The Snow Queen in the Land of Infinite Summer

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The Snow Queen in the Land of Infinite Summer

by TrivialPursuit

Summary

She is not what Dorne was promised, not innocent, not pure, not whole (not Elia).

Notes

Pieces of something I've been working on for a while and just decided to publish. Let me know what you think. Title is subject to change. Can be viewed in continuity with the other works in this series or just adjacent.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

Her thick red hair is swept off her neck in a rope-like halo of braids held in place by wicked blue hairpins. The few tendrils that have escaped cling lightly to the sheen of sweat that has settled across her skin. She reminds him of Mellario for a moment, uncertainty flickering across her face as she is handed out of the litter by her new husband, but only for a shadow of a moment, until any vestiges of apprehension are banished in favour of a ladylike smile.

The heavy blue folds of her dress rustle softly as they drag across the floor towards him, the only sound she makes as Oberyn escorts her to meet her new liege (though the thought that she would truly bend the knee to any Southron lord is pure foolishness). They are a study in contrast, Oberyn and his young bride. He is hot and violent, wildfire ready to explode in a fiery mass of rage and ruin while she is cold and cruel, slowly destroying everything in her path; the death she deals will be slow and merciless.

'My prince.' She dips into a low curtesy and Doran suspects she could hold the position for hours if required of her. It reminds the prince somewhat grotesquely of a man on the executioner's block. But while on lesser men it would look subservient, Sansa Stark is no less the queen.

'Princess Sansa. Of you I have heard much. It is an honour.'

Her smile is ice forged in the Land of Always Winter. She is no warm creature meant for the sun and sand of Dorne.

She is not what Dorne was promised, not innocent, not pure, not whole (not Elia). There is something broken in her, something that has been left to rust, tearing her apart from the inside and creating jagged lines where there should be nothing but unbroken skin.

'The honour is all mine. I have heard much of your wisdom and skill, my prince.' He thinks perhaps the Lannisters do not know what they have sent Dorne, do not know that within this woman-child there is something cruel and terrible that will whittle them to nothing.

Later, at the feast, when the Princess is dancing with one of his sons, Prince Doran Nymeros Martell turns to his brother and smiles, 'She, I think, will outlive us all.'

And for him it is a certainty, more so then the continuing march of time or his own demise; he is sure, without a shadow of a doubt.

~

Obara does not like the child who has wed her father; does not like her clever hands and ice-chip eyes, does not like the cruel edge that plays around the corners of her clever lips. She is not at Sunspear for the Princess' arrival, she meets the girl who would be her step-mother a week after, when she returns from Lys expecting her father and finding a pale child with hair like fire in his stead.

'You must be Lady Obara. I am Sansa of House Stark, recently wed to your lord father.' A smile is firmly in place upon her face as she extends a bone-white hand, which Obara ignores. She does not trust this girl of ice.

Instead Obara practices her spear work and watches. The Princess rarely comes into the yard to
watch people train and Obara has never had cause to frequent the Princess' rooms. The times they do
meet the she-wolf is kind and courteous, not a Northern heathen like those she heard about so long
ago in the stories her mother used to tell her, not a rageful and violent creature driven by bloodlust,
nor the meek, foolish girl she might have expected. Instead, she reminded Obara of the raptors kept
in an aviary she once saw in Volantis, beautiful and helpless, wings clipped yet cruel eyes still
searching for their prey.

Perhaps what Obara hates most about her father's child bride is her virtue, her precious virtues, of
which there are many. Sansa is not a devout woman, never darkening the sept's door nor visiting the
godswood that had been planted for her arrival (privately, Obara does not blame her; of all she has
heard and read of the great northern godswoods with their omnipotent heart trees, the one growing in
Sunspear, without weirwood or true heart tree, is pitiful), yet she has the air of devoutness, of
someone who prays five times a day and lives a pious existence and Obara loathes piety; it is nothing
but patronizing prejudice disguised as morality. She is chaste too, for all that it matters in Dorne, and
Obara would think it simply prudishness if she had not observed the Princess play both the seductive
temptress and the devotedly attentive wife with the same breath (Obara is sure that half the men of
Dorne are sure Princess Sansa loves he alone, yet she has never strayed and never will). She is kind,
in a way that is not quite authentic but not quite false; her kindness is not lacking verisimilitude, to be
sure, yet there is an absence that keeps Obara from taking it to heart. There are moments, like when
Myrcella speaks to her, or news comes of the war, or even when Father displays his affection for
Ellaria in full view of his bride, that make Obara wonders what twisted the Princess into a creature
full of such loathing.

