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### I Know All What I Do

by [anniebibananie](http://archiveofourown.org/users/anniebibananie)

#### Summary

Two years after the plague wipes out the majority of the population, leaving the survivors to fight for life, Sansa Stark reunites with Jon Snow in a Walmart parking lot. Then they keep doing what they've always done: survive. This time, though, it's together.

#### Notes

**TRIGGER WARNING: MENTIONS OF RAPE AND ABUSE**

I have never written Jon and Sansa before, so I really hope you guys like it! I would appreciate any feedback if you have the time <3 I also might write a companion piece to this on Arya, Gendry, Bran's side of the journey, so if that would interest you just let me know.

See the end of the work for more [notes](http://archiveofourown.org/works/11352903).
Sansa liked to think in the two or so years since the world has come to a soft end, she had gotten pretty good at maneuvering through it. The small hand gun stuffed in her jeans was precariously low on bullets, and she still would never get the hang of it, but the threat of it alone was usually enough to scare any would-be attackers away anyhow.

People saw her long, red hair and tiny waist and thought she was easy prey. If only they knew how much darkness she had come in contact with. If only they knew how much hate sat in the inside of her heart. They wouldn’t touch her with a ten foot pole, if they knew.

Despite all the precautions Sansa stuck to religiously, always maintaining her strict set of rules, there were certain things she could not avoid. Like, say, a pothole. Or two, for that fact.

She had been without a car for a week after the wheel came right off on the highway and there had been nothing around to fix it—she wasn’t sure she would have been able to fix it anyway, but she certainly would have tried. Twenty minutes later it wasn’t only her car in peril, but her ankle, too. Sansa was officially done with holes.

So, she was hungry and tired and limping when she met Jon Snow in a Walmart parking lot. Her hand was on her side, grazing over the gun sitting below her shirt, when the car pulled to a stop.
It was a black SUV with tinted glass. She couldn’t see whoever was inside, but she could see the shimmering reflection of herself. Ratty, dirt-filled hair and a purple v-neck shirt that was becoming more and more threadbare by the day. That had been why she was at Walmart in the first place. That and an Ace Bandage.

The door opened, and she pulled the gun out but didn’t raise it. It was nice to have the security, but she didn’t want to start a war. And, if she could avoid it, she really didn’t want to test her accuracy.

“I have a gun,” she called, just to be safe. “I could really use a ride, if…” her voice trailed off into a whisper. If her gun hadn’t been her lifeline for the last two years, she would have dropped it to the ground in shock.

Jon Snow stood in front of her—older, dirtier, different but still him. Sansa was suddenly 16 again, watching him and Robb go off to college. Except now he wasn’t smiling, and he filled out the red plaid shirt he was wearing. Though his hair had always been on the long side, it was longer than she remembered as it hung to his shoulders.

“Sansa?” he asked. He took a step closer but couldn’t seem to move any further.

For her, all it took was the release of that sound and she was hobbling forward. This was the closest thing to family she had seen in years. Even before the plague hit everyone, because she had been particularly stupid that year and decided she would rather stay at school with Margaery than come home for Thanksgiving. Besides for her dad, she hadn’t seen anyone in an agonizingly long time.

If she could have known then what she knew now, she would have done anything possible to be there. She would have hugged her dad so tight he couldn’t have breathed and never let go of her mother’s hand and stayed up whispering with Arya all night.

Either Jon was still shocked or unused to being touched, probably a mixture of the two, because he locked up when she threw her arms around his neck. It didn’t matter to her that they had never touched like this before the end, because she hadn’t seen another person in months. Another person she cared about in years.

He still smelled the same when she pushed her face into the crook of his neck and his arms finally looped around her. He tightened and pulled her in. Sansa thought he might have just been scared this wasn’t real because she felt the same way.

“I was just trying to find a new sleeping bag,” he said when he pulled back. His eyes flashed to her swollen ankle before reaching back up to her face. “We should get something for that.”

She nodded, letting him help her brace her weight as they walked into Walmart. They took a lap of the store to get all their supplies, and Jon only looked mildly shocked when she picked up the bowie knife with interest and slipped it through a pant loop.

The world felt brand new when they left—her in a fresh blue v-neck, a denim shirt hanging open over it and him carrying bandages and a new sleeping bag. It felt closest to any world either of them had ever known.

As far as Sansa was concerned, there wasn’t much point in her asking where they were going. She didn’t care. Anywhere was fine with her as long as she could keep moving. It was a comfort enough to be in a car and know she didn’t have to worry about trusting the person in the driver’s seat; it had been a privilege she hadn’t ever even contemplated until she felt the knot of tension in her chest release.
The people she had had to trust to survive… none of them had been good. Certainly none of them had been Jon Snow.

She leaned her head up against the window, watching the landscape blur past. Jon had found an ice pack that only had to be cracked to get cold, and it sat on her ankle as she propped it up on the dashboard. It spoke to how messed up her life had been that this felt luxurious beyond belief.

“Robb?” she finally asked after a half hour of chewing the inside of her lips. She hadn’t really wanted to know, but she knew the answer pretty plainly. If he wasn’t in the seat she occupied, it probably wasn’t in any seat at all.

He took his eyes off of the road and they were heavy. Jon Snow’s eyes had always held some sort of weight to them—even as a teenager Sansa had seen it from behind her sneers and eye rolls. She wished she could go back and tell her younger self that she could have actually liked the things she liked, that not everything was something to be looked down on. You’re not better than them, she would say. You love them.

“The plague took him out,” he said. “He was gone the first day.”

The plague that left the world so chaotic had come in the span of a week. There was no rhyme or reason to it; either you were infected or you weren’t. Which, essentially, meant either you died or you survived. Sansa had been immune, but Margaery had not. Jeyne had not. Neither was her mother or Rickon. The phone lines had gone down pretty quickly, and too many fates went unknown.

Sansa nodded and watched the open highway in front of them. It felt like a distant memory to think about the days when this would have been stop still traffic and she would have groaned and swiped through her phone apps.

“Probably better,” she said. “Lucky, maybe.” She could feel his eyes on the side of her face, and she assumed it was probably shock.

“You really think that?” he asked.

She met his gaze. Jon Snow was a survivor, she realized. Sometimes she wished she wasn’t, too, so that she could end all of this. The darkness inside of her felt exceptionally heavy.

“I think there are fates worse than death,” she said. “I think I’m glad he didn’t have to face any of them.”

Jon cleared his throat and ripped his eyes away from her. “Do you know about any of the rest of your family?”

“The plague took out mom and Rickon. Dad’s dead.” Sansa didn’t want to know how he looked, she didn’t bother turning. Her fingers fiddled in her lap. “I haven’t seen Arya or Bran, I…” she didn’t know how to finish the thought. “What have you been doing?” she asked instead.

He shrugged. “Looking.”

“For?”

“Anything. Anyone.”

