Together, We Collide

by LustOnMyFingers

Summary

Five years after Robert's Rebellion, Daenerys returned from Essos after the death of her brother Viserys, to be raised at Winterfell, per Ned's request. She and Jon find themselves drawn to each other in a way that tests his desire to join the Night's Watch. Set during the last feast thrown for King Robert and his entourage at Winterfell. Jon, banned from the festivities by Cat, and Dany ducking out by choice on account of the Usurper, together, do some innocent flirting past the walls of Winterfell after Jon boldly carries her there atop his shoulder. They lie in the grass, talking and pondering the meaning of the red comet streaking the night sky. Before the flirtation gets out of hand, Jon tries to retreat, but Dany has something else in mind, as she attempts to change his mind about joining the Night's Watch.

(Recent Import from FF, Originally Published: Sep 14 2017)
This story kicks in at the end of Chapter one of Collide by OnlyInAutumn - It's an AU of an AU! That's why it's a bit jarring. Collide is only 3 chapters and it's incredible, please give it a read! (One other random note: My setting was changed to outside the south gate of Winterfell rather than the godswood - to be revealed why at a later date.)
Beyond the Gates

Daenerys flaunted her sly smile as she lay in the grass beside him. Perhaps he'd have been more bothered by her smugness had she not been right. Jon had considered stowing her away with him when he left for Castle Black. He had no defense for the playful accusation. What other thoughts could she glean just from a look? After twelve years, he had no shortage of them, especially not where Daenerys Targaryen was concerned.

Like now, with her silver-gold hair splayed around her like a halo, her breasts, milky crescent moons rising from her neckline, he could feel more thoughts stirring. The longer he took in the sight of her, the more it felt like a clamp was tightening around his chest. He wanted nothing more than to kiss that smile right off of those full, pink lips. To climb on top of her, wondering what would happen if he pulled her skirts up... He shook the thought from his head before she could catch him staring again. Instead, he tucked it away, perhaps to revisit the next time he found himself alone, mind wandering.

Jon pulled himself up, shifting so that his back faced Daenerys. He exhaled, the sound carried away by the cool breeze that rattled the leaves above them. He muttered, before closing his eyes, "We should be getting back."

Daenerys was quick to pick up on his tone, the regret had weaved its way through each word as he spoke. She allowed a wordless moment to pass, giving Jon the opportunity to leave if that's what he wanted. Neither made any effort.

"Should we? I'm not tired. Are you?"

Back still turned to her, Jon shook his head.

"Good," she said, examining him. "The music hasn't died down. There's no one waiting for us. You can stay with me a few moments." She paused to muster a bit of courage, "And if you wouldn't mind, stay exactly as you are. Don't turn around, and don't dare leave. Not until I say."
Almost scared by her strange command, Jon felt his body tighten and tense as if expecting a physical blow. Jon didn't turn, but he did adjust. Lifting his knees to his chest, he wrapped his arms around them and dipped his head. He tried to sneak a peek of her, hoping to discern what she was up to. Dark, tangled curls foiled his attempt, falling over his eyes like a veil.

"Don't, I said," Dany reminded him. "Stay put."

Concentrating on controlling her breath now, Dany inhaled, as deeply as she could, before indulging in thoughts she never thought she'd vocalize or put words to. She held the air in her lungs a moment. She had to tell him now. Otherwise, Jon would leave for Castle Black without ever looking back, without ever knowing.

"Jon, I know I've been teasing you, but the truth is..." she stopped to sigh, before letting out a nervous chuckle. "I don't know where to start. We don't talk much. Certainly not as much as I'd like to."

Dany noticed Jon's curls swaying as he nodded his head in agreement.

"Since we first met, I had always found you every bit as princely as Robb. I harbored small, secret affinities for the both of you. Until about a year ago. I felt restless roaming the grounds with a cloak to cover my hair, hoping to go unnoticed. I came upon the both of you. This time you weren't just cute boys running about the castle. You had been sparring, as Theon looked on in his jealous way."

Jon smirked, knowing exactly how she meant.

"It was a rare day where the summer heat found its way north," she breathed, rushing through the words faster than Jon had ever heard her speak before. He scanned his mind, hoping to pinpoint the day she spoke of, without any luck. "You both had your tunics strewn along the ground, your wild curls bouncing, smiling as you showed off your skill. Robb became a blur as I focused on you. I saw that you were no longer the boy your frumpy clothes would have me believe."

Daenerys took a few quick breaths to recover from the still-vivid memory, struggling to break free the truth that had caught in her throat. With a mixture of anticipation and disbelief, Jon audibly gulped. He fought the urge to run away from all of this, staying loyal to her command not to move or turn.

After a moment, she carried on, "I slinked into the shadows so that I could keep watching you. Your muscles danced under your skin, the sunlight shone a halo in your dark hair," she paused to remember how soft it had been between her fingers only moments ago.
"My heart hammered in my chest then, as it does now." Jon felt his own heart hammer at the thought of Daenerys studying him in such detail.

"Finally, your match was done and Theon handed you a flask of water. You poured it over your head to cool off," her voice trembled a little as she continued. "You shook the water from your hair like a wolf. I watched it stream down your body as it carried your sweat away," Daenerys felt her lungs deflate as she grappled to coax the rest of the memory to her tongue. She took another moment to compose herself as best she could amongst this broken levee of secrets. Her lungs begged for extra room to expand. Though, no matter how deeply she inhaled, no allotment of air seemed enough to aid her endeavor.

Jon started to rock slowly, trying to extinguish the feelings of self-consciousness he felt bubbling to the surface. "I'm not finished," she playfully reminded him. Seeing him fidget this way gave her exactly the push she needed to keep going.

"I wanted to stay and spy for as long as I could manage but felt feverish. I ran to my chambers, clutching my stomach, all coiled up in knots. I collapsed onto my bed, fighting with the tightness of my gown so that I could breathe. I stripped naked as my name day. When I closed my eyes to relax, all I could see was you."

The music could still be heard from beyond the castle walls, which seemed muted beneath the exasperated breaths both Jon and Dany had been struggling with.

Dany tilted her head down, leaning into Jon, but careful not to touch him. He could feel the warmth emanating from her body, nearly tugging him toward her as if something in their blood drew them together like magnets. Dany lowered her voice, though there was no actual need. They were alone as they'd ever been. "Your face, your curls, your muscles... those pouty lips. Of course, I've been staring at your lips, Jon."

