

Master Case AGAINST Jaime as the Valonqar

Now that I've posted the final stage of The Cloak Soiled Him, my mega-essay on Jaime Lannister's arc, I'm sure some of you are wondering: well, okay, but Jaime's gonna kill Cersei, right? Like, everyone knows Jaime HAS to be the Valonqar.

And this is the part where I say: no, he is not the Valonqar, no, he will not kill Cersei. Why not, you ask?

I submit the following counter-points in response to the popular assumption that Jaime MUST be the one to kill Cersei.

And why is that? I don't think it means the show will handle Cersei's death all that differently from the books. The killer will be the same person in both versions. However, the flashback of Maggy's prophecy completely left out the part about Cersei dying, and they had their reasons for that.

What could those reasons be? For instance, the wording of the prophecy makes sense for information we already have in the books, but with what we have on the show thus far, it would need too much explanation. Like, what exactly does "valonqar" mean? And once we know it's Valyrian for "little brother," is the killer someone we already understand as someone's little brother? What does it take to connect the dots between Maggy talking about the Valonqar, and Cersei's actual circumstances of death?

A friend of mine made a very interesting case, based on this omission, for FrankenGregor, aka Ser Robert Strong, as the Valonqar, and I encourage you all to read it. I'm not really invested in FrankenGregor as Cersei's killer, but I think it's a viable option for discussion.

There is foreshadowing in the text for Cersei playing Mad King, and that could, arguably, be evidence for Jaime as the killer. However, to do that, Jaime would have to be replaying the Mad King scenario with her, this time going from kingslayer to twinslayer. I see evidence of Jaime going through a redux of the Mad King scenario, but not with Cersei. One of the similarities the text has set up between Jaime and Brienne is what I call the Kingslayer Parallel. The show has glossed over this, which is mostly how I predicted that Lady Stoneheart would not be appearing on the show. Short version: Brienne is accused of killing Renly Baratheon, so she also has to live with the Kingslayer stigma, like Jaime, and her predicament with Lady Stoneheart is a very tight parallel to Jaime's situation with the Mad King. Therefore, Jaime's repeat of the Mad King will be in helping Brienne deal with Lady Stoneheart, which is a totally separate issue from Cersei playing Mad Queen.

Now getting back to the show. I wrote the Kingslayer Parallel analysis before we saw Season 6. Now we're just getting into Season 7, and we have seen Cersei play Mad King already. She used a bunch of wildfire to commit mass murder, and Jaime wasn't there to stop her. We saw Jaime come back to King's Landing, and we saw he was not amused with her, but he hasn't killed her. She used the wildfire, and she got away with it. Without getting into leaks, we've already heard enough from Nik and Lena to know the twins are both still alive at the end of Season 7. The show has used up all the narrative space it could have devoted to having Jaime kill Cersei. If Jaime doesn't kill Cersei by the end of Season 7, then he's probably not going to kill her at all. Even if the show ran for another 5 seasons after this, they've already painted the twins into separate corners in which there's no space for Jaime to be a twinslayer. If D&D are writing the show so that it's impossible for Jaime to kill Cersei, that's probably because there will be no part in the series in which Jaime becomes the Valonqar.

Counter-point the second is logistical. With where Jaime is at the close of Dance, him getting back to Cersei is, putting it generously, a logistical challenge. What moves him to go back to King's Landing? Or perhaps Casterly Rock? How does it occur to him to get close enough to Cersei to kill her? And where is Brienne while he's doing this? A popular theory to answer this logistical challenge is that Brienne will die in the Lady Stoneheart confrontation by sacrificing herself in a trial by combat. Thus, Jaime's free to go, so for some reason, he goes back to Cersei, and he strangles her, and then he dies soon after without having contributed anything positive to the survival of humanity.

And this is the part where I say: No. That entire scenario is a 7-layer dip of Not Gonna Happen. There will be no trial by combat. Brienne and Jaime will win the fight with Lady Stoneheart, in whatever form that fight takes, because Kingslayers Band Together. Brienne will not die in Winds of Winter. That would be a terrible way to conclude her arc. The problem is not that the people pushing this sequence of events are stupid. That's not what I'm saying at all; there are a lot of really smart, knowledgeable fans supporting this theory, and if THIS is the best they can come up with to clear the way for Jaime to be a twinslayer, that's because Valonqar Jaime is untenable.

Counter-point the third: emotional.

Honestly, much of the argument in favor of Valonqar Jaime is all about Cersei's POV. It would be so, so, shocking to Cersei if her tall handsome twin were the Little Brother who killed her. Wouldn't that be the most spectacular irony? From Cersei's POV, of course. And also, Cersei says they were born together and so they'll die together, because Twin Magic, so that means Jaime has to kill her and then he'll die soon after. Yeah, here's the thing: that logic makes perfect sense if we assume Jaime's entire significance to the story is as a player in Cersei's arc. It's certainly the way she sees him, but she doesn't need to be proven right.

Jaime's arc is not all about her. Cersei can be wrong, and she frequently is wrong, especially regarding her relationship with her twin. Jaime has a developing romance with Brienne, which has allowed him to drift far away from Cersei, emotionally, morally, and geographically. He is a player in Brienne's arc as much as she's a player in his. Cersei tells herself he would never abandon her for Brienne, but he did exactly that, so, when Cersei thinks she and Jaime must leave the world together, that's not prophetic, that's narcissistic.

Finally, Jaime is so much more important than Cersei's shock at her circumstances of death. He is a more thematically significant character to the series than Cersei. GRRMartin has put way too much care into developing Jaime's character, and in taking him as far away as possible from Cersei, to make him the killer. He doesn't want to kill her, he just wants to get on with his life, and GRRM has written his story so that he can move on and do other things. Even if he throttled Cersei and then went on to do great things and live a long time, his killing Cersei would be a distraction, at best, from his arc. If he killed her and then died pointlessly, it would make a complete shaggy dog story of all the work GRRM has put into him. If you want to ask, well, if Jaime isn't the Valonqar, then who is?, then my answer is, honestly, I don't care all that much. My point is that Jaime's arc is taking him to do much bigger, more important things, and more positive things, than being a twinslayer. Cersei's already taken away so much of his life. She doesn't get any more.