

Ruby + Miranda's Wedding Ceremony FINAL

Structure

1.0 Values

- 1.1 Darkness (Nate)
- 1.2 Hope: Progress Thus Far (Tara, written by Jess)
- 1.3 Light: Vision of the Future (Riva)
- 1.4 Tsuyoku Naritai (Ruby)

2.0 Community (Oliver)

3.0 Partnership

4.0 Declaration

- 4.1 Feelings and admiration expressed
 - 4.1.1 Ruby
 - 4.1.2 Miranda
- 4.2 Exchange of vows. (Ruby and Miranda)
- 4.3 Declaration, exchange of rings.
- 4.4 Embrace

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FULL DAYLIGHT WHILE GUESTS ENTER

START CEREMONY: NO IMAGE PROJECTED, COMPLETE DARKNESS

During the first section of the ceremony, Brienne stands to the side of podium in her seat, sits when not speaking.

Brienne: We are here for a ritual of commitment. Before us, Ruby and Miranda will commit to each other, but they will also commit to their values and to their joint pursuit of them.

For this reason, we will speak of what matters most to Ruby and Miranda. We will speak of the darkness we face, of our triumphs, of hope, of the light humanity might attain, and of our unwavering commitment to becoming stronger.

Pause

Brienne: First, I call upon Nate to speak of the Darkness.

Nate rises from seat and ascends podium, commences speech.

Darkness (Nate)

I don't expect that humanity to survive much longer.

Often, when someone learns this, they say: "Eh, I think that would be all right."

Allow me to make this very clear: it would *not* be "all right."

Imagine a little girl running into the road to save her pet dog. Imagine she succeeds, only to be hit by a car herself. Imagine she lives only long enough to die in pain.

Though you may imagine these things, you cannot *feel* the full tragedy. You can't comprehend the rich inner life of that child. You can't understand her potential; your mind is not itself large enough to contain the sadness of an entire life cut short.

You can only catch a glimpse of what is lost —
— when one single human being dies.

Now tell me again how it would be "all right" if every single human being were to die at once.

Many people, when they picture the end of humankind, pattern match the idea to some romantic tragedy, where humans, with all their hate and all their avarice, had been unworthy of the stars since the very beginning, and deserved their fate. A sad but poignant ending to our tale.

And indeed, there are many parts of human nature that I hope we leave behind before we venture to the heavens. But in our nature is also *everything worth bringing with us*. Beauty and curiosity and love, a capacity for fun and growth and joy: these are our birthright, ours to bring into the barren night above.

Calamities seem more salient when unpacked. It is far harder to kill a hundred people in their sleep, with a knife, than it is to order a nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Your brain can't multiply, you see: it can only look at a hypothetical image of a broken city and decide it's not that bad. It can only conjure an image of a barren planet and say "eh, we had it coming."

But if you unpack the scenario, if you try to comprehend all the lives snuffed out, all the children killed, the final spark of human joy and curiosity extinguished, all our potential squandered...

I promise you that the extermination of humankind would be *horrific*.

And yet, humanity is dying right now, as I say these words.

Every single one of us is marching towards their deaths, and most are already resigned to it. Do you know how often a human dies? About twice per second.

Tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick. Ten deaths. Too fast for an appropriately somber pause. Barely half a second to remember that each was a sapient person, kin, fellow heir to our great birthright and all our vast potential. Barely enough time to acknowledge each one,

nevermind to comprehend who they were, nevermind to mourn. Tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick. Ten more. And some think they can conceive of the worth of this world.

One hundred and fifty thousand humans die per day.

One million humans die per week.

These horrors are *literally incomprehensible*.

And look at the state of those of us who are alive. How many of us are depressed? How many of us are lonely, and struggling to connect with someone, anyone?

The horrors levied against the living sometimes rival death itself. Right now, people are being tortured, abused, and raped. People are being ravaged by disease and dementia through no fault of their own. Every single one of us is aging, we are all condemned to waste away in our own skin, decaying until our minds falter and our bodies give out at last.

Do not get me wrong. If we can be happy, if we can enjoy our fleeting time — then we are sparks of light in this world of darkness. Despite the lovecraftian suffering around us, we are able to make friends and tell stories and laugh and forge lives worth living. The potential for good within us far outweighs the suffering. I have never once regretted, for a moment, that we exist, that we are here to carry the torch of humanity forward into the future.

But make no mistake, we carry that torch through darkness.

Tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick.

Humanity is dying as we speak, and while we may one day have the opportunity to put an end to disease and death, we are far more likely to destroy ourselves than to cheat those ancient reapers.