Jon brought one of his hands to the damp grass, steadying himself. Her breathless whisper just barely whisked his curls, sending gooseflesh along his arms and neck. The faint scent of her perfumed tresses had him wrangling with the urge to turn around and face her. He felt his own insides coil as she recounted the details, feeling trapped beneath his tightening trousers as his arousal grew.

"Stay put. I'm not finished," she commanded, breathless still. What more could there be? He wondered, intrigued.
"So what you're a bastard, I thought. But I realize now that it's not about dismissing it or ignoring it. It's exactly what I like about you. Every bit of skill or confidence you have, you earned. Your identity is all your own, not wrapped up in the honor of someone else's name or legacy. In a way, you're free to have your own legacy, Jon Snow, and I envy that. I long to treat the wounds the dagger of 'bastard' has opened up in you. I wonder if anyone has ever held you the way I ache to, and I curse myself for not having the courage to have ever done so, myself."

Jon felt hot tears well in his eyes. This loving confession only amplified his arousal following all the candid visuals she had painted in his mind. Undeniably, he longed for Dany's body, but also for her affections and a chance to really love her.

"Every night for supper, I sit amongst your sisters, utterly jealous as I watch you laughing with the other boys," disdain, clear in her voice as she explained, "Don't get me wrong, I love your sisters to bits. But that smile of yours across the room is like a poison to me. My womb begs me to just lay with you, already!"

Jon gasped in disbelief. Everything she had said had pointed to this conclusion, but the bluntness with which she said it cranked tighter the clamp around his chest. She continued in a low whisper, "Ever notice how often I excuse myself early from supper?"

Jon tilted his head toward her again, though this time she barked no commands or discipline. He had noticed and had always wondered. Through his dark veil, he could see her eyes were downcast. He caught a glimpse of her cleavage as her rapid breaths fought with her tight gowns. Quickly, he adjusted his gaze back to the dark ground beneath him before he got caught. Now he really wondered what would happen if he climbed on top of her. But he stayed put, behaving, as had been instructed.

Mustering a more provocative tone, Dany whispered, "Each night I collapse onto my bed, my hands wandering around my body, my mind struggling to convince itself they're actually your hands. Try as I might, my hands are too soft and small to pass for yours. Alone I am denied the weight of your body on top of mine, your thickness sheathed inside me. Everything about your absence drives me mad."

Jon shifted uncomfortably, this time it was his skin that felt too tight to contain his blood. He had never been more aware of it as it coursed through him, he could see his pale wrists jump at the veins with each thud of his heart. The sound of his rustling caught her attention, and she mistook his intent.

"You're almost free to go," Dany whimpered, watching him squirm. She gave herself a moment to catch her breath once more before wrapping up. She leaned in closer to him, dropping her voice to a mere whisper, hardly able to bear saying the words she must for her final confession.
"I wonder, Jon Snow, if ever you looked at me and felt a similar ache tight in your groin. Tugging at your cock desperately, imagining what my hands would feel like wrapped around it, or perhaps my mouth... or..." she gulped, "swallowed up in my cunt," her emphasis on such a crude word had him reeling. He clenched his eyes shut, his blood whirred in his ears. Jon was desperate to get a grip on himself, the ground, anything.

"I also wonder if it's hard right now, and how it'd feel through your trousers. I wonder what would happen if I were bold enough to reach for it," she breathed, with a starved, seductive intonation. Jon's collar, like fingers around his throat, left him struggling for air. He felt wild, untamed. His cock rebelled against the restraint of his trousers, imagining her reaching for him. Then be bold, he ironically wished he could command her, or perhaps even beg.

Instead, he ignored her warning and turned to face her. He looked every bit as ravenous as he felt. Daenerys met his eyes almost with fright. He was a Wolf in that moment, heaving hard with a furrowed brow. A snarl played at the corner of his trembling lips, fangs bared, in what might otherwise be described as a smile.

"If this is some cruel joke..." he warned her, shaking his head as his gaze shifted from her eyes to the small, soft hand reaching for his chest. Feeling his heart thud against his rib cage, she worked to temper him. Her voice had returned to normal, "I wish we could've slowly built to this moment. But considering we kept polite all year, it is only now in my desperation that I must confess all of this, else you leave for Castle Black, vowing to the Gods to never lay a hand on me."

Tears glistened in her eyes, now, she clutched his leather doublet hard in her fist. Her face contorted with passion, anger, emotion—Jon couldn't tell exactly what. The conviction of her words stronger than any she had spoken before, "I'd sooner welcome death than face a future without knowing your touch, Jon Sn-"

And so the Wolf tackled the Dragon—his prey, his own name, which died on her lips as his tongue sparred with hers. For a moment Jon felt guilt for thrusting his weight against hers, until he remembered she felt as if it were something she had been denied. Who was he, a bastard, to ever deny Daenerys Targaryen?

With that, he pressed himself even further into her body, nudging her face away so he could bury himself in her neck as she caught her breath. He nipped his way up to her earlobe, trying his damnedest to tame his instincts. Dany fumbled with her dress on either side, pulling her skirts up so she could wrap her legs around him. "Jon," she whimpered, almost inaudibly, had her mouth not been nestled against his ear.
Jon felt hard as stone as they lay groin to groin, she cursed all the fabric between them. That she might yet feel the full swell of his cock inside her sent a soft moan to her lips, which turned to a hum as Jon pressed his mouth to hers once more. She wriggled herself from under his force, begging him, "Wait ..."

With her sudden reservation, Jon snapped out of his primal state long enough to lighten himself above her so she could make any adjustment she needed. Dany smirked up at him as she slid her hand from his chest downward. His eyes followed her hand until he realized where it was headed, "Dany ..." he gasped, as his gaze shifted from her hand back to her eyes. She wondered where the Wolf had gone. Jon's dark, watering eyes were nervous, regressing to that of a mere pup.

"I told you I wanted to feel you through your trousers," she lustfully teased. Jon's eyes darted around, desperate to drop anchor but unsure where to land, as her hand had finally found him. He clenched his eyes shut as she gently squeezed him, studying his reactions to each touch. With eyelids clasped tightly, he willed himself not to wake from this dream. It must be a dream, he thought, trying his best to stifle his whimpers.