Sansa paused and chewed her lip. She wondered if he was glad she was the one he found.
They didn’t talk for a long while after that. Jon drove until it was dark, and when he pulled into a motel off of the highway she followed his lead. When he came back with a key she hobbled from the car into the room, setting herself down on the bed.

He handed her a water bottle to use to brush her teeth, and her eyes almost bubbled with tears. When she walked into the small bathroom, she searched in the cupboard and found a hand towel and a miniscule bar of soap. She sniffed her armpits and frowned at herself in the mirror.

There was enough to swipe her armpits clean and brush her teeth. The rest she saved for the morning. When she walked back out into the bedroom, Jon was already under the blankets of his bed. Hers had a pile of pillows for her ankle, and she gave him a small smile. Once she was situated, he turned his lantern off.

In the darkness she searched for something to say, anything to say. She wasn’t as good at talking as she used to be, though, and she wasn’t sure what to say to Jon anyways. They hadn’t been close in her childhood. He was a passing figure tied to Robb’s hip, and she would have told you he was basically part of the Stark family, but she had never considered him part of hers necessarily.

Yet, it was such a relief to hear the soft puffs of his breath in the bed a few feet away. Her heart ached as she thought about how much Arya would have loved to see him. Bran, too. Most nights when she let herself think about them briefly before sleep, it was easier to imagine them dead.

The alternative was to imagine them alone or hurt or worse. It was to picture Arya with a knife in her pocket and having to put her boxing classes to use. Bran, with his thick-rimmed glasses and smart smile was made for academia, not a world without it. She would do anything to see them alive again, but she would also do anything to save them from the things she had seen.

Maybe they were together, she hoped. They had only been a day or so apart when everything happened. One of them could have made it to the other, they could have gotten time to call and make a plan. It was a childish hope, but for once she let herself hold it in her heart. If she could find Jon Snow at the end of the world, they might still be out there. Living. Breathing. Surviving.

The next morning they headed out early, and though Sansa had never been much of a morning person, she didn’t complain as she packed up her things and got back into his car. As he pulled out from the parking spot, she handed him a granola bar from her own pack. He stared, unsure of it for a moment before grabbing it and smiling.

“Thank you,” he said. It broke the silence.

“What about your mom?” she asked, and even though she regretted having to bring the mood back to something dark, she also couldn’t help but feel bad that it took her that long to ask.

He shook his head no, and she nodded.

“Have you tried to find them?” he asked. “Arya or Bran?”

Sansa shifted in her seat. Her hair was hanging messily around her, and she braided it to the side. “At first that was what dad and I were doing—”

“I thought you said the plague…” he trailed off, pieces clicking together. Dead, she had said. That was all.

“Dad was immune,” she said. “I got home in time to reach him, and we took the truck to go find Arya and Bran. Hopefully you two, if we could manage it.”
This memory too felt far enough away to make it hard to grasp onto. She had still been clean then, even with all the chaos of the world. The car was packed with essentials, and even though Catelyn and Rickon had passed, they at least still had each other. There was something to be said for that.

“It was still pretty crazy then, you remember.” She thought about the riots on the streets and the overflowing hospitals. The looted stores and loss of information—no phones, no internet, no TV. “He was shot only about a month in.”

How had she survived and he hadn’t? She still couldn’t believe it most days.

“Fuck,” he said, darting a look over. “Robb was always saying you might be the toughest out of you all. I think he may have been right.”

Her eyebrows scrunched together, and she shifted in her seat to turn toward him. “He said that?” Out of all of their siblings, Robb and Sansa had always gotten on the best. It was because of their shared practicality and often sarcastic humor—it was easy for them to click, to be on the same page. Even knowing that, though, it was hard for her to imagine him complimenting her like that.

Jon nodded. “He hated that boyfriend of yours, the pale one. He was always saying how much better you could do. What was his name again?”

“Joffrey,” she said. It made her feel like a Sansa of another time to talk about him. “We broke up about a month or two before everything. I guess I never got time to tell Robb that…” She swallowed the pang down. “He was an asshole. I can’t believe I dated him for so long. He was always telling me what I should or shouldn’t wear, stupid controlling stuff like that. What a waste of time.”

A lot of her life felt like a waste of time when she thought about it, so, usually, she just didn’t let herself think about it.

“I dated this girl Ygritte,” he said with a small chuckle, “and she only wanted casual. Told me it and everything. It was my fault for getting feelings, trying to complicate it. Things like that seemed so big before. Now, I don’t even care that she broke my heart. I would just be happy to know she was alive.”

“She was the redhead, right?” He nodded, and she continued. “I remember her. When I came to that Halloween party you two had that one year before I transferred. She came as Artemis.”

“I forgot about that,” he said. There was a joy present on his face at the thought of that, that there were pieces from before that could still be put into place. “She was the closest I’ve ever been to love.”

It was a random thought, but she understood what he was saying. Those things you thought you needed to live and then all you were doing was surviving and they seemed so luxurious. Love and friendship and family. She missed it all, but she knew now that surviving just meant still breathing. If she could wake up and go to sleep and do it all over again, she could keep going, and even that was a gift of sorts.

Sansa shook her head. “I’ve never been close at all. I didn’t think I had time for it. Never dated boys I really thought would last because there was so many more important things to do and there would always be time for it later.” She shrugged. “Maybe that’s better, though. You don’t have to miss things you never had.”

“True,” he said, “but you also don’t have anything to hope for when maybe we get a sense of
normalcy back.”

“Is that what keeps you going? A hope for love?” she asked, genuinely curious. Neither of them had probably spoken this much in the last two years combined, and certainly they had never talked this much in one go when they knew younger versions of each other.

He shrugged. “I would just be happy to have a cold beer.”

A laugh ripped itself out of her throat before she even had time to contemplate it. His look of shock slipping into a smile, something grateful, something like a trophy. She hadn’t realized how much she missed anything close to that—laughing, joy, talking about nothing of import. It was nice. Probably, nicer than she deserved.

A week later when he stopped for gas, she snuck into the gas station and searched through the back cooler. Everything was pretty looted, but she found what she was looking for.

“Here. Hope,” she said as she set it on the console between them.

His lips quirked up at the corner as he eyed the six pack, shaking his head in a fond way. For a moment he cradled them like they were precious, and she thought she might have been right. Hope.

All things considered, Sansa was pretty surprised it took weeks before she woke Jon up with one of her nightmares. For the most part, she was pretty good at keeping herself quiet. She would bound up, breathing heavily and darting her eyes around to make sure the shadows of her dreams hadn’t followed her to reality and bite her lip hard to keep it all in. It usually didn’t take that long to fall back asleep, and if she couldn’t, that was fine, too. She knew now how much less sleep she needed to survive than she had thought.

But some nightmares were worse than others. It was Ramsay Bolton’s hands, his leer, his tight hold on her wrist and the pitiful cry for help she released that swirled in her head. Beating against her like a relentless sea. The darkness felt like a growing bubble that filled her up too full to breathe, and when she woke from the nightmare she stumbled up with a cry.