Later, at Myrcella's name day tourney, when the Princess sits in the box and watches men tear each
other to pieces for the enjoyment of others, Obara turns to Nymeria and whispers in her ear 'She, I
think, will damn us all.'

And Obara cannot shake the feeling of dread that settles in the pit of her stomach as the slightest of
smiles curves across the Princess' lips.

~

Ellaria is not sure what to make of the child Dorne is presented with along with Gregor Clegane's
head in some pitiful attempt at reparations for their murdered queen. The girl does not like Dorne; it
is totally foreign to everything she was taught, or at least it seems to be, and for that Ellaria pities her.
For the first month of her stay she is sunburnt and miserable, her bone-white skin unused to the
constant sun and heat. She takes to the temperature much harder than Myrcella did, suffering
heatstroke for the first week, though she keeps herself constantly indoors, submerged in the bathtub
for hours.

On the seventh day, she emerges from her chamber in a gown of watered grey silk cut in the style of
court, the only concession to the heat being an attendant shading her with a parasol.

'Princess Sansa,' Ellaria says, reaching her hand out to the woman-child who will bear the only heirs
to Oberyn's earthly goods, 'I am Ellaria Sand, paramour to your husband. I want to offer my help in
adjusting you to life in Sunspear. Though the situation may seem odd for you I hope we shall be
great friends.'

'Thank you, Lady Ellaria. I often find myself wishing that I were able to speak to my mother about
my situation.' There is something flat about the eyes when the princess speaks that reminds Ellaria of
a whore she had met once who had a smile that was so exquisite simply being in the same room as
her should have felt like basking in the sun, but for the fact that someone had knocked out all her
When Princess Sansa announces she is with child it takes everyone, even perhaps her husband, by surprise.

'Gods be good, I will give my husband a strong heir.' She smiles sweetly, and Ellaria would think her as sincere and vapid as the children do, but she knows the last Stark cares little for the gods and their whims, barely tolerates the Seven and does not darken the door of Sunspear's false godswood. Princess Sansa, she knows, believes in the will of man alone.

As Sansa curls an arm around her gently rounded stomach, Ellaria feels a shiver run down her spine. It is not due to an unseasonable draft in the halls of Sunspear, but rather the understanding that Sansa, who is more rage than woman, will use every ounce of her fury to protect her child.

'She, I think, will kill us all.'
The babe is born on the cusp of a winter that barely cools Dorne's sweltering heat. Oberyn and Ellaria are at Yronwood, Prince Doran is at the Water Gardens, and nobody else can see fit to wait in the antechamber for the news, so the woman they call the Ice Princess gives birth alone in a room stinking of blood and the winter rose hybrids that had constantly adorned her chambers since they were sent from Highgarden with nobody waiting for news outside her door. There is nobody for the maester to tell when the blood starts to flow too heavily, and there is nobody to shout and get in the way. (He is not sure whether he prefers it or finds it distractingly sad.)

The child is born and the mother survives, despite all odds (Some say she did die, but the Stranger did not want her and sent her back). When Prince Oberyn receives the news of the birth of his heir he rushes back to Sunspear to be greeted by a wan and pale wife clutching his son tightly to her breast.

'His name is Brandon.' she tells him.

He does not like it, would rather have sons named Olyvar or Lewyn if he has to have sons at all, but Oberyn knows those Southron names would not do for the solemn, grey-eyed babe who seems to be an old man trapped inside an infant's body.

'Brandon Nymeros Martell. It will do.'

When they announce the name to his family, eighteen eyes swivel to the babe cradled in his mother's arms but otherwise remain silent. Doran smiles at his good-sister and she smiles back. (There is an odd bond between the Lord of Sunspear and Oberyn's cold Northron wife that he does not understand.)

Finally, Arianne breaks the silence; 'It is a good thing he is a Martell. Starks never do well in Dorne.' Sansa smiles mirthlessly.

'Isn't he lucky.'

The second child is born in the early days of winter, and this time Prince Oberyn is at Sunspear and so the family gathers outside the birthing room and waits, little Brandon perched on Prince Trystane's knee while his father paces anxiously. This birth is neither so long nor so perilous, indeed the maester says it is one of the easiest he has ever seen. 'A good thing,' the servants whisper among themselves, 'the poor lady nearly left us for good last time around.' Nobody will say this to the Red Viper's face. Nobody is sure if he knows.

The babe is a boy, and Oberyn wonders if that is what his little wife has cursed him with, if that is her way of punishing him. By giving him sons he cannot love as much as daughters. But he knows these musings are ignorant and cruel; his wife has no more control of the babe she births then of the weather.