His arms shook as they struggled to hold his weight. His blood betrayed him, too, all of it rushing to gather beneath Dany's focused touch. Too suddenly, the warmth of her hand was gone, and he unclenched his eyes to look at her, to see where she had gone. Her eyes were cast downward as she fumbled with the lacing on his trousers. He gasped again, in shock, as cool air broke through the barrier.

Jon looked every bit the terrified pup once more. Dany could see his body falter above her, "It's alright," she cooed, bringing her hand up to tuck his curls behind his ear. She then placed her hand on his shoulder, guiding him to the ground beside her, giving his quivering muscles a break. Jon watched her with wet eyes as she climbed atop, straddling him. She lifted his tunic, placing a hand on his lower abdomen. Jon preferred this vantage point, surveying her lustful expression, all the while keeping a close watch on that hand of hers. A smile tugged at the corners of her lips as she felt the firmness of his muscles against her palm. She closed her eyes. It was clear in her expression that finally getting her hands on his abdomen was some form of triumph for her. She began moving her hand down once more, but with one clear distinction. This time, it was skin on skin.

Though inevitable, Jon gasped as the warmth of her hand had finally found him. His skin felt tight again, blood pulsing in desperation to keep up with the heavy demands of his thudding heart. A deafening hissing sound whirred inside his ears.

Nothing had ever felt so warm against him as her hand had in that moment. Dany's fingers grew slick as she swirled them 'round the tip. Be it the new sensations she felt or had been causing, Dany's own muscles began to quake. After a few soft strokes of his length, she exhaled deeply before withdrawing her hand. She searched Jon's expression, finding a mixture of agony and relief. Jon looked down to investigate her hand's retreat, not quite upset that she had stopped, but more
confused at the suddenness of her departure.

Dany straightened atop him, lifting her skirts while rolling them neatly toward her, exposing her breeches to him. "Hold these," she commanded of Jon. He was happy to oblige, grasping the folded skirts, pressing them to her waist so he had an excuse to put his hands on her. As Dany masterfully loosened her laces, Jon's eyes wandered down to inspect the darkened patch of fabric nestled against her groin. It's wet, he realized, and it clung to her mound like a second skin, in a way that sent a jolt right through him. Dany gasped as she felt his cock twitch beneath her, the sudden jerk causing the fabric to fall from her grasp enough so that silver-blonde curls peeked out from atop the laces. The mere exposure made Jon feel faint, his hand slipped away from her skirts, seeking refuge on his forehead.

Dany grabbed his escaped hand and guided it back to her stomach, and slowly downward, mirroring her exploration of him only moments ago. "Your turn," she explained as she shifted her weight backward, still straddling as she thrust her groin toward him. An open invitation. Jon tucked the folds of her skirt underneath her bottom, exposing her curls to him once more. He shuddered at the sight of the thin, wispy hairs. Please don't wake up, please don't wake up, he chanted internally, still half-convinced it must be a dream. Another jolt rippled through him. Dany stifled a small giggle at his second involuntary salute.

By now, his eyes had adjusted to the moonlight and Daenerys was stark white against the darkness. Jon, being a man, and thus, a visual creature, found his curiosity had gotten the better of him. He had to see her. He brought both hands down to the front of her breeches, pulling them as far down as they'd go. Her wetness clung to the fabric in strands as he pulled it away from her skin. A surge of saliva came rushing to his mouth. Even his tongue trembled.

Dany let out a gasp as the cool air found her. Jon carefully placed his fingers against the small pink swell that presented itself beneath soft curls. It was throbbing, just as he had been. He ran his fingers in slow, gentle circles over her wetness. Dany convulsed at the slightest hint of his touch, which only piqued his curiosity. As he slid his fingers further down to explore, she made a series of chaotic, desperate panting noises he never dreamed of having the privilege to hear. Dreams, he thought. Feeling bold, himself, he removed his hand from her prematurely. With the same mixed look of agony and relief, Dany unclenched her eyes to meet his.

"My turn," he considered, his voice gruff, "It's only fair that I confess something to you." Dany looked down at him with an expression of both pain and intrigue.

"I did my share of dreaming, too. It was always your skin. I imagined it would taste like milk," his accent heavy as his gaze drifted from her eyes to his fingers, webbed with her wetness. "Creamy and a little bitter. But, you're salty, too."
Even in the moonlight, Jon could see Dany's face flushing further, "There's been one part of you I've been dyin' to taste. My imagination can only get me so far." A soft whimper escaped her lips without her consent, merely at the insinuation of his mouth anywhere near her tenderest parts. *Did men actually do that?* she wondered.

Jon lifted his still-wet fingers to his lips, coating his pout in her taste. As he licked his lips, his dark gaze became molten with intensity. His irises looked like eclipsing moons, a corona of flame licking the edges of the dark spheres. *It must be the moonlight,* she thought. Though, in that moment, she couldn't help but think of *dragons.*

Feeling helpless, unsure exactly what to make of it, she shifted her focus to Jon's mouth as he massaged his fingers into his lips, inhaling her scent deeply. Somewhere beyond the ragged sound of her breaths, she swore she heard a low growl in his chest. The wolf had returned.

"*I will* have a proper taste of you," he threatened, lifting himself up onto his elbows. Their open lips met again as she melted into him, though she could feel his teeth clamped together against her wandering tongue. With one swift motion, he pulled down her breeches, exposing her backside to the darkness before flipping her on her back. He pressed his groin into her skin. The fabric of his trousers quickly became entrenched, the heat between her legs already unbearable.

No matter how many fabrics were permeated, Dany's arousal seemed to know no bounds. There were traces everywhere, from Jon's face to Dany's as they kissed, his hands, now his trousers... and, as he dropped his head to survey the full extent of the damage, he saw that even her thighs were coated in her slickness. He could smell it, infusing the air around them, suffocating him, drawing his nose and mouth in. He didn't fight it. He followed the scent eagerly, taking small tastes from her thighs as he inched his way to the source. His breath, like fire, hot against her wet cunt, mere inches away. Dany shook, doing her best to brace herself for the impact of his tongue...

"Jon? Dany?" Robb called in the distance, "Where have you two gone?"