Read your histories. How well do humans respond to the great challenges; we who tried to build a communist paradise and slaughtered millions, we who tried to build a capitalist paradise and built a blind machine that exploits weaknesses in our minds to increase our consumption? How close to the brink did our species come, when we discovered the secrets of the atom? How long did we teeter on that edge?

We are humanity, and our story is not some fairy tale where the plucky heroes are destined to survive. We are just one species in a cold and uncaring universe, rising up from the bottom; the dumbest possible civilization capable of inventing the technology we possess. We face the future blind and barely able to coordinate.

What, truly, do you think are the odds that an intelligent species selected at random survives long enough to gain the stars? What are the chances that nature never once in their long history presents them with a challenge that is too difficult? For this is not a storybook, and the challenges are not calibrated to our capabilities.

What are the odds that we'll survive every single threat on the horizon?

If we want to make it out of here alive, we have to avoid totalitarian lock-in, civilizational collapse, catastrophic wars, biological terrorism, nanotechnological catastrophes, misaligned intelligence explosions, and all the risks we haven't even noticed yet.

What are the base rates, do you think? How many civilizations ever manage to survive their homeworld and fill their galaxy? What are the odds we can dance the deadly dance with nature, and never miss a single step?

Because I'll tell you this:

When we look up at the night skies, they are *empty*.

And this is not a fairy tail.

And we're likely to lose.

Nate descends from podium.

Brienne: We acknowledge the depth of the darkness, as we must if we're to have any hope of banishing it. But we do have hope! We wouldn't be here otherwise. We've come a long way, and we hope to keep going. I now call upon Tara, on behalf of Jess Whittlestone, to speak of our Triumphs and Hopes.

Tara ascends podium.

IMAGE 1 PROJECTED

Tara commences speech.

Triumph and Hope (Tara)

The world today isn't perfect - far from it. But it's also much, much, better than it used to be. Just as it's impossible for us to really *feel* the full extent of the suffering in the world today, we also can't really *feel* the full extent of the progress humanity has made.

But it's vital that we do, because it's that sense of progress that will give us hope, hope that the future can be better.

Having hope isn't always easy. We look to the past, and we see suffering. We look at the world today, and we also see suffering. It's hard for your brain to tell the difference. 100,000 people dying *feels* roughly as bad as 1,000,000 people dying. But 100,000 deaths is a *lot* less than 1,000,000, even if it doesn't seem it. It's incredible progress.

To really see progress, first we have to look backwards. Imagine what your life would have been like had you been born just 300 years ago - as an average person living in the 1700s. There was no middle class back then, so chances are you'd be poor - very poor. So poor that you stood a real chance of starving. If you were lucky, and managed to keep enough food on the table, you'd still be severely malnourished - enough that you could easily be killed off by any one of the various common diseases of the time. And deadly diseases *were* common: if you were born in 1700 in Europe, by the age of ten you'd have lived through two smallpox epidemics, a measles epidemic, and a famine. Add to this the constant threat of infection - without running water and soap, without antibiotics, a mere cut could easily kill you.

You worked *hard* - not just long hours, but physically gruelling agricultural or industrial work. Not just physically demanding, but also physically dangerous. If you got injured, you'd be on the streets, begging.

As a woman, you'd avoid this physically threatening labor of work, of course - replaced with your own special kind of physically threatening labor. You'd probably be pregnant most of the time you weren't nursing. Infant and child mortality were ridiculously high, so you could expect to lose a *lot* of kids - maybe half or more. Your chances of dying during childbirth would be much, much higher than they are today - add to that the fact that you're giving birth about ten times as often, and childbirth is one of your biggest risks of dying.

You couldn't vote - a privilege reserved only for landowners. You probably couldn't read - less than half the population could. There's no electricity or heating, obviously, so you just have to get used to those cold, winter, nights, and pray that the bad weather doesn't kill your crops - and your family. Your life expectancy is around 35.

Now think about your own life: your warm house, electricity, clean, running water. Your smartphone, internet connection, maybe that holiday you've got booked for a few months' time.

Sure, you have stresses and worries: that you might not achieve what you could, that you don't have time to do all the things you enjoy, that someone you care about could get a rare illness. But you're only able to worry about these things because of a whole host of other worries that *don't* take up your time: you don't have to worry about getting enough food, about getting a small cut, about keeping fifteen children alive.

The progress we've made over the past 300 years is *immense*. And 300 years is *nothing* - an absolutely miniscule amount of time in the hundreds of thousands of years of human history.