Her hand hit against the bedside table in her scramble to sit up, and she couldn’t help the sob that wracked her body. She tightened her fists painfully and sucked the sound back in, trying to keep herself contained. Jon pushed himself up just as her nails dug into her palms.

“Sansa?” he asked blearily. She could only see the outline of him in the darkness, like a TV on static. His outline shifted up. “Are you alright?”

“Fine,” she croaked out. She wrapped her arms around herself tighter, trying to keep the ache contained. “Go back to sleep, Jon.”

Sansa thought he might for a minute when no response came, but then she heard the sound of his sheets pulling back and the handful of footsteps it took to come over to her space. When he sat on the edge, she shifted to welcome him up.

“Do you want to talk about it?” he asked in a whisper, like he knew how fragile she was and how difficult it was for her.

She shook her head no, and for a moment he looked like he was going to move away. Now that he was this close, and she could see the sleep at the corner of his eyes and the small scar above his lip, she couldn’t think about him leaving. He shifted, and she grabbed onto his arm almost desperately.
He brought his feet up onto the bed and then slipped underneath the covers. Unsure, he laid like his body was there for the taking if she needed it. When he spread his arm out wide to the side, she fit herself into the bend of him.

She thought it might be hard to touch Jon after the nightmares that traumatized her, but he was an open book. All he did was offer, never push. He gave what you needed and never asked for more, never pushed anything on you that you couldn’t handle. She was so unbelievably grateful for it.

Tighter, she moved closer and wrapped one of her arms over his chest. If he had a problem with the contact, he didn’t say anything about it. His hand rubbed circles where it fell by her back, and she breathed in his scent again. Still the same, after everything.

In the morning she said thank you sheepishly, and he shuffled up to his feet like it was nothing. Like offering himself like that was nothing. To him, maybe it was, she contemplated. Maybe he didn’t feel like he had nothing left to give.

“We’re here.”

Up until that point, Sansa hadn’t realized there was any set destination in mind. He had just drove, and she hadn’t questioned it. She was just grateful to brush her teeth and have an air-conditioned car, and, most importantly, Jon in the driver seat.

Sansa didn’t know the dirt road they had been driving down for at least ten minutes was a driveway until they pulled up to the cabin. It was a big, rustic place with two wings. Another car sat in front, and she looked around to see if there was any sign of other people. When she stepped back onto hard earth, she looked up to see the front door opening.

“Jon!”

She tried to recognize the man who called Jon’s name like that of a friend, but she couldn’t put the pieces together. A small woman appeared through the doorway from behind him, coming up to give Jon a hug as well. Sansa realized how awkward it probably was that she was still standing twenty feet away from them just watching.

Her backpack propped up onto her back, she walked with her slight limp to the doorway. Soon, her ankle would be healed entirely. Or at least she hoped. It was hard to walk through stores and feel safe when she knew her ability to run was greatly hindered.

“Who’s this?” the woman asked, coming up to give Sansa a hug.

Sansa tried not to freeze up, and even though the woman was nice, she was glad when she let go. “Sansa Stark,” she said, trying to sound pleasant.

The man’s eyes widened to a comical degree. “You’re Robb’s little sister?” he asked in a mixture of shock and awe.

She nodded, and he pulled her into a warm hug. “Your brother was one of the best men I ever knew. I’m so happy you and Jon found each other,” he said. He pulled back, and Sansa noticed that there was a tear leaking. Crying from genuine happiness, she realized. She wasn’t sure she had seen that in years. “I’m Sam. And this is Gilly.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” she said.

Jon put a hand on her lower back, helping to guide her in as they followed Sam and Gilly. The
house was even more well furnished than she would have expected. It was decorated like a cabin used for vacations—less like home, more like a destination—but Sansa still found it remarkable. Clean furniture and lights and it smelled like the plug-ins Catelyn used to buy to make the house smell like the woods Ned and her had grown up in.

When she came to the back of the house and stood in front of the big glass window, her jaw dropped. “A garden,” she said. It was laced with awe, and she couldn’t help the beam that took over her lips. “Can I go see it?”

“Of course,” Sam said.

She dropped her bag and exited through the back. There was a porch and a stairway that took her back to the ground, and when she reached the expanse of the garden she fell to her knees in the fresh dirt. There were tomatoes and carrots, potatoes and lettuce, and when she looked over to the corner there was even a spot labelled for pumpkins. Tears leaked from her eyes and she pressed her hands into the dirt, feeling the warmth.

She hadn’t realized how cold she had been, until she suddenly felt warm.

“Gilly tries, but she’s not that great at gardening,” Sam said.

She hadn’t realized he had followed her, but she pushed up a little.

“We could use a gardener if you want to stay.”

Even though her hands were filled with dirt, she wiped the tears away from her face. When she turned, she watched Jon talk to Gilly up on the porch. They laughed, and her heart sung. Sam watched her patiently, smiling nervously down at her.

She nodded. “I’d really like that.”

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Jon stayed in his own room a little down the hall from her the first night, but it didn’t take long for her to realize how quiet it was without his soft breaths. It felt too empty, and after an hour of tossing and turning she slipped socks onto her feet and padded down the hall.

Her hand hovered on the door knob for a long while, wondering whether it was better to knock or walk right in. She pressed her ear to the door, but it sounded quiet past the wood. With a deep breath, she pushed the door open slowly.

“Sansa?” he asked, pushing up on an elbow. His voice still sounded awake, and she breathed a sigh of relief that she hadn’t woken him up.

“I couldn’t sleep.”

He didn’t say anything, just pushed to the opposite side of the bed and flung the blankets open as an invitation. When she slipped in between the sheets, she twisted her body to look at him. In the soft moonlight she could see the new lines of him, the scars she didn’t remember being there in adolescence. She almost reached out to touch them, but she kept her hand tightly clasped in the place where it was pulled into her chest.

“I’m not sure I was a good person before.” Her voice was a whisper—the moment too light, the darkness too quiet, the thought too dangerous for more than that.

Jon’s brow furrowed. “What makes you say that?”
She shrugged, clearing her throat and shifting further into herself. It was one of those thoughts she had let have too much space in her head since the plague. There were just so many things she would change if she could go back, and she knew it was useless to dwell on things she could not possibly change, but she also didn’t have much else to do. Thinking was pretty much the only pastime she had. Even when she could manage stretches of nothingness, they never lasted anywhere near long enough.

“I was horrible to you,” she said. “To everyone, but you probably worst.”

He scoffed. “Sansa, teasing and a few playground remarks don’t make you a horrible person.”

“I was awful,” she said again. “I wish I could go back, tell myself what an idiot I was for wanting my life to speed up.”

“How could you know?” Jon shifted, and the moonlight slanted more fervently across his face. Sansa could see the way his eyes lit up, passionate and fiery. The fact that she had done that made her stomach turn unfamiliarly.

“I wish I could change everything.” The tone was wistful. “Maybe if I had been a better person…”

_The world would have been kinder_, she thought. That was the darkest thought, sitting below the belly of rot that had been multiplying inside of her for too long. The darkness, the horrors, the nightmares… maybe they were all just a karmic retribution. If she had been someone different before the end, maybe she could have had a smoother time. She might have deserved more.