"*Seven hells,*" Dany cursed, quivering, emphasis pulling awkwardly at each syllable.

Jon let loose a quiet growl, feeling mocked by the gods in that moment. Though it had been quite dark, Jon took one last look at the treasure he had finally unearthed, leaving its true discovery for another time. He clambered to his feet in one swift motion, his hand outstretched to help Dany to hers. He steadied her as she wobbled to find footing. She pulled her breeches up from her knees, tying the laces tight as he grimaced, throbbing with pain. *So close,* he thought. She reached for his laces, tying them tightly for him. They didn't have long, now.
Even so, his blood pulsed slow like lava, burning him from the inside, commanding him to continue what he had started. He tried his best to conceal the little monster and gain enough composure to face his brother, whose footsteps were fast approaching, squishing in the dewy grass beyond the gates.

"Jon? Is that you?" Robb was closer, now. Jon assumed his brother had seen the pair awkwardly fumbling in the darkness. He had no idea how to explain himself, all alone with Daenerys Targaryen.

"We're here, Robb," he answered meekly, searching his mind for an explanation that wouldn't come. All he was capable of in this moment, was filling in the blanks of his fantasies with all the correct features, textures, *tastes*, as images of Daenerys flashed in his mind's eye.

"Is everything alright?" Robb asked, his voice snapping Jon out of his reverie, pulling him against his will, back to reality. His brother kept his distance, almost as if he knew he had caught them at something.

Dany's voice quivered as she called to him, "I'm okay."

Robb approached them, still keeping a safe distance. Jon prayed he couldn't smell her lingering scent, too. He licked his lips thoroughly and discreetly behind a bent hand, thinking that might do the trick. It hadn't. Dany wobbled a little bit more, and Jon steadied her again.

"What happened? Are you okay, Daenerys?" Robb asked, worried from the sight of the staggering girl, with a fresh sheen of sweat coating her flushed face. He looked to Jon, suspicion slowly warping his expression.

"Something disagreed with me, I'm afraid. Jon chased after me past the gates as I spilled my supper at his feet... The sickness is finally winding down after a few unsightly performances, thankfully. I'm glad you weren't here to see it," Dany stroked her stomach, and Jon's face had become visibly worried. *She's good*, he thought.

"You should get back to your room, get some rest. I'll escort you, myself," Robb offered, never doubting for a moment that her disheveled, flushed appearance had been nothing but illness. Chivalrous prince that he was, he continued, "I can fetch Maester Luwin once you're tucked in."

"Nonsense, Robb," Daenerys stuttered, "Jon will walk me to my room. He's already here, after all, and not welcome in the dining hall, in any case. Look at him, he's bored to tears," Dany gestured toward her prospective lover. Jon gulped nervously as he nodded along.
"Besides, I wouldn't dare deny you the opportunity to show off your many charms to the royal visitors on their last night here," she weakly exclaimed, this time, nodding toward the dining hall. Though, to Jon, it sounded like flirtation. In response, he furrowed his brow with jealousy, eyes scrunched.

"All I need is some rest," she smiled with kind eyes, squinting assurances to Robb, whose worry was visibly melting away.

"Alright," Robb relented before turning to Jon, who had returned to full brood by this point, dismissing any suspicion from his mind. "Jon, since you don't have to worry about entertaining any of our guests tonight, just... stay with her a while? At least until she falls asleep. Call for Maester Luwin if the sickness returns."

Jon's glare at Robb relented as soon as he realized he was not only given permission to sit bedside to Daenerys, alone in her chambers overnight—but more or less ordered to. Jon struggled to look disappointed or inconvenienced, somehow. Dany, noticing the absurd range of emotions dancing across his face, pursed her lips so as not to laugh. His efforts to play along mostly went unnoticed as Robb had already turned to Dany. Placing a brotherly hand on her shoulder, he continued, "Get your rest, I trust my brother will take good care of you tonight."

"Thank you, Robb," she gleamed, her plan unfolding perfectly.

"I'll let them know I found you, and that Jon will be lookin' after you so they needn't worry."

"Please do. I mean to cause no alarm on such an important night. I don't wish to take any more of your time. Go, enjoy yourself!"

"I will," he assured her, flashing his regal smile at the pair before scampering away, back to the royal festivities.

The pair exhaled in relief. Jon rubbed his head, "I'm not sure how you managed that."

She wobbled again, placing a hand to her forehead to wipe away the sweat. Jon looked down at her, worried and confused, "Are you really feeling unwell?"
"In a way," she laughed. "I ache from head to toe. My flesh feels as though it's burning me alive."

He nodded in agreement, politely clasping his hand around her waist as if to guide her back to her room. Daenerys barely budged. Stopping in her tracks, she breathed his name, "Jon..."

"What?" Jon asked, his thick northern accent rounded the word before slicing it a bit short with his tongue.

"You must ache, too. Show me. Once that door closes behind us, I command you to bring that Wolf back out. It drives me mad when you look at me as if you'd eat me."

Jon's brow twitched at the sound of her raspy voice. They continued walking together in synch. A Wolf, he considered. With each careful stride, Jon did his best to quash his default setting of shyness and reservation. It was his instinct to fade into the background, to go unnoticed. But Daenerys Targaryen, of all people, had spilled her darkest desires to him. Despite his best efforts to blend in, she had picked him. Not Robb, or Theon, someone with a proper last name, or even some faceless lord who had yet to seek out her hand in marriage. But him. The least he could do was tuck away his instinct to hesitate or second-guess himself. He'd draw from her boldness. She wants me, he reminded himself. Seemingly the exact same way he wanted her, in fact. Hopelessly.

He vowed to thank the lady by showing her, as she commanded, the ravenous and desperate way in which he'd dreamed of taking her every night his head hit the pillow. They had almost reached her door, now. With seconds to spare, Jon coached himself through. It doesn't have to be perfect, he thought. Be a Wolf.
Be A Wolf

As Daenerys unlocked the door, Jon steadied himself. He pushed his chest out, straightened up so he’d tower over her, broad and intimidating. Immediately upon closing and locking the door behind her, Jon pushed her against it. "Jon..." she gasped, startled, as his hands enveloped her head, his fingers quickly tangled in her hair. He breathed against her chest, sharp sighs that to her, sounded like snarls. She braced herself.