When he enters that birthing room and sees his wife propped up in bed, a pale, dark-haired babe with bright, joyful eyes in her arms, glowing with pride that went beyond mere maternal, he can forgive her this boy because she looks so beautifully warm then.
'Does he have a name?' Because he is not so stupid as to think she has not already carefully picked one out.

‘Benjen, I think. It is a good Northern name.’ And Oberyn knows what she will not say, that she cannot name her son Robb, could not burden such a tiny babe with the memories of a king, a warrior, a brother, an almost-twin. No matter how she wants to, she loves her son too much to smother him in such a way. She is, he thinks, kinder then he in this regard.

'Ser Benjen Nymeros Martell, the hero of songs.' He laughs and, to his surprise, so does Sansa, though she stares worriedly at the little bundle in her arms.

'Gods, I hope not.'

~

It is the third child, born in the midst of a storm, who is Oberyn's coveted girl-child. She is long, thin, flame-haired and pure fury. Benjen and Brandon stare quietly at their sister, faces smooth in something like awe.

'My Lord?' (For that is what his sons call him, and he is not sure whether to be irritated or amused) 'Where is Mother? Will she be alright?'

'She is recovering, I believe.’ He is afflicted with sudden, irrational, worry; what if she isn't? What if there's something wrong with his little wife?

'Princess Sansa will be fine, my love.' Ellaria runs a reassuring hand along his spine, purposely cutting off his errant thoughts, and he smiles, because Ellaria does not begrudge him these children that are not hers.

'Does she have a name?' It is Tyene, staring at her new sister with a look he cannot quite ascertain, even as she holds out her practiced arms for the child in a way she never did with her brothers.

'I- I do not know. I will have to ask the Princess.' And this is new to him, because he cannot picture naming this furious little human without her mother's involvement. And perhaps it is because he has not named their previous children, but it feels wrong to name this one. So he passes the babe off to her sister and he goes and asks.

His wife smiles when he enters, though it disappears when she sees he has not brought her child with him.

'Our daughter, what will she be named?' Sansa smiles, because she knows what he is asking.

'I am partial to Lysa, my lord. It was the name of my aunt, you know. She taught me much of the world of men and I can never repay the debt I owe her.’ She waits, for an objection perhaps, but none comes. He thinks mad Lysa Arryn is not the best namesake for a child, but says nothing. 'There was a Lysa married to a younger Martell a while back, I believe.’ She offers, and Oberyn thinks it's the beginning of something that might be peace.

'Princess Lysa Nymeros Martell.'

~

The last of the Sand Wolves are born in the midwinter night, the screams of their mother echoing through the halls of Sunspear, barring all from sleep until they quiet (though it is the quiet moreso than the noise that people will cite as the reason for their sleeplessness). Their mother bleeds and
bleeds and does not stop, not when the twin babes who will be her last let out their first cry, not when the maester presses her with potions and poultices until he has none left, not when her husband bursts into the room and orders her to live. She bleeds and bleeds and does not stop. It takes two weeks after the babes are born for their mother to open her eyes, to stir to anything resembling life.

While his wife struggles for life Oberyn sits in the nursery and watches the children sleep. The twins are the first of Sansa's brood to mirror their father's colouring rather than their mother's family, with the thick black hair and smooth olive skin that mark them as children of Sunspear. The boy is strong, with the look of a fighter about him already, his body curling possessively around his sister's. Yet while the boy is undeniably strong his sister is the opposite. She is impossibly tiny and Oberyn wonders if all of his daughters were this small (They were not, he recalls; Obella, the tiniest of her sisters, must have been twice as large).

'They remind me of you and Elia.' His brother smiles, and it is a hallmark of how tired Oberyn is that he did not hear him coming. Lysa sits up in bed suddenly, aware of the arrival of her second favourite person, but makes no sound otherwise, simply sits curled up in bed, her glittering blue eyes darting between the two men and the infants, waiting for something to happen.

'She is so small. But what if there is something wrong with her?' Even as he says it Oberyn knows this cannot be so; nothing can be wrong with this perfect little creature who so resembles his Elia. 'Do you think she'll be alright?' And Oberyn is not sure if he speaks of his daughter, so thin and weak, or her mother, who has not opened her eyes for six days.

'I'm sure she will be fine.'

The sit in silent vigil, the two men and the little girl, over the infants, waiting for news one way or another.

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Chapter End Notes

The last two kids are named Torrhen and Alayne (names chosen by Oberyn), if anyone is interested.

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End Notes

[Let's burn together](#)

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