We've made insane amounts of progress. Sometimes I look at the world around me, remembering that once humans were hunter gatherers living in the natural environment, vulnerable to predators and extreme weather, and everything looks amazing. How did we get here? How did we manage to create these huge, intricate, buildings, interwoven with technology so complex most of us can't even begin to explain how it all works?

Somehow, life developed on Earth from the most basic elements - and somehow incredibly, we, humans, evolved from that first basic life. We learned to hunt, to make fire, to use tools. We developed writing, allowing us to share and pass on knowledge from generation to generation. We learned to farm, leading to the agricultural revolution, and allowing people to spend their time doing things other than searching for food. Gradually, new, more complex societies were born: cities and states with different classes of people. We learned to create our own fuel from coal, built the steam engine, and began producing goods in factories. We developed more and more advanced methods of transportation, allowing us to explore the world, share ideas, and grow in wealth and power. We learned how to make vaccines, and eradicated deadly killers such as smallpox, saving *100 million lives*. We invented electricity, cars, and human flight. We put a man on the moon. We built computers, and connected them all via the internet. We made these computers small enough that anyone could carry one round in their pocket at all times.

We've made extraordinary progress in understanding the world around us, in learning to control our environment and guard against threats - large and small, in treating and eradicating diseases and saving lives. Every second, people are dying - but every second people are also defying death, death that would have been inevitable just a century ago.

Compared to almost everyone who has ever lived in all of history, your life is *awesome*.

Of course, even today, we're the lucky ones. The average person today is *much* better off than the worst-off person. Millions of people in the world still aren't so lucky - millions still live in poverty, still struggle to get enough food to get by, still die from curable diseases. But we now have the power to help people who suffer today, even those living on the other side of the world, at little cost to ourselves. Incredible advances in transport and technology mean that someone living in the Western world can save a life in developing countries *at the click of a button*. We're

much less violent, much more compassionate, empathetic and altruistic - we have not just the practical ability to help those worse off but also increasing levels of motivation to do so.

We're going to face some serious challenges over the next century, that's for certain - and of course it's possible we won't make it. But we've also got so much progress ahead of us in the next few decades, more progress than we can imagine. The world in 30 years is likely to be pretty unrecognisable to us now. Based on the patterns of the past, if we don't off ourselves, there's a chance it's going to be unrecognisably *better* - that we'll have eradicated the vast majority of suffering, that we'll have a drastically better understanding of our universe and the technology to exert much greater control over it, that we're going to have moved closer towards the light.

One thing I don't doubt is that we're going to put up a hell of a fight. We're going to do everything we can to survive. We're not going to sit back and let this universe engulf us. Around me, in this room, I see so much drive to fight back: to eliminate suffering, to push humanity forwards into a bright and better future, and that drive only seems to be getting stronger. And that, above all, gives me hope.

NO IMAGE PROJECTED. COMPLETE DARKNESS.

Tara descends from podium.

Brienne: We hope to banish the darkness. But our ambition is far greater than that. We intend to create a future glorious beyond imagining. I call upon Riva to speak of the Light we might attain.

Riva ascends podium.

IMAGE 2 PROJECTED

Riva commences speech.

Light (Riva)

The universe is complex and beautiful. To think of the themes we have listened to today, of love, humanity, life and death, should leave us humbled by the histories of all those who have lived before, of all those who will live after us, the vast unimportance of ourselves in the sequence of the eternal everything. Forever impressed by the genuine role of human anonymity, the world doesn't and won't ever really know who we are, merely just one of many dots in the vast space-time spectrum that we should protect. But how many of us daydream about the goal of humanity in the universe? What does it look like?

Sometimes I think about humanity in the same way I regard a painting by Georges Seurat. The use of pointillism- which is the artistic technique of painting a collection of thousands of microdots on the canvas that contrast and compliment each other in a multitude of colours. From up close these dots seem nonsensical, even plain wrong- a blue dot next to a yellow dot that from further away appears *white*. From a distant viewpoint these individual dots combine to make a beautifully intricate scene. An analogy of all the beings in the universe. Each life, idea, love simply a tiny colourful dot, complimenting and contrasting, but from further way these blend to contribute to a bigger picture, a bigger goal.

How big is this overall picture? Well, it's *huge*. The distance of the known universe is 900 billion light years in diameter, where each light year is 5.87 Trillion miles. The full scale is unfathomable to us. And it's old too. 13.75 billion years old. Our human-like ancestors have only inhabited this universe, this exact planet on which we stand, for around 6 million years, a ridiculously short time-slice when compared to the true scale of the context. The fact that we are here, right now, with all the possibilities and options that could have made things turn out very different. How lucky we are to have such an opportunity, to have the agency to shape the planet to a manifestation that represents the human race.