"So she wants a Wolf," he thought. *Wolves bite,* he considered, as he sunk his teeth into the exposed portion of her upper left breast, with enough force to make her cry out in shock, but not enough to actually hurt her. *Wolves scratch,* he ran his nails from behind her neck down across her right breast, likewise leaving pink trails against the opaline canvas of her skin.

"Don't move," he commanded, smirking. He willed her compliance with an outstretched hand, "Stay exactly as you are."

Jon let loose a low, guttural groan before pacing away from her. He clutched his doublet and tunic together before peeling them off and over his head in one swift motion, wriggling his arms free of the sleeves one after the other. Jon ran his fingers through his ruffled hair, instinctively flexing his muscles before her in the dim moonlight that seeped in through her window. He looked her up and down, noticing how hard her chest was heaving as she watched him, mesmerized at the transformation. Daenerys remained still, save for a nervous gulp and uneven breathing.

Turning to search Dany's belongings for a candle, Jon found one to set alight with the aid of a nearby flint stone. He began to speak, back still facing her, "I've got somethin' of a plan for us tonight," he moved toward the window, securing the shudders. "If I make you uncomfortable in any way, I beg you to stop me immediately."

Exhaling sharply, Daenerys was visibly excited as their eyes met once more. This only helped Jon garner the confidence he needed as he stepped forward to relieve her of his command. Inches from her wanton eyes now, his breath hot on her lips, he dropped his voice to a whisper, "But until then, I beg you to not to stop me."

Kissing her hard, he maneuvered out of his boots, pushing them aside as he felt around for the laces on her gown. Tongues sparring again, he worked to blindly unlace them. When the fabrics loosened up, she shook them from her shoulders, and they slid down her body with ease.

Breaking their kiss prematurely, Jon knelt before her, admiring her naked torso in the candlelight, feeling every bit his prey. He lifted her
feet, one after the other, moving her gowns from beneath her. Sidetracked, Jon had planned to remove her boots next, but went for the laces on her breeches first. He had to see those curls again. He untied them only as much as was necessary to bring them down to her knees. Jon smirked as Dany tried her best to find something with which to brace herself on. Not yet, he thought.

Dany quaked as he ran his fingertips from her knees, over her thighs, and finally resting them on her hips. He clenched either side with his fingers, leaving his thumbs free to roam about her silver wisps, following along the crease of her thighs. Dany whimpered helplessly, clenching her eyes and bracing further, waiting for his mouth. Not yet, he thought once more.

Smugness washed over his expression as his hands abandoned her hips in favor of her right foot. Disappointment was clear on her face as she inspected what he was up to. Jon wriggled her boot free, leaning further into her groin, a welcome excuse to take in her scent. Though she was onto him after both bluffs. She didn't bother to brace herself this time. Playfully, as Jon turned his head, he nuzzled his nose right into her hair, exhaling deeply. His hot breath like steam against her already sweltering cunt. Dany cried pitifully as she pressed her arms and palms flat against the door. In response, Jon stifled a small chuckle as he wriggled her left foot free of its boot.

With her breeches still half-mast, Jon rose slowly, running his fingertips against the back of her thighs. He grabbed handfuls of her flesh on his way up, searching for the right center of mass. Once confident he had found it, he wrapped his arms together below her bottom and lifted her up. Dany dug her nails into his shoulders for support and felt the familiar, involuntary twitch of his cock against her thigh as her breasts hung just inches from his mouth. He turned slowly, carrying her to bed. Leaning back a bit, he gripped her shoulders before gently resting her atop the soft furs on her bed.

Hovering over her, he studied Daenerys a moment. Nearly naked, completely at his disposal. How did this ever happen? he asked himself, his introspective awe clearly reflected in his eyes. He hesitated. It's not that he didn't know what to do, he just didn't know where to begin. Too many versions of this moment replayed in his head, his fantasies all bubbling to the surface, overwhelming him at once. With the back of his right hand, he ran his fingertips along Dany's jawline and a thumb over her lips. She shuddered, violet eyes alight with lust and anticipation. Alright, he thought. No more bluffing.

Retreating to the edge of the bed, Jon knelt before Dany, pulling the fabric from her knees to her ankles. Examining her with misty eyes, he mapped out his next few moves, mouth watering at the prospect. Pushing her thighs backward toward her chest, he slipped his head between her legs, underneath the fabric that held her feet together. He rested her thighs on his shoulders, and inched his way between her legs once more, determined to finish what he had set out to do the beyond the castle gates. Grasping the furs she lay on, Dany braced herself for what she hoped would be the final time, confident Jon wouldn't deny her any longer.
He slid his hands under her thighs before bringing them to the thatch of silvery curls before him. He restrained them beneath his fingers on either side, allowing for better access. Her scent wafted around him once more, an enticing briny aroma that sent saliva rushing to his mouth and blood to his cock. Dany's body heaved unevenly with each fragmented breath, she fought to hold still, waiting for his hungry mouth to finally greet her.

Jon made first contact at her opening, as gently as he could manage, his stiff tongue already steeped in her juices. A deep shudder overtook Dany, her moans manifesting in vibrato. Jon's body likewise rippled in excitement from the madness he had already caused her with the slightest touch. Keeping the pressure as light as he could manage, he moved the tip of his tongue upward over her lips, swirling between them. Dany rocked her body gently, urging her breaths to follow a similar rhythm as her voice quivered and broke into a series of animalic moans and grunts.

Fighting the urge to pull her lips between his just yet, his tongue dove between them just as they met beneath her clit. Slower yet, he ran his tongue over the full length of the swollen pink flesh. He could feel it throbbing against him, just as he had been, tucked away in his trousers. Noticing the similarities, he made another mental note to pay special attention to it on his next pass. He felt Dany's body quake as deep, throaty moans spilled from her mouth, only serving to reinforce his hunch.

Stopping momentarily to smirk up at her, Jon was feeling smug. With her palm nursing her forehead, Dany's weakened thighs quivered on his shoulders. She took a few breaths to recover until finally, their eyes met. The insatiable look in Jon's pitch-dark eyes made her flush further. She had looked utterly disarmed and overwhelmed. And yet, he had only just begun.