He shook his head and some of his dark curls fell into his face. Sansa couldn’t stop her hand from reaching out and pushing them back. Touching him a little seemed to break away her reservations, and instead of pulling her hand straight back, she was trailing it down the scar on his face before resting it along his jaw. Finally, she brought it back to herself.

“I wouldn’t change you,” he said. It was said so certain Sansa could feel the back of her throat go dry.

Her mouth opened and closed. She wanted to tell him that she didn’t deserve him, because despite all he had said she was certain she didn’t. Maybe she was being harsh on herself before, but she still knew that Jon Snow deserved goodness that no longer sat inside of her. He was the sort of person kindness sat within, as easy as breathing. Sansa was the sort who had had to learn it, and it was a sloppy skill in her hands.

She wanted to tell him that he had practically saved her. Physically, yes, but she was starting to see how much more than that it was. The loneliness and darkness had been spilling over her, taking more and more parts of her away, and she hadn’t even realized. Not until he appeared and suddenly he had begun to fill her back up.

Despite it all, the everything she wanted to say, her mouth stayed shut. She didn’t want to ruin the moment, and nothing she felt would be able to be communicated anywhere near enough. Instead, she scooted in closer until her head burrowed into his chest and she scooted lower on the bed to slate her knees below his own.

When his chin rested on the top of her head, she finally felt safe enough to close her eyes.

They didn't talk much about it, the fact that they shared a bedroom and a bed and, sometimes, the sort of intimate conversations you can only have in the dark. There’s something freeing to Sansa about not having to worry about the expression her face made when she talked.
It was relaxing to live somewhere with a generator and a garden. With two other people whose attitudes were untouched by the hardships of the worlds as they flung light, breezy conversations and kindness at Sansa like they were lifelong friends. Her body was clean, and she got to eat hot food.

Jon seemed lighter, too. Especially, when they were lying next to each other at night and she watched some of the wrinkles and creases melt away. It was easier to remember the Jon of her youth, then. The Jon who was a little brooding, a little shy, but always the one to laugh hardest at a good joke. Nobody could throw one-liners back and forth like Robb and him—matching each other with their sharp jokes and dry release.

Sansa loved it there. Which just made it harder that she couldn’t stay.

“I think we need to find them,” Sansa said as her and Jon weeded the garden.

He was in a gray henley, hair tied back in a bun. Even the thick, pastel-colored gardening gloves he was wearing didn’t seem to hinder his masculinity. He sighed. “Arya and Bran?”

She nodded.

“It’s been two years,” he said. “Why now?”

“I’ve never stopped,” she said. “I was… delayed a few times over, and I’ve had a few injuries, setbacks. When I was traveling alone and moving slow, it didn’t seem like there was much point in me searching. Even if I found them, they’d be better off without me slowing them down.”

Sansa could tell Jon was opening his mouth to argue, and she raised an eyebrow in his direction to make him snap his mouth shut. She continued. “I’m with you now, though, and knowing there’s somewhere as safe as here, well, it makes one hopeful, don’t you think? We could start building up a society of some sort. There could be a future.”

She still wasn’t sure she deserved to be part of it, but she would be damned if she didn’t do everything in her power to make the people in her life she knew who were lose out on that chance. She needed to see Arya and Bran. She needed to try to find them and hold them and let them know how much she loved them. How much she thought they deserved.

He nodded, and the smile that sat on her lips was worth more than any diamond jewelry she had ever owned.

“We can repack the SUV and head out tomorrow or the next day,” he said. “You know you’re not going anywhere without me.”

Sansa looked down to pull out a particularly gnarly weed, but mostly to hide her smile. She bit her lip, but it burst right through.

A week later they were back on the road. This time toward the West coast, where Arya and Bran had both been for college before the plague. It was a vain hope for it to be so easy, but Sansa couldn’t deny a part of her hoped for that.

They were in another motel, and this time when Sansa woke from her nightmare Jon’s puffs of sleep stayed even. She shuffled out from underneath his arm, threw on a sweatshirt, and exited the room to walk to the picnic table she had seen when they had pulled in.
Her breaths were still ragged. It had been a particularly nasty one with vivid detail. Even if she could forget the things that had happened awake, she would never let herself forget entirely, she realized. A wind rushed past, blowing her hair, and she felt an undeniable weight of dread.

Something clicked to her right, and she was about to twist when she felt the metal against the side of her head. Her muscles froze.

“Hasn’t anyone ever told you not to go out alone at night?” Sansa didn’t recognize the voice, though she didn’t know why she would. It was cruel and calculating. She cursed herself for not being more aware of her surroundings, but she couldn’t help the flashes of Ramsey still in her brain or her father’s blood leaking across concrete. She had needed to remember she was awake and remind herself what was dream and what was reality. “I want your car.”

Sansa tried not to wince. She couldn’t give away the car. The gun wobbled against her head, and she tried to think if she had ever learned something to do in this scenario. Her gun was still sitting on the bedside table, but she had slipped the bowie knife into the thigh holster Gilly had given her as a parting gift. All she had to do was get her hand on it and stab *something*. Just long enough to get him off his guard.

“Please,” she said, holding up her right hand in hopes of distracting him. Her left moved slowly into her sweatpants, inch by inch. She could do this. She could be the hero of this story. *Survive, survive, survive* chanted in her head, but instead of her own voice it was Jon’s gravel. “Don’t kill me. I have things you want.”

“That,” the voice came closer, the breath against her neck clammy and uncomfortable, “may be true, sweetheart.” His hand came up to rub against her waist, and Sansa had to bite down on her tongue to keep the gag at bay.

“Sansa!” Jon’s voice was enough to give Sansa the moment she needed, and as the man to her side shifted to look, she shifted to stab. The bowie knife sliced into his chest as she slapped the gun from his hands.

His eyes widened in surprise, and he reached out to her throat and clasped tight. Her leg kicked out, and she pulled the knife out before slicing back into him again. Before she had to think about doing it a third time, Jon was by her side and he shot a bullet straight into his head.

Killing another human, no matter how terrible they were, was something impossible to get used to. How hard must it be for Jon? She wondered. It was tough for her and she wasn’t even that good of a person, but noble Jon? It must tear him apart.

“Sansa, are you alright?” he asked in a rush of breath. His hands came up to the sides of her face, clasping them as he searched into her eyes. “Did he touch you? I swear, I’ll…” There was no threat left to give to a dead man.

“No worse than someone else hasn’t already touched me,” she said, but her voice cracked a little. Jon’s face looked horrified. Guilt bloomed in her for even saying it.

“No,” he said, shaking his head. It almost sounded like he might cry. “Why wasn’t I with you. Sansa, my god.” He clasped his eyes tight, and when he opened them again to look at her they were wet. “I’m never going to let anyone touch you like that ever again. I swear on my life.”