We've come a long way, and *we can go a very long way too*. We could quite literally inherit the universe, to make it ours, not for the sake of possession, but for the sake of *protection*. *For the sake of universal flourishing*. Every human so far has died a martyr for

evolution. What is the end goal for all this creation and loss? We must fight that humanity's purpose was not just about sustenance and survival.

Imagine a future world. Imagine a future world where we are free from our current limitations. Free from biological time. Free from aging and death. Free from disease. Free from such biological fragility. Free from spatial limits. From being constrained to one, albeit beautiful, planet. We spread through the universe, inhabiting and stabilizing planets in the way that our ancestors inhabited Earth's towns, cities and countries. But instead of applying borders like we did previously, we will have transcended our insecurities. Imagine a time where each individual intelligence is respected. Imagine a time where universal flourishing combines with a universal interconnectedness. Imagine a deep consideration and compassion for all life, all matter, ingrained in every individual, every action. Imagine respecting every representation of intelligence as a representation of the entire universe. Much like those pointilist dots. For every love, every idea, every instance, every marriage and every child, perhaps we can fathom that we are already contributing to universal flourishing.

Imagine the full scale of all of history, all 13.75 billion years of the universe. Imagine these truths accessible at any moment. Imagine a time when we could understand everything- all the cells, all the DNA, all the stars, all their frameworks. Imagine being able to *manipulate* them. All the systems that define us, all the contexts in which we reside- our bodies, our minds, our planet, our universe. Imagine everything networked, everything connected. All 10 to the 82 estimated atoms of the universe switched on, transcended into *programmable matter*. Not for the sake of domination, but to ensure that they are the best possible form of themselves, for whatever their purpose may be within this bigger picture. Maybe that's what love is.

Imagine a time *when time is no longer imaginable*. When the dances never need to end, when the lovers never need to die, when entropy no longer dominates. Imagine a world where we could explore with full scope, for as long as we wanted, every idea, every concept, every location. To dance with the stars, to dance with each other, to dance simply for the sake of dancing with no time limits. Imagine a world of radical life *expansion*, accompanying radical life extension. Imagine all the things possible. All the potential art, all the

potential beauty, all the potential creation and ideation. What will life look free from the shackles of time? I doubt we could even imagine it with the right justice.

We live in a world that rests on an assumption that we can fathom what is possible and what is not. Yet history has shown us that the impossible often becomes possible, and the dreams that seem out of our reach become very real. Everything on this earth, every one of humanity's achievements is simply a manifestation of how high we aim. What's the grandest vision that humanity can aspire to? Well, it starts with how big you are willing to dream.

NO IMAGE PROJECTED. COMPLETE DARKNESS.

Riva descends from podium.

Brienne: We have spoken of the horrors that exist, the threats that loom, and the good worth fighting for. We cannot know that we are equal to these challenges, but we won't let that stop us. I call upon Ruby to speak of our determination to Become Stronger.

Ruby ascends podium.

IMAGE 3 PROJECTED

Ruby commences speech.

Tsuyoku Naritai (Ruby)

There is a cry among us, a cry dear to us. “Tsuyoku Naritai” – “I want to become stronger.” Embodied in these few foreign syllables is one of our deepest values and greatest virtues. We say these words because we know that the challenges we face today are great, perhaps too great, perhaps greater than we can handle – today. But that does not matter, because *we want to become stronger*.

Some believe that we were created in the image of a perfect, wise, and just god. We know that we were not. No, we are the product of a blind, uncaring, unfeeling, raw mechanical process. We were hacked together, a disparate assortment of adaptations just good enough to pass our genes onto another generation, without oversight, without foresight, and certainly without benevolence. We became whatever worked – but only whatever worked in a time and place we left long ago.

So when we are faced with the suffering of millions, when we are marching towards our deaths, and when threats to our existence loom on the horizon – we cannot expect to be equal to these trials. There is no magical reason why the universe ought to present us with challenges we are strong enough to overcome. But in this cold and uncaring universe, there is one mercy. One card we hold in our hands – the capacity to grow. *The ability to become stronger*.

[We will run rampant with this ability, for in it is our capacity to do anything.] We will grow until we have the might to banish the darkness, and until we have the power to seize the stars.

Already we have come so far: in wisdom, skill, and kindness. Once we accepted dogma, the stories which were told to us, but then we learnt to argue and to reason towards truth. Later we learnt that even reasoning can easily go astray, so we taught ourselves to look at the world, to let it tell us what was true. After that milestone, we surged ahead with development after development – feeding billions, eradicating age-old diseases, and flying to the heavens and beyond. Once we only cared for those closest to us, our kin and tribesmen, but step by step our empathy spread to our peoples, to our species, and to all sentient life.

