It was as if all the blustering strength went out of Robert Baratheon’s body at

once. He put his sword back where it belonged and cast one last, longing glance at Lyanna. But neither Oberyn nor anyone else in the room missed the way his eyes changed when he looked at Aemon. There was utter hatred there, for a child who stared back with guileless gray eyes. It chilled Oberyn to the bone that a man could hate an innocent babe that much.

The atmosphere in the room relaxed somewhat after Jon Arryn led his former ward back towards the main keep and the door closed behind them. Arthur finally sheathed Dawn, and Queen Regent Lyanna took a drawn-out breath.

“He’ll trouble you later,” Oberyn told her.

“Do you think I don’t know that?” she snapped, causing her son to cry. It took her a few moments to calm him down again.

“If he makes another challenge, I will take him up on it.”

“I don’t need you to protect me. I have the Kingsguard for that.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t do it for you. I would do it for me.”

For a moment, they stared at one another. Then Lyanna laughed, and for the first time, Oberyn had an inkling of what Rhaegar had seen in her. She was beautiful in her own unique way, unlike the refined and pampered ladies of most of Westeros. Wild and untamed, like the sands of Dorne. Maybe marriage wouldn’t be such a hardship after all. And if this day was anything to go by, he would most certainly not get bored.

Fin