“Jon,” she said in a sigh. She was so tired, and blood was seeping into her keds, and she didn’t recognize her own life anymore. Maybe even worse, she wasn’t sure she recognized herself in it.
She was battered and broken. Robb may have called her strong, but all she felt was weak.

His eyes looked away from her face to finally survey her and the scene. Blood was splattered on her and, though she wasn’t crying, tears had leaked from her eyes. “Let’s clean you up,” he said. “We can try to get some sleep before heading out.”

Sansa nodded and let herself be guided back to the room. He brought out some reserve water they had, and even though she knew she shouldn’t use it on her body, she couldn’t stand the feeling of blood. Of another human being on her skin. Jon left her alone in the bathroom, and she used the now bloodied shirt dipped in water to wipe it as clean as possible. Her sweatpants were salvageable. Her shoes were not.

Finally, she stood barren in the dark bathroom with the smell of death around her. There was only a sliver of light coming through a half window above the shower, and in it she could see just the upper curve of her breasts and the delicate line of her collarbone.

She hadn’t thought to bring any of her clothes in the bathroom, but Jon had left his shirt from earlier hanging over the bar of the shower and after a quick sniff to make sure it was at least passably clean, she slipped it over her head. Jon wasn’t any taller than her, but he was certainly broader. If it was still daylight, it might not have hung long enough to be decent, but in the darkness of the night after a terrifying moment, she figured it passed fine.

How much could Jon see? Sansa couldn’t help wondering what she looked like as he propped himself up to scoot over, throw the blanket back. At this point, he had seen her worse. He saw her in her worst, truth be told, and yet he still found someone he wanted to keep close. Someone he wanted to save.

Her throat felt tight again. His hands didn’t reach out to grab her in, and Sansa didn’t know how to feel about that. She was sure he was just trying to be cautious and not scare her away. Now that he knew the broad strokes of the horrors that had happened to her, he was probably scared. Maybe disgusted.

“You don’t scare me,” she said. “You aren’t him.”

His eyes snapped shut again, and Sansa wasn’t sure if he was trying to erase the images in his mind or he was just torturing himself. “When…” he trailed off as he looked at her again, reaching a tentative hand out toward her.

Sansa thought he might have been going to cup her cheek, but she intercepted it and grasped his hand instead. Their fingers interlaced, and she kept it between them in her eyeline.

“It was during the Winter of last year,” she said. “I was driving a motorcycle for a long time, but when it came to Winter I was trying to find a car. I got stuck with something unreliable and then ended up stranded on the side of a major highway. This guy stopped to pick me up, Ramsay Bolton.”

Sansa shivered just remembering the look of him. From the moment she met him, there had been something off. Every one of his movements had felt like it was being filtered through a thought process. Completely inorganic. When he smiled or laughed, it was just him doing what he thought a normal person would do.

But she had been desperate. It was his car or freezing to death. All she had to do was go for a day or two with him, and then she could find another car and get the hell away. The gun on her hip gave her a false sense of security—she had thought she was the kind of girl that truly horrific things
couldn’t happen to, or at the very least only a few. She didn’t think there would be so many.

“When I tried to leave, he locked the room and grabbed my wrists…” She swallowed thickly. “I’m sure I don’t have to say it.”

Jon shook his head no, and when he opened up his arm Sansa didn’t waste any time coming into his chest. She unlaced their fingers and wrapped her arms around his middle, bringing him as close as she could.

“Thank you for saving me,” she said into his shirt.

“Thank you for the same.” The words rumbled through his chest.

Sansa didn’t ask. She didn’t really have to to know what he meant. She understood. It was something she had learned about Jon over so long spent with him, now. At their base, they were similar people. Maybe even the same. Sansa felt more broken, more tattered, but even that was just an assumption.

Even if there was nothing else to thank the end of the world for, she knew she could at least thank it for that. For helping her find him.

Jon’s fingers tapped against the steering wheel incessantly. “Where do I get off again?”

The map crinkled in Sansa’s hands. She twisted it, bringing it closer. “Next exit. I remember there being a lot of signs, you should be able to follow them.”

It had been probably three years since Sansa had come to Bravos U to help drop Arya off and walk around. Arya had been independent even then, kicking them all off of the campus as soon as possible. Since then, Sansa had only seen her during major holidays, just a handful of times. A year later Bran had gone off to college and then all the Starks had been scattered.

When Sansa tried to think about the last time they were all together, it felt like a million years ago. Now half of them were dead, and Sansa couldn’t even find the rest of them. She had found Jon, or maybe he found her, she thought. That was at least something.

They got to campus when the sun was still high in the sky, but by the time it was dark again they hadn’t found anything. Not even a trace. They’d gone through her dorm room, but Sansa could barely tell she had once lived there. The old comforter was the same one Sansa had given her, and there were a few impractical pieces hanging in the closet, but that was it. No pictures on the wall. No notes.

Sansa took a deep breath after grabbing her duffel from the car. The odds of finding Arya right off the bat had been minimal, she knew that, but part of her had thought they would at least find something. A semblance of a clue.

What would Arya and Bran look like now? She knew it couldn’t be that far from the last time she saw them, but years could change a lot. The images were too heavy swirling in her head. All she wanted was to make them cease for a minute, to leave her alone.

It had been easier to stay in the college then to drive off to a motel, and by the time Sansa had grabbed her things, Jon had already pushed the two small twin beds together in the room adjacent to Arya’s. She liked that it was just assumption now, that they would share a bed.

Jon stood up straight upon her arrival. He looked tired, she noticed. Darkness smudged underneath
his eyes, the creases thicker than normal, and his shoulders were slumped. Her eyes scanned over
him, stopping on his lips. Had they always been this plush?

“Are you alright?” he asked.

The silence sat heavy for a moment, the room feeling thick with something, and then Sansa
couldn’t deal with the weight of everything anymore. Make everything cease, she thought again.
She surged forward and grabbed onto the lapels of his flannel shirt. There was only a moment to
see the look of shock on his face before she crashed her lips down on his.

Her momentum was strong enough to push him back against the desk, something clattering to the
floor. His stubble was harsh against her skin, but she found she liked it. His lips moved in tandem
with her own, hungrily. Jon grabbed onto her hips and twirled her around to bring the desk behind
her back.

A moan erupted from her throat as she brought her arms around his neck, and he hoisted her up. He
moved in between her legs, and she clawed at his shirt to bring him flush against herself. Having
him this near was intoxicating, and all she wanted was more, more, more. His teeth clipped her
bottom lip, and when she arched into him he groaned.

“Sansa,” he said in between breaths as she kissed down his neck. His head dipped back as she
sucked his pulse point, a groan freely released.

The sound of it made her pause for a second, arousal swirling in her gut. Even the moment of pause
was too much, and she dug her hands into his hair to pull his lips back to hers. He grabbed onto her
thighs, pulling her up, and she wrapped them around his torso. As they fell onto the bed, it struck
her how odd her younger self would find this. Her and Jon Snow. About to have sex.