And we will not stop, for there is more work to do. We have begun turning our minds on themselves, to see how they work, to discover ways to use them better. We will perfect an Art. We know that it takes humility to care about truth rather than pride, to follow the winds of evidence rather than convenience – and we practice every day. We know that no homunculus sits behind our eyes, but rather a pantheon of agents – and we are learning to unite them in pursuit of our goals, with strategy and cunning. More bridges await, and we will cross all of them.

And as we create concord in our minds, we will learn to work together. We will not let ourselves act in our own immediate, personal interests; no, we will defy the forces of Moloch, and work

jointly for the prosperity of all. No nation will stock arms and construct machines of death out of fear that they will be the only one to abstain; no scientist will withhold their findings of what wasn't the case to get published; no leader will work for popularity alone; and no researcher will disregard the dangers of their work.

When our friends propose plans to improve this world, we might still offer our critical counsel, but we will also pledge our support. We will invent ways to work ourselves to agreement, alignment, and alliance, so that jointly we can strike. Our teams will be hailed as fearsome cells which attain their objectives with ferocious effectiveness. Aye, we will become strong enough to work together.

And we will become stronger *together*, because we are not individuals. Here, beneath this sky, is a community of people dedicated to each other and to universal flourishing. We are united around our values and visions. We will give strength to each other: teach each other, support each other, love each other. Side by side we will grow mighty, and take the rest of humanity with us.

We will become stronger, because what is at stake is too dear and too precious not to. A single person is a whole world; each of us has a mental life too rich for our own vocabulary to convey; each of us is infinitely precious.

Everyone is worth fighting for without reserve. And here, on this Earth, we need fighting for. Thousands of thousands of us are suffering – poverty, hunger, disease, abuse, torture, loneliness, despair. Not one of us is not inching towards our graves. And before long, all of us could be gone irrevocably.

This is not okay. We will not let it be. We will do what it takes, whatever it takes - we will become stronger.

But when the pain is gone, and the danger has passed, we will not be done. To stop as soon as the darkness has gone would be a tragedy not much smaller than doing nothing at all. There are stars to reach, a universe to populate with myriad flourishing minds on myriad flourishing worlds, a connectedness of all things to bring about, eternal dances, endless knowledge, boundless fun and joy and love. All the goodness that ever could be - unfathomable as the vastness of space itself - that too is at stake.

pause

We cannot reach that good . . . yet. Always we add 'yet' to the end of our sentences.

Tsuyoku Naritai.

PLAY SONG 1: THIS BITTER EARTH BY DINAH WASHINGTON AND MAX RICHTER

NO IMAGE PROJECTED. COMPLETE DARKNESS.

Ruby descends from podium.

Brienne: We have given voice to Ruby and Miranda's central values. These are the ideals upon which they will build their life together: universal flourishing and endless growth. But they are not the only ones who share those values.

This ceremony is not held in private. It is held before all of us, a community of purpose, created not by accident of location or genetics, but by the goals and values we share with Ruby and Miranda. We are here to support them in their commitment, to hold them to it, and to join them in it.

I now call upon Oliver to speak of this community.

Oliver ascends podium.

IMAGE 4 PROJECTED

Oliver commences speech.

Community (Oliver)

In the last half hour I observed something beautiful. And it wasn't only the the wonderful images of the night sky. It wasn't only the epic and beautiful speeches that we just listened to. It was something, that many of you might not have even noticed. But for me it was the most impressive thing this evening.

When Nate talked about the darkness above us. How we are threatened to be crushed under the weight of a universe that does not care about us. I saw genuine fear and worry in all of you.

When Tara read Jess' piece about the progress of the human race. About the people that lived, the people that died, the beauty of this culture, this life, this city and... all of this. About how not all hope is lost, and we are still marching on. I saw warmth and caring in all of you.

And when Riva painted a picture of the future. A future without suffering, without limitations, and without the shackles of time. I saw so many of us looking up at this artificial sky, some clenching our fists, longing for the stars, knowing that what separates us from them, is just a few hundred years. When Riva spoke, I saw joy, and hope, and a dedication to fight for our dreams, in all of you.

And ultimately. When Ruby talked about how **we**, as a community, need to get stronger. How we are not yet set up for the tasks ahead of us. How we will overcome every challenge that lies ahead of us, or die trying. When he spoke, I saw that never ending urge to improve in all of you, and with it, all of the memories in which you all have helped me grow myself.

And this blew me away. I cannot imagine another group of people who would have reacted the same way. Because you all care, you all fight, and you are all here for a reason.