Dany ran her fingers roughly through his tresses, clutching, pulling and scraping her nails against his scalp. In any other context, this might've been painful, but it only gave Jon more incentive to keep exploring. His tongue made the return trip in reverse. With more pressure this time, he ran his tongue from the hood of her clitoris back down to her entrance, this time stopping to suck her lips before breaching her with a stiff tongue. Having dropped an octave or two, Dany groaned long and slow, matching the penetration of his tongue. Jon clenched his eyes shut, the heat inside of her igniting his tongue as well as his groin by proxy.

As he surfaced for fresh air, Dany took the opportunity to draw her legs closer together, kicking the pesky garment free from her ankles. Jon quickly pushed them apart, taking another moment to both salivate over the sight of her splayed before him, and to map out another plan of attack. Jon explored her with his fingertips, swirling them in such a way as to lubricate them. Dipping his head back down, he grabbed her hood between his lips, gently sucking and probing it with the tip of his tongue. Once he established a rhythm, he slipped one of his already-slicked fingers slowly inside of her. In response, Dany burst into a series of whimpers that sounded like crying. Jon opened his eyes and directed his gaze upward, relieved to see her grinning fiendishly even though he'd swear she was weeping.
"An-another finger," she cried weakly. Without any hesitation, Jon slipped another finger inside, her tightness all the more apparent with the increased width. Jon shuddered at the revelation of how incredible she felt inside. "Mmm," he couldn't help but moan into her as he sucked and tongued harder, thrusting deeper. He anchored his index finger and pinky outside of her as best he could, massaging her from the inside with the remaining fingers. She clenched hard around them, making it difficult for him to bend at the joints. Her muscles fought against his intruding fingers, and her body thrashed against her bed. Jon held her still as best he could with his left hand pushed into her abdomen. It started to feel like a battle as her legs flailed and her arms dug into the furs, unsatisfied with any grip she found. She sounded possessed, and looked it, too, whenever he spied her from beneath the silver fringe. Her eyes had rolled into the back of her head, all traces of violet gone in favor of pure white. Like a skinchanger, he thought.

Jon grew exhausted keeping all of these balls in the air at once but knew she was close, so he mustered all he could to keep going, unsure exactly how to tell or what to expect. Suddenly, Dany's body seized up, her breath caught in her throat, all her groaning and growling suddenly ceased. Full-body tremors erupted forth from her as Jon feverishly struggled to keep up his performance, her body fighting him with all her force. The groans returned, followed by a series of convulsions and shuddering. After one last high-pitched wail, Dany pushed Jon off of her with a swift kick of her feet to his shoulders.

He fumbled backward on the hard floor, his left palm luckily catching his fall. Dumbfounded, Jon's wet mouth hung agape. His hair was permeated with the sweat from his efforts, and his face, with Dany. On his right hand, his fingertips were pruned and sticky with her excess, hanging from his fingers like threads. Dany was perched on her bedside, legs still spread, her palms planted in front of her, steadying herself as she gasped for air. Her hair fell around her head, her silver-gold mane a disheveled and tangled mess.

Dany had been reduced from a proper lady to a wildling in that moment. She half-reminded him of Ghost. Who's the Wolf now? Jon thought, unable to stifle a snicker any longer. He cleared his throat to disguise it, then gasped, even though he already knew the answer, "What'd I do wrong?"

"I'm sorry," her voice was hoarse and raspy, "I couldn't take any more."

Jon raised an eyebrow, a grin stretching as far across his face as Dany had ever seen it, "It was good, though?"

"Jon..." she cooed, collapsing back onto the furs. "There are," a necessary pause as she gasped for more air, "no words."

Jon stayed on the cold stone floor, taking advantage of the view between Dany's open legs, all modesty forgotten as she worked to regain her composure. He resisted the urge to reach out and
touch her, likely sparing himself another kick in the shoulder. Instead, he reached for his crumpled tunic, slipping it over his head, and pulling his boots back on. Dany propped herself up to inspect the shuffling she heard from his direction. "What are you doing?" She asked, exasperated.

With sore knees and uneven gait, Jon walked over to Dany and kissed her deeply. She flushed, tasting herself on his lips. "I'm going to get you some water. I won't be long."

He dragged his fingers from her palm to her fingertips as he walked away. Jon took the key to her room from the hook and locked the door behind him.
The Silver Serpent

Upon entering the room once more, Jon noticed Dany had combed the tangles from her hair and dabbed away most of her excess sweat. She was sitting upright on the edge of her bed, legs crossed beneath a thin sheet she held clutched to her chest. *She's perfect*, he thought.

"Take it all off, again," she commanded, the power dynamic shifting back. Part of him felt relief—first, for having done a good job, and second, to slip back into his more natural, submissive state. A state he felt comfortable in, particularly if it meant taking orders from Daenerys. And so he removed his boots and socks and slipped his tunic over his head once more. He pulled a small flask of water from his pocket, emptying it into the goblet on her desk. Grasping its neck between his fingers, he walked toward Daenerys, who had been gazing at his chest in a hungry manner.

"You should drink something," he suggested.

Grabbing the goblet from him, she took two quick gulps. The sheet fell from her grasp as she reached to place it back on her desk. Jon couldn't help but drop his eyes to her breasts.

"Yes," she agreed, moving that sultry gaze to his eyes while pulling loose the laces on his trousers, *I should.*

Jon bit his lip at the mere insinuation. He felt his nerves get the better of him as she nudged the fabric down slowly, anticipation authoring her expression. He didn't know whether to examine her reaction or close his eyes. *Might she be disappointed?*

He closed his eyes as the cool air hit him again. No, he thought, urging himself to be brave. He pried open his eyes, one at a time, to see Dany's hands still clutched to the fabric on either side of his parted thighs. There he was, standing at attention, eye-level, before her. He fought the urge to fold his arms, leaving them to dangle at his sides.

After another agonizing moment of silence as she examined him, Dany, smirk-laden just as he had been, slipped the fabric down to his knees. The parallels had him worried, for all the teasing he had done to her. She licked her lips as she clutched his waist. Pulling him closer to her, he struggled to find footing in the sudden shift.

She placed wet lips to his abdomen, slowly tasting her way south from his navel, not straying far from the path his hair had laid out for her. Still clutching his waist with her left hand, she gradually
drew her fingertips up his thighs, eliciting a series of shivers. Dany likewise nestled into his dark curls, a bit musty now, after having worked up a sweat as he tended to her. She, too, found herself salivating.