Her hands clamored at his shirt, begging to feel his skin. Once her palms splayed over his
abdomen, she pushed up to grind against him. It made him kiss harder, yanking her to a more
upward position so he could pull the shirt over her head in turn.

His head bowed down and kissed the sensitive flesh above her breast, trailing down until he pushed
the cup of her bra back and he took her nipple into his mouth. Sansa’s eyes snapped open.

“Jon,” she panted.

His hands stilled at his name, and his brow furrowed. “Sansa, wait,” he said.

But Sansa didn’t want to wait. With his shirt on the floor and his chest heaving up and down in
ragged breaths, her groin pooled with heat. She was already so wet, and he’d barely started
touching her. When she reached forward again, he tilted his body away from her.

“We can’t do this right now.”

Her heart sunk. It was because he remembered how broken she was, right? Suddenly, she felt too
naked and vulnerable on this bed. She’d been so stupid to think she could ever deserve someone
like Jon Snow.

“You don’t want me?” she said. She wished she had been smart enough to clasp her mouth shut,
but it seemed that she welcomed the pain the answer would bring. Maybe, in the end, she did
deserve to hurt.

“Sansa,” he said as he looked down to his crotch where his jeans were obviously tight, “we both
know that’s not true. If we do this now though, it’s just going to be about how nothing went right
today. It’s an act of desperation, I don’t… I want this to mean something.”

It did mean something, she wanted to say. I want you, but more than just sex. Everything, she thought. But she was still reeling in the embarrassment of being turned down and the fright of saying any of that aloud. Those feelings were far too dangerous to have in a time like this. People she loved died or got hurt. Jon was too good to get sucked into her chaos.

Sansa flopped on her back and stared at the speckled white ceiling. Shifting, Jon laid down beside her. After a breath, she turned to her side to stare at him. After months of being together, Sansa realized in that moment she had never actually seen him shirtless. Her eyes trailed down, and a puff of breath released as she eyed the angry, red scars she found there.

“Wha—” Her eyes flashed back up to his face.

He looked guarded, but he nodded and tried to place a semblance of a smile on his face. It fell flat. “You’re not the only one with tragedy.” His shoulders rose into a shrug. “You never would have known me when my dad was around. He wasn’t a nice guy.”

The room felt heavy with so many emotions, so much shared tragedy. Sansa hated the way he seemed to try to claw into himself. She’d felt embarrassed because she thought he might not want her, that she wasn’t worth his time, but now she saw something in him that felt too familiar. What if he saw himself the same? They really were too similar, hating parts of themselves for things they couldn’t control.

Pushing herself up, she sat on her knees for a moment and bent forward toward his stomach. His lips puffed with a breath when she kissed the first scar, and she took her time moving to the next. Every scar she kissed, ran a finger over—all in the hopes he would see how much she cared about every part of him, even the parts he thought were rotten. When she was done, she slipped into his side and rested her chin on his shoulder.

“Beautiful,” she whispered.

Jon kissed her forehead, lingering for a beat. She thought she might have seen a tear on his cheek, but by the time she took a second look, it was already gone.

They saw the signs for the waterfall attraction a day later as they made their way to Bran’s school. It seemed natural enough to stop—they needed to wash their clothes, collect some extra water in case of desperation, and, unofficially, Sansa and Jon could use the bit of fun it might provide.

The signs took them down a dirt road plastered with strange advertisements speaking of a time before. Toothpaste, women’s razors, a sports bar. Then, finally, the waterfall appeared. It was bigger than Sansa had anticipated it to be, and the pool at the base of the fall was beautifully blue.

As soon as the car stopped, it seemed a lightness took over them. All the grief and horrors they had been suffocating under washed away. Sansa giggled, and when she looked back at Jon he gave her a look of something she wasn’t sure how to read. Almost like awe, almost like love.

She stripped off her shirt and pants, kicking her shoes off, and then she jumped right in off the small ledge to dip into the waters. It was cold, but she had been expecting that. Fall was upon them, and soon Winter would be, too. But for now, the sharp bite of the water was bearable, if not a relief.

“It’s kinda cold,” Jon said a second later as he joined. He went under for a second, pushing his hair back upon return.
Sansa splashed him. “Don’t be a baby.”

He paused before surging forward, splashing her back harder. Sansa kicked herself up higher, putting her palms on his broad shoulders and pushing him under. His arms wrapped around her waist, twisting her around to throw her a little bit away.

When she came to the surface she laughed, head thrown back. It was loud and boisterous, filling the cavern around her. A second later, Jon was laughing too. It almost felt like it was from a different time, a different place. Sansa watched him laugh through her own chuckles, tears leaking from her eyes at the force of it, and she almost felt normal. She almost felt whole.

“What if we can’t find them?” Jon asked as he scrubbed his shirt. It was said casual enough, but Sansa could see the thick line between his eyebrows. The clench of his jaw.

Her mouth hung open before snapping shut. She had been doing everything in her power not to think about that.

“I need to find them,” she said. “I need to know. I’ve lived too long not knowing.”

He nodded as he scanned over her face. When his eyes went back to the weathered navy shirt in front of him, he cleared his throat. “Then we’ll find them.”

She nodded back.

The day after they arrived at Bran’s school, Sansa could feel that hope spurring in her chest again. Jon slipped his gun into his pants before they exited the car, and Sansa made sure her knife and gun was in place before following.

The main areas were empty, not surprisingly. Sansa hadn’t even come to drop Bran off at school, so she couldn’t remember which dorm was his. One time she had sent him a package, but that was the only time she could remember knowing it. She wracked her brain, but it came up blank.

As they walked through a building with classrooms, they heard a sound from further down the hall. Jon and Sansa shared a look, and he took a step forward. His gun sat heavy in his hand, and Sansa pulled her own out. She wished the hallway was lighter so she could see the end of it better.

Two figures appeared with their hands up in a sign of peace.

“We aren’t here to hurt anyone,” the man said.

The girl took a few steps forward, bringing herself more into visibility. Her hair was dark and curly, reaching just above her shoulder. After a beat, he joined her. They looked remarkably similar, she noted, they must be related.

“Who are you?” Sansa asked.

The girl eyed her then, and suddenly a look of something unsure crossed her features. She moved forward, and Jon took a step in front of Sansa.

“Do I know you?” the girl asked, her eyes narrowed as if that would clear up the picture in front of her.

Sansa shook her head, mouth pursed. “I don’t… Did you go to school here?”
The two nodded, and the girl seemed to spark with some excitement. “Yes.”

“Meera,” the boy warned, but Meera seemed undeterred.

“Did you?” she asked.

Sansa shook her head again. “No, but my brother. Bran? Did you know him?”

“Sansa,” Meera released in a sigh. “You’re his sister! My brother, Jojen, and I were friends of Bran’s. Come in,” she said, waving the two on and disappearing past the wall with her brother.

Jon reached a hand out to pause Sansa. “Are you sure we should trust them?”

“They know Bran’s name,” she said. “That’s the closest I’ve been to my siblings in years. We have to talk to them.”