This is what makes this community so special. And this is why Ruby and Miranda are here, among you people, under this sky, today.

If we want to win, we need to make sure that we make use of all the tools that are available to us. We are social apes, and there is little as powerful as our social environment in changing us. If the people around us are strong, we will become stronger. If the people around us build something that helps all of us, then united we will grow faster than we ever could alone. This is why we need to fight this war, not as a loose pack of lone wolves, but as a community.

How rare is it, that I can change my mind, without having to be shunned for my inconsistency?

How rare is it, that I can talk about the things that I really care about, without being judged as too ambitious, or disconnected from the world?

How rare is it, that I can sing out loud, and dance, and laugh and play, without the need of keeping up a mask for the people around me?

And how rare is it, that I can be accepted with all of my flaws, and tolerated with all of my idiosyncrasies, without having to justify myself?

The answer is: rare. Even here. But it is a decent bit more common than in any other place I've ever been.

I will not pretend that we are perfect. Because we are not. People in our midst feel excluded every day. When someone shows me how I am wrong, I will myself often lash out at them. I am a burden to everyone around me, on many days. We all make mistakes, and we are all far from perfect.

But we are trying. As small monkeys on a pale blue dot, we are trying. And if there is one place, and one group on this planet that I can imagine eventually making all of these rare things abundant, it is this one.

Ruby and Miranda have come here today, because they want to embark on a journey with us, and it will be a hell of journey.

Because, when I am thinking about leaving Earth to colonize the stars, you are the people I would like to take with me.

Because, when we are not perfect, we try to get better.

When we are wrong, we try to notice as quickly as possible.

When we disagree, we acknowledge that at most, one of us is right. And probably neither.

And whenever I have the feeling that one of you is crazy, I will make damn sure to be twice as sceptical of myself, than I am of you. Because you all just tend to be too god damn right. (That goes especially for you, Scott).

This ceremony is as much a celebration of Ruby and Miranda, as it is one for all of us. They are not forging this bond alone. The promise that they are making to each other today, is also a promise to us. A promise to never stop fighting, a promise to never stop growing, and a promise to march on with care, warmth, and an urge to find the truth.

And I will happily take that promise with them.

NO IMAGE PROJECTED. COMPLETE DARKNESS.

Oliver descends from podium.

Brienne:

Ruby and Miranda have been part of this community and shared these values with us for a long time. The purpose of this ceremony is to declare an even stronger bond between the two of them: a partnership. I call upon Miranda to remind us what partnership means.

Miranda ascends podium.

IMAGE 5 PROJECTED

Miranda commences speech.

Partnership (Miranda)

What is a marriage? Fundamentally, when two people choose to join forces together, to support and care for each other. In fact, a marriage is a special case of a whole class of situations where humans choose to band together. When two people do this, we call it a partnership. When many people do, we call it a community. We are a social species, a species that forms pair-bonds and alliances and teams. In some sense, this is what we are *for*. For many people, perhaps most people, the bonds they form with others fill a deep need—for security, comfort, safety, or many other things. The types of unions we know of are myriad. Families. Friendships. But a partnership of two, based on love, might be one of the purest examples—two people held together not by shared genes, not by convenience, not by politics, but by choice.

Why is partnership so valuable? Two people might have the same values; they might care about working hard, or being kind to others, or growing stronger and learning constantly. They might share the same vision of an ideal world. They might have spent years staring at the world's darkness, the parts that were furthest from their ideals, banging their head against the unsolved problems, and chosen goals—and those might be the same goals. If two people are trying to accomplish the same things with their lives, it makes sense to do it together.

Why does it make sense to do it together? There are benefits more concrete and direct than the emotional needs met. Skills and personalities compliment each other. In a team, whether of two people or of a dozen, division of labor and each person's comparative advantage can split seemingly insurmountable problems into workable pieces. Two people can each love their work, and be grateful to the other, willing to do the "nasty parts." Two people can support each other, each being a light for the other during their hardest and most frightening times. They can hold one another accountable, nudging each other back onto the hard projects, the ones that are most tempting to avoid. They can make each other's lives simpler and easier, leaving more time for the important things. In the past, humans hunted together, because they couldn't afford not to—the game was too large and dangerous for a single hunter to take down. In the past, humans raised children together, in a world too harsh to raise a child alone. In the present... A nurse and a doctor, their roles written and defined and learned in professional programs, fight together for a patient's life. Scientists work together to study the world and write papers about it. A CEO works with an assistant as competent and skilled as he is, but in different areas.