A sharp exhale escaped his lips as she buried her nose in his tuft the same way he did to her. More than ever, he understood the consequences of teasing one's lover. Mere inches from her mouth now, the blood pulsed through his cock in a familiar way, as if his skin couldn't contain it. Her hot breath at its base had his ears ringing and whirring as his blood drained from his head again, rushing south to greet her. Sweet pain surged through him as he ached for her touch.

"Mmm," she crooned, eyelashes fluttering open to meet his twisted expression. Dany smirked further, pleased to see his face shaped by the same torment he had caused her not long ago. That's enough, she thought, reminding herself that though he had been briefly cruel, she should follow in relenting, to put him out of this misery. She moved her hand higher, cupping his testicles as gently as she could manage, still using his own tactics against him.

Failing to stifle his soft whimpers, Jon's balance faltered under her touch. Likewise, she tried to steady his waist with her left hand. And with her right, she continued tracing her fingertips back up towards the base of his cock. Jon's breathing became erratic. She took her hand away. His expression clearly stated, without words, that he had had enough of the teasing. *Don't worry, my love,* she thought to herself.

She waited for his gaze to meet hers again before opening her mouth, unsheathing her tongue beneath the tip. His eyes similarly looked possessed, whites barely visible, in favor of pitch-dark puddles glistening in the candlelight. For a moment, she swore they looked like a deep violet, perhaps *indigo*...

Before the thought could take root in her mind, she felt Jon jerk as her tongue made impact. She dragged it gently backward, from base of the head to its tip, already wet with anticipation. She swirled her tongue 'round, getting her first true taste of him. She thought it, appropriately, tasted quite similar to his kisses, still wet with her. Jon had clenched his eyes shut, his fists balled tightly at his sides. She closed her lips around him, swishing her tongue gently along the bottom as she made her way further down his length.

Jon looked down, longing to see her full lips wrapped around him. His legs started to shake against his will as she began sucking. Dany could feel him falter. She let him fall from her mouth and swiftly rose, clutching her hands to his body to steady him. Jon's daze was drunken as he leaned in to kiss her feverishly, boldy grasping her breasts, "*Dany...*"

She returned his kiss for only a moment before guiding him to lie down. "Lift your head on my pillows," she commanded, "so you can see everything."
Jon furrowed his brow, shaking his head in disbelief. He once again considered the probability this was all a dream. How was a bastard not only invited into Daenerys Targaryen's willing mouth but instructed by the highborn goddess, herself, to adjust her bedding for a better view of it? Daenerys, who had fetched a clip from her desk to hold her hair back, noticed Jon's furrowed brow and concerned expression. "Don't look so flustered," she assured him, clipping her hair up into a more constrained cascade of silver-gold, "Could you have stopped after just one taste?"

Dany clawed her way up to him as he clawed at her furs, bracing himself the same way she had done. Dany slithered seductively toward him, using only her tongue to scoop him back into her mouth. She tilted her head to either side as she slowly moved up and down his length once more. Her eyes, blooming lilacs beneath thick, dark eyelashes, monitored Jon's reactions. As soon as he eased into her slow, melodic sucking, she decided it was time to see if she could make him shake. His gaze followed her as she sat upright, licking her hand, palm to tip. Securing it around him, she thrust upward in a pulling motion, curving her palm against his tip, flipping her hand as she dragged it back down him. Up again, she pushed, dragging the palm of her balled fist across him once more. Jon tried not to give too much away with either his expressions or his voice, but his poorly stifled whimpers kept escaping through a jutted jaw and half-bitten lip. His dark eyes glazed as he pried them open to watch her working at him. Dany could tell he was trying to last as long as he could. She just wanted him to feel every bit as transcendent as he had done to her.

She lowered her head again, incorporating her mouth together with her hand, twisting her palm from side to side as she massaged him up and down, her mouth following each stroke with haste, saliva dripping down his shaft. She began twisting her head opposite to her palm, hoping to overwhelm him with sensations, as he had done to her. With the tugging of her hand, Dany managed to draw his foreskin down, making it all the more sensitive as her tongue went swirling. Jon bit into his lip so hard she thought he'd draw blood.

After discerning that he must be close, Dany took one last look at him before closing her eyes, dedicating all of her remaining faculties this late hour to keep her rhythm strong. With her eyes shut, Jon felt a little more at ease to watch her, finding the eye contact to be a bit daunting, at least while experiencing all the new sensations. He watched her breasts swaying in unison with each stroke, her arched back elevating her ass just enough to stoke the fantasy that he might one day take her from behind. That brief thought, paired with the memory of how his fingers felt almost trapped in the tightness of her sweltry cunt was enough to break his concentration.

Finally, he succumbed to her skillful efforts, toes curled, muscles clenched. He let out a gruff, exhausted groan, writhing beneath her now-slacken caress. Her swollen lips remained tightly wrapped around him, devouring him the same as he did, her. With a sigh of relief, Jon's muscles visibly relaxed beneath his pale skin, and only then did Dany take her mouth away from him, swallowing, and slowly sucking him clean in her retreat.
She wiped her numb mouth with a tired hand and collapsed onto her lover. Dany weaved her fingers through Jon's damp mop of hair. She planted a tender kiss on his mouth, before dropping her head to his chest as they both recovered. Jon adjusted his breathing to match hers.

Dany was the first to break the silence after a moment. "Jon..." her voice lingered, inquisitive in tone.

"Yes?" he murmured, his voice still drunk with lust.

"What was... um," she trailed off, taking a moment to find the right combination of words, "Where... did you learn to do that?"

"From you," he replied, without a lick of hesitation.

"What? " she countered, confused.

"Like I said, I do a lot of dreamin' about you, too, you know. That's the one I liked best, so I tried it. I followed your cues so I'd know how to do it," he explained. Dany's face flushed further, if at all possible. She had no recollection of giving any cues. It was all a blur of ecstasy in her memory.

"Oh. Well, it was..." she trailed off once more, raising a hand weakly to emphasize a word she searched her mind for, but couldn't provide. She was unable to find a single word that could appropriately describe the experience he had given her.

Jon laughed, pleased with himself that she had been at such a loss for words. "And what about you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Where'd you learn all that?" Jon asked, his accent lazily rounded his consonants just in the way Dany loved.