Swallowing, Jon released his hold and followed.

The room they stepped into must have been an old classroom, but now it had mattresses on the ground and was stocked with supplies. Meera clearly had something in mind she was searching for, and she rifled through a box vigorously before pulling out a stack of something.

“Here,” she said as she scattered them over a table. Finally, she came up victorious. “Proof.”

Sansa grabbed the photograph, and she saw the girl hadn’t been lying. The two of them stood dressed in athletic wear, hiking up a mountain. Her brother looked just the way she remembered him. She could feel Jon behind her, and she shifted to let him see the picture more fully.

“Do you know where he went?” Sansa asked.

Meera shook her head. “I never got to say goodbye. I’m not sure.”

Sansa deflated, but this was at least something.

“We could show you to his room, though,” she said.

Hope flared again.

There wasn’t much to be found in Bran’s room, much like Arya’s. Meera and Jojen left the two of them alone after a few minutes, and Sansa appreciated it. Maybe there was more to be found, if she just kept looking.

Jon scoured through his closet while Sansa sat down at his desk. There wasn’t anything still sitting out on the top of it like she knew there would have been. Bran was always in books, searching for more information. What would he be doing now in a world where he couldn’t just learn? He was probably so useful, she decided, with all that knowledge underneath his belt.

“Nothing in the closet,” he said.

She took a deep breath and opened the drawer. There was a note sitting on top of it, and she grabbed at it greedily. “I think this is something,” she said, and Jon clamored over.

It was an address in Canada. Maybe it was nothing, she couldn’t really be sure. She tried to think of why it would be in his drawer. It seemed familiar, but she couldn’t connect the dots. It was on the tip of her tongue.
“Didn’t your Uncle Benjen live in Alberta, Canada?” Jon asked.

“Holy shit,” she said. Her legs pushed up and she was standing, swirling around to grab onto Jon. “He does. There’s a cabin up there. That must be where they went, it would be perfect.”

“I think I went up one year with you, didn’t I?” he asked. “It was very hidden, right on a lake.”

Sansa nodded furiously, the energy coursing through her. This was it. This was the clue she had been hopping for all along. When she reached up to kiss Jon hungrily, he didn’t question it or push her back. He laughed into her mouth, and she couldn’t stop the smile in return. The smile was so wide it almost made it difficult to kiss at all.

“You kiss me in moments of emotion,” he said between kisses.

Sansa giggled as she pushed his shirt to the side and kissed his collarbone. “I don’t kiss you just because of that, you know.”

He stilled, grasping lightly onto the sides of her face. One of his hands pushed away a lock of her hair, and she leaned into all of his touch. “Do I?” he asked.

She bit her lower lip, looking at him up through her eyelashes. “I hope so.” She popped up onto her toes and pecked his lips. “You saved me, and you gave me hope.”

His mouth rushed forward again, and Sansa felt like he was breathing life into her. Every movement, every touch, it was like he wanted her to know what that meant to him. What she meant to him.

“You give me so much hope,” he said between desperate kisses.

Sansa sighed into him, and this time when she said his name, he just kept going. The two falling into the bed. Clothes strewn, moans elicited, happiness. So rare, she thought. So beautiful.

“Are you sure you don’t want to come with?” Sansa asked as she pulled back from the hug.

Meera shook her head no. “We can’t.” She paused, biting her lip for a moment. “Just… tell him I miss him?”

“Good luck,” Jojen said with a clap on Jon’s back.

Sansa rested her eyes on Meera for a moment longer. Was there something there she could understand? Love maybe? She wasn’t sure, but maybe it was just the feeling of family. Of someone you missed because they understood you.

She nodded again, squeezing Meera’s hand. “I will. Good luck”

Two nights later Sansa laid in Jon’s arms, curled into his side. Despite feeling fatigue course through her body, she couldn’t find the depths of sleep. When Jon shuffled next to her, she released a heavy sigh.

“It’s getting cold,” Sansa said into the darkness of the night.

Jon nodded. “Winter is coming.”

Sansa shuffled and turned around. After a moment, Jon twisted and wrapped an arm around her
stomach. Her eyes fluttered as he laid a kiss on the back on her neck.

“If we don’t get up there, if we get stuck… the cold could kill us.”

“Many things could have killed us,” he said. “Robb always used to say Starks survive.”

The words washed over her. It had been a bedtime story told by her father. “Starks survive all,” he would say. He tapped little Sansa’s heart, smiling down at her with confidence. “You have lead in your bones, my little wolf. You can survive anything.”

What would he think if he knew everything she had survived? Would he still think her strong? She pushed her back further into Jon and clasped her arm over his, needing the heat and the closeness of him.

“We’re going to find them,” she said. “And I’m never going to let them go again.”

“I miss them, too.” Jon nuzzled his face into her shoulder. “And, you know I’d follow you anywhere.”

Sansa’s eyes snapped shut, and she smiled smally as the warmth rushed over her. “I’d do the same for you. I won’t let you go.”

He brushed her hair aside, rubbing his nose into her skin before placing a lingering kiss there. When his arm tightened, she felt so close to home she could almost cry. She smiled, instead, and that made her feel unbelievably brave.

It was just a routine run to see if they could find some extra coats or jackets, maybe sleeping bags and blankets for when the nights got colder and colder further up north. They were close enough to the cabin that it made Sansa’s heart hurt to have to stop, but she understood the practicality of it. Survive, she reminded. She couldn’t let her heart get in the way of her head. Thinking had been her most useful tool since the plague; she wasn’t going to let sentimentality get in the way of that now.

Jon went toward the sleeping bags, and Sansa went toward the coats. There was a surprising amount of jackets left behind in fairly good quality, so she tried to find the best fit that also left her mobile. She picked out a nice hoodie and a looser jean jacket to layer on top of it, and though it wouldn’t be perfect, it was better than she had last winter.

“Sansa! Did you find the—” The words halted with a clang, and she froze.

Taking a step, she called out, “Jon?”

Another boom came, and she pulled the gun from her pants. Taking quiet, swift steps, Sansa went around the back way to where she knew Jon had been. Her heartbeat was booming in her ears, but she remained calm headed. Her being all over the place wouldn’t help Jon if something was actually happening.

Two men stood next to Jon, whose hands were tied behind his back. They were hulking men, and Sansa hadn’t shot a gun in too long. Even if she could get one in one go, she couldn’t guarantee she could get the second one down before they hurt Jon. Think, Sansa, Think. Her mind whirred as she put a plan in action.

“You sure there was someone else with him?” the one man asked.
“Yeah. He doesn’t have the car keys, must mean they do. I saw ammo in there. We need that.”

This world, Sansa thought as she creeped down the aisles to retrieve all she needed, was just need versus need. It made it hard to hate people who wronged her, sometimes, but also she thought of a different outcome. Why couldn’t people just be people. Why couldn’t they help their neighbors like Gilly and Sam? Why did it have to be all about blood and power?