And there are other benefits of partnership. Not just the immediate, object-level ability to do more, faster, together, but the bonus to *growth*. Someone who works alone can commit to long-term self-improvement, of course—can set personal goals, can push their limits, can resolve to turn their flaws into strengths. But how much easier does this become, and how much more becomes possible, when two people do this together? When a friend can see someone's strengths and flaws more clearly than they can see themselves? Two people can help change each other's minds, and realize that their assumptions are in fact assumptions and not simply facts about the world. To know someone else's mind as well as your own, to take joy in their progress and learning, to push each other forwards towards new heights... This is what is possible.

This is why we join together. Because humans are pair-bonding animals, and to be loved and cared for is one of our deepest needs. Because we see the same values reflected in each other, and share the same goals and desires and vision for the future. Because together we will accomplish more. Because together,

we can help one another to become stronger. We can work together joyfully. This is what a partnership is worth.

NO IMAGE PROJECTED. COMPLETE DARKNESS.

Miranda descends from podium.

Brienne:

Any alliance can strengthen us. These two are not merely be allies. They've chosen each other for something much closer than that, and they've chosen carefully.

I invite the betrothed to express, as best they can through the inadequate medium of human speech, what each member of this partnership means to the other.

Ruby and Miranda ascend the podium, face each other.

IMAGE 6 PROJECTED

Brienne: Ruby, you may speak.

Ruby commences admiration speech.

Admiration: Ruby to Miranda (Ruby)

There is a name I call Miranda. It is not 'honey', 'cutie-pie' or anything of the sort. I call her 'Braveheart'. Yes, this name is used elsewhere for someone rather different from Miranda and for rather different reasons. That does not matter. To me, this name captures who she is.

We speak here of all that must be done, of the bad things which must be stopped and the heights towards which we can strive. These aims are natural to me. From youth, I was told that the world was created for me, that I was God's chosen, my purpose to transform the world according to his will. I always knew that I was important and responsible. This didn't bother me; my pride demanded that I be significant, and while my responsibilities weighed on me, there was no question that I would take them.

Miranda is different. She does not seek greatness, grandeur, or importance. She does not need to be a hero. For a long time it was her plan to live in one town, have a few kids, be a nurse for forty years. That simple life would satisfy almost all of her. And she would tell you that in another world, it is the life she would like to live. She will say that it has been hard, all those around her telling her that she cannot live out her dream, that being a nurse isn't enough, that she could be more, should be more, *must* be more.

The instinct might be to turn back, walk away from those pushing her. Go, and stay in her small town, be the best nurse she could be, for she doesn't need to be a hero. But Miranda didn't do that. While it is counter to so much of her, she did not ignore the call that she was needed. So much needs to be done and there are too few doing.

She is brave and answers the call that she did not ask for. She doesn't do this meekly, half-heartedly, or resentfully. Rather, she has thrown herself into her mission. She gives it her all, she outperforms those who take it for granted they should be at the centre of the story.

Time and again, Miranda pushes up against a limit, a sensitive point here or there, but she never backs away. She tells me she wants to talk about things especially when they hit a nerve, a weakness she might overcome. She hits something scary or unpleasant, withdraws, goes and mulls about it for a day, and then throws herself at it with full force.

A trite example, but so emblematic: we were shopping for wedding shoes and after finding what we were looking for, Miranda realised that she actually has a deep-seated dislike of heels. They clash with her self-image, and her desire to be always physically agile. I suggested flexibility around such things, since a corporate career might have occasions which demand certain dress. She wasn't happy about this. But when I came home the next day, I found her practicing running in heels in the hallway, because dammit, she's not going to be limited. Time and time again.

Talk is cheap, and we have talked a lot today. But Miranda does. She cares about doing, about the world, about virtue more than she cares for herself. Who else delights in gruelling 16 hour shifts where glancing away for too long could result in an actual, immediate death? Who else never says no to a request for help? Almost incapable of putting herself first?

Miranda doesn't speak in grand terms about the widespread suffering on this planet the way I and others have today. There is a reason for this. We can do so, because we are not truly feeling the pain of the people we are talking about - it is somehow abstract, distant, even though we know it is there and motivates us. Not so for Miranda, the suffering of other people *is real*. Another person, right here and now in pain, strikes her hard. To dwell too deeply on the plight of all humanity would be unbearable - and so she doesn't talk, she acts.

I hope to be worthy to act alongside you, Braveheart.

After Ruby has finished.

Brienne: Miranda, you may speak.

Miranda commences admiration speech.

Admiration: Miranda to Ruby (Miranda)

The world is broken, and that's terrifying.