Sansa set up a clock, setting the alarm for two minutes before crawling back toward the aisle where Jon was. The two men were still discussing their plans, and for all their brawn they weren’t all that brainy. They were talking loud and openly.

“Do you think she just left him?” he asked.

The other one shook his head. “Nah, I saw them squeeze hands. They love each other.”

Squeezing her eyes shut, she took a deep breath. Love. It had been sitting at the back of her mind and the forefront of her heart, but she hadn’t let herself think too deeply on it. Love was so dangerous. But she did love Jon—against all odds, against all the hardships they’d faced. If she didn’t get a chance to tell him, she would scream with the hurt of it all.

The alarm went off, and as the clock shook from the shelf she had placed it on, it clattered to the floor.

“What’s that?”

He shrugged. “Go check it out. It’s probably the girl.”

That was what she had hoped would happen, and as the taller man exited down a side alley, she creeped forward. Right now the remaining man was turned away from her, and she tried to creep close enough to release Jon’s hands.

She could sense the exact moment he noticed her in his peripheral because his eyes widened and his body froze. She was halfway through cutting the stiff rope from his hands with her bowie knife when the man turned around, leaping at her with a scream.

It was faster to reach up with her knife than get a proper grasp on her gun, so she brought it straight into his chest with a furious scream. He bent to his knees, ripping the knife out of his chest with his own hand and a grunt. She tried to shoot, but the gun was knocked from her hands.

Stupid, she thought, why couldn’t she have been faster? Why didn’t she just shoot him and then untie Jon, but that would have meant he wouldn’t have been able to fight when the next man came. Diving on the ground before he could, she grasped the gun in her hands and swiveled. The first shot missed and he rushed toward her, but the second one hit just as his hand wrapped around her throat. His body collapsed half on her, and she shoved him off with as much strength as she could manage. Just as he fell off, the other man was returning.

Sansa thought that might just be it, because she wasn’t sure she could respond fast enough, but then Jon had gotten out of his ropes and was pushing forward. The man pulled out a knife and sliced Jon in the abdomen, and she screamed out as he recoiled.

Bringing the gun up, her aim had never been more perfect as she shot him through the head. Anger, it would seem, made her focused above all else.

Stepping over the body of the stranger, she rushed toward Jon as he felt to the ground.
“I should be okay,” he said as he clutched the wound, but blood was pooling around it furiously. Her heart clenched.

“Keep pressure,” she said as she pushed up. Her feet moved faster than she thought possible as she went back to the sewing kit she had found earlier, picking up a bottle of vodka on the way back. Her knees clattered to the ground, and she ripped his shirt open.

“If you wanted my shirt off… you could have… just asked,” he wheezed. His attempts at humor just made her cluck her tongue. The alcohol poured, and she ignored the hiss from his lips.

“You should be grateful for all those needlepoints I used to do with Nan,” she said as she looped through his skin. “It’s going to save you.”

“Sansa,” he breathed out as he brought up a shaking hand to her face, “I just want to say…”

“Save it,” she snapped as she bent closer and shook the hand away.

“Sansa,” he said sharply. “I love you.”

Her hands stilled, and she snapped her eyes shut. Finally, she turned and gave him a heathy kiss on the lips. Her forehead leaned on his own, their breaths intermingling for a minute. Not for the first time, and certainly not for the last, she thought of how lucky she was to bump into him by chance. “I love you, too. Now suck it up and let me sew you shut, because I’m not losing you due to two idiots.”

Even through the pain, he couldn’t hide his smile.

“This is it,” Sansa said, pointing toward the driveway. “I know it is.”

Jon turned the car hastily, but Sansa didn’t care as she hit harshly against the side of the door. If Bran and Arya were really here, she was afraid her heart might truly burst through her chest. This was everything she had been waiting for, and after everything… She sighed with the thought of it.

Her hand reached out to grab his on the console between them, and he squeezed in reply.

“If they’re not here,” he said, “we can keep searching. We’ll find an answer.”

She nodded, but she couldn’t describe it. There was a feeling deep within her like she knew it was going to work this time. Never in the past had she felt like she had connection with her siblings in this way, but it felt like she could sense them. For some reason, she felt like she could feel their beating hearts near.

They both flew out of the car the second it came to a halt. In his excitement, he forgot to turn it off and he doubled back around in a sprint to pull the keys out and meet by Sansa’s side.

There wasn’t a sign of anyone—no car, no lights, no nothing—but then the front door opened and a rifle appeared. The man wielding it was around the same height as Jon, maybe a little taller, with dark hair and broad shoulders. Stubble lined his jaw, and his thick boots clunked as he stepped forward.

“Who are you?” he asked in a clipped voice.

“You’re in my Uncle’s home,” Sansa said.

The man’s eyebrows scrunched minutely before he smoothed it over with composure. “I don’t
know wha—"

His voice was cut off as someone pushed through the door, knocking the man to the side. There Arya stood.

“That’s my sister,” Arya said. She looked the same but different. Hair was still cut fairly short, and her clothes were boyish. She was wearing a loose white tee shirt and dirty jeans.

Sansa and Jon rushed forward, but Sansa got there a little faster. She wrapped her arms around her sister and clasped her tightly to her chest. The door opened again, and she looked up. Bran was there, too, and Sansa reached out to hug her brother next.

Arya jumped at Jon, and he swung her in his arm as Sansa cried into Bran’s shoulder.

“You’re safe,” she said as she pulled back, clasping at his face. “You’re both safe.”

Sansa didn’t know how it was possible, but Bran looked taller than the last time she had seen him. Thinner, too, but with some light muscle he had never had before.

“We are,” Arya said as her and Jon finally separated. “How did you find us?”

“We went to both your schools,” Jon said. “Meera and Jojen Reed were there.”

Bran stilled. “How are they?”

“They say they miss you,” Sansa said.

The man cleared his throat, and all four turned toward him. He gave a little wave, eyeing the two new arrivals with hesitation and apprehension despite their warm welcome.

“I’m Gendry,” he said.

Sansa raised a brow. “Who are you?”

“I’m…” His eyes trailed over to Arya helplessly, searching for something.

“He’s Arya’s boyfriend,” Bran said finally.

Both Arya and Gendry sputtered, but Sansa laughed with the force of it. It was so normal, despite everything. Maybe there really was a hope for something. Not the life from before exactly, but something new and different. A little bit broken, but good nonetheless.

Sansa reached behind her and grabbed Jon’s hand. Their fingers interlaced again, and she felt the power of it. The man she loved at her side, her family in front of her.

Arya’s eyes caught on their hands, but she shuffled her face back up. A small smirk sat there, speaking to having to talk later, but she didn’t say anything on it now. “The others are inside. Come on in, we have a lot to catch up on.”

Jon and Sansa shared a look. Others? It said. Taking a deep breath, clasping tighter, Sansa walked through the door. The future looked brighter, and for the first time since before all the death and the hate and the struggle, she let herself fully hope. She let herself love.

There was strength in that, she decided. In fact, she’d never felt stronger.
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