I knew this from the beginning. I grew up knowing that I lived in a fundamentally neutral universe that didn't know or care about my existence...and thinking that if I was particularly careful, if I learned enough and worked hard enough, I'd probably be able to survive in it. I knew I was lucky in a lot of ways. Lucky in the genetic lottery, lucky to live in a first world country, lucky to have my friends and family. Lucky enough that maybe I could do more than survive; maybe I could help some other people survive, too, the ones who were worse off than me. I would learn a useful skill, work hard, carve out a small safe place in the chaos. I just thought I was being realistic.

And my assessment was realistic, in some ways. The world is broken in more ways than I could wrap my head around at twelve years old. People are suffering, and the future is frightening.

It never occurred to me that someone might look at all of this, and see what I saw, and instead of hunkering down to survive the storm, they might stand up and say "well, this isn't okay, I guess we'll have to fix all of it."

In all of my planning for the future, I think I'd thought that I would be alone. Not literally alone—there would be people I could live with, work with, care for. But there's a kind of partnership that goes much deeper than that. A partnership of beliefs, of values, of goals. You can stand by someone, protect them even as they protect you, as you fight together for the same vision of a better world.

With that, more feels possible. More than just survival. More than carving out a place for myself and my friends, and making that better. With shared resources, shared skills, you can do something bigger.

Ruby and I want the same things. We look at suffering in the world, and want it to stop. And even once that's fixed, once things are basically okay, that's not enough. We want there to be more happiness, and beauty, and people growing and thriving and building things together. We can agree on that. But he's the one who can stare into the abyss and have the audacity to think that we can fix it. I was the one who, deep down, just wanted to be quietly useful.

When you take two people who care about the same things, and can agree on the same goals, but who are seeking out different and complimentary roles...well, that's the foundation of a really good team. A partnership. Partnerships are a thing because they *work*—when people are aligned, coordinated, in sync with each other's work and goals, the massive complexity of the world and all its chaos starts to look a little more tractable.

Ruby and I each have our strengths, and our corresponding weaknesses. With his unbridled belief in his own ability comes the weight of responsibility; with my desire to quietly help others, comes a fear of being important. These are things that hold us back, and we can help each other smooth them out, providing security for each other in these specific ways. Being different, it's easier to see each other's flaws. If you care about becoming stronger and continuing to grow — as both of us do — this is pretty important.

My dad once said to me, “the thing that makes a scientist is finding an important enough problem.” For people other than scientists, you could also say: the right project, the right team, the right partner. The world has no shortage of problems that need solving. In that chaos, I was looking for a place to stand. Someone I could reach out a hand to, and say, which problem are you solving? And can I be useful?

I’ve found that person.

Ruby and Miranda remain facing each other.

PLAY SONG 2: BUILDING HEAVEN BY JESS PENNER

IMAGE 7 PROJECTED

Brienne:

We've spoken of the darkness, and of our hope to overcome it. We've spoken of the light that will come when we do, and of our commitment to become stronger. We've spoken of the community that acts together toward this goal, of the purpose of a new partnership within it, and of why those partners have chosen each other.

I now ask them to proclaim their bond, crystallizing their promises before us, beneath the stars.

Ruby and Miranda recite their vows in unison.

Vows (Ruby and Miranda)

I vow to love you, always and forever. To make your joy my joy, your sorrow my sorrow. To keep your flourishing foremost among my concerns. To stand by you in vigor and frailty, in abundance and famine. To accept you when you are strong and when you are weak, when you prevail and when you falter. To care for you, especially when you forget to care for yourself.

I vow to be proud of you, to respect you, and to always remind you how dear you are to me. To listen to you and to understand you; to give you my attention when you request it, and silence when you request that. To share my thoughts with you and to cultivate our closeness.

I vow to become worthy of your love and dedication. To never ask of you more than you are able, but also never less. To help you grow, so that you can help me, so that I can help you, ad infinitum.

I vow always to be faithful to our values, visions, and goals.

I vow to be your spouse, your companion, your closest friend.

Brienne:

You've chosen rings of meteorite as symbols of your dedication to fulfill your promises to each other, and to fulfill the promise of the night sky. Exchange these symbols now.

*Miranda gives Ruby ring. (Kenzi gives it to her).
Ruby gives Miranda ring (Brayden gives it to him).*

Brienne:

I would like all of you here to repeat after me.

Ruben Michael Bloom and Miranda Irene Dixon-Luinenburg,

pause

we now pronounce you husband and wife.

pause

Brienne: You may embrace.

PLAY SONG 3: FUTURE - REAL AND TRUE BY MILEY CYRUS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJBHdKBOdcw>

La fin!