She considered for a moment. "Huh," she concluded, "I guess you did the same for me, in a way. I
followed your lead, feeling a bit spiteful, and then competitive," she remembered. "That, or fantasizing about your cock in my mouth all year must've paid off."

Jon grinned at her, cheeks suddenly flushed red at her crudeness, despite having tumbled around with each other all night. "Dany..." he uttered meekly, sounding embarrassed.

"Jon," she purred, an eyebrow raised playfully.

"You're lucky it was only a year, for you."

"Oh?" she perked up to examine his eyes. "Longer?"

"As far back as I can remember," he confessed, shyly. "Even as a boy all I wanted to do was kiss you." Dany nuzzled into him, surprised it took her so long to really notice him. She felt regretful they hadn't started sooner.

"What now?" Jon asked, breaking what he felt was an awkward silence.

"Well," she started, lifting herself up from his chest, reaching for her goblet. As her breasts nearly brushed against his face, Jon boldly stretched his neck out to catch one of her nipples between his lips. He gently bit down on it, watching it wiggle as he let go.

She laughed at the unexpected nip, "Sit up, Jon, have a drink."

Jon did as commanded, taking a large swig, but leaving enough for Dany to finish off. She emptied the goblet and rather, let it fall gently to the floor this time.

"Hmm, what now," she pondered, snuggling back into his chest. "We sleep. But not for long. Soon the sun will rise, as will we, with everyone else. Then, we'll pretend none of this had ever happened."

Jon looked disappointed at the final part of her conclusion, "What?"
"For appearance's sake, not with each other," she quickly clarified, removing her clip as her hair spilled across her back, and his chest. "When the darkness returns and the castle goes quiet, I will require your services once more."

"My services?" he played dumb, hoping to coax her desires out of her, so he had something to fantasize about through the day as he struggled against the pull of sleep.

"As much as I dreamed of it before, after tonight... I must have you inside me. Every inch. I'll go mad without it. Do you want to be responsible for inciting madness in the last Targaryen, Jon Snow?" she laughed. Jon pursed his lips, the joke a bit too dark, even for him.

"I jest, but only about the second part," she teased, before leaning in closer, "Every inch," she reminded him with a torrid emphasis, flames licking both words.

"Mmm," he hummed weakly, hoping to give the impression of a tired but lustful response, though in truth he felt conflicted. There's nothing he could think of that he'd be unwilling to do to her had she asked or insisted. On the other hand, one of Jon's driving forces was his desire to never father bastards of his own. Every inch, her words replayed in his head as he considered them.

It was a huge risk. Daenerys may have feelings for him now, but the implications will only accumulate the older they get. She had a bright future ahead of her. Meanwhile, he didn't even have a last name to give her. Even if he had, there was none more fitting than Targaryen. Daenerys Targaryen, it had always been like poetry to his ears.

Dany's weight compressed as she yielded to slumber. Her steady breathing turned to sweet, soft snoring. Jon's heart swelled in his chest, having her pressed into him in such a way. He could barely enjoy this moment, remembering that some faceless lord waited for the chance to claim Daenerys as his wife, and would expect her maidenhood in tact. There mere consideration of this made him feel ill. She wasn't his, but as she lay nuzzled into his chest fast asleep, it sure felt like she was. He felt tears well in his eyes as his many victories this night seemed all for naught. Perhaps someone like Theon could be content tumbling around in bed with Daenerys and nothing more. But not Jon.

He had all but ruled out Castle Black after tonight, Night's Watch and their offensive vows be damned. But if he stayed, he knew he could only resist her advances so much before he'd have to give in, risking her future, his, and a possible pregnancy.

Jon lay awake for the scant few hours they had left before sunrise. The candle had long since burned out when the sun started to seep from the crack between the shudders. He slipped stealthily from underneath Dany, his shoulder sore from her weight. Or maybe her kick. Her room still smelled of
sweat and sex. He dressed quickly and quietly as he could manage, taking one last look at the silver-haired beauty who had mercilessly claimed his heart. He smiled warmly, only to follow it up with a sigh. Jon was too familiar with the feeling of happiness immediately chased by guilt. He wasn't even sure it came in any other form.

After gathering his boots, he grabbed her key from the hook, locking her inside as he left. He slid the key under her door, hoping she would find it when she woke. He pulled his boots on a few paces away and skulked off as the last throes of twilight surrendered to dawn. Through a window, he spied the comet streaking against the sky once more, stopping a moment to consider whether it was truly a sign of luck, or a bad omen looming. He carried on, wasting his wish on the former.
Bastard vs. Ward

In the dining hall, Jon sat amongst Robb, Theon, and a few guards and stable boys close enough in age. Jon's plate was mostly empty, save for a few stale rolls. There wasn't much left this night, as most of the food had gone to the King and his family. It didn't matter, though. Whatever appetite Jon had wasn't for food. He scanned the opposite end of the room for the silver-haired beacon. She wasn't hard to miss. He gulped, his face was pained, though it wasn't far off enough from his usual brooding expression to alert attention away from the raucous behavior keeping the men around him at bay.

Daenerys felt like his reality. But she wasn't. She lingered somewhere along the fringes of truth and fantasy. A secret he did a poor job of concealing while he forced dry bread down his unwilling throat, staring at her. Tasteless, really. Unsatisfying. Everything was, aside from her. The mere thought of her made him feel ill with love and lust in equal measure. Seeing her just tables away only made it worse. Now he understood why she'd excuse herself early. Fever, he thought, and his blood crept back to betray him as he could feel it rushing under his skin. The heat of it reddened his face.

"What's up with you, eh?" Theon took notice at Jon's sudden change in color as he stared across the room, unblinking.

Jon flinched, having been completely lost in his gaze. "Just tired," he muttered quietly.

"From staying up with Daenerys?" Robb inquired. Theon raised his eyebrows as he perked up to listen, drawing his goblet to his lips. Jon met Theon's eyes with a defensive glare, warning him not to go there with a simple look.

Robb continued, chewing a mouthful of food, "She looks better, gorgeous, even. You, though. You look like shit. Reckon you caught whatever she had?" He vaguely waved in her direction as he shoveled another bite into his mouth.

Theon had been very intently eyeing the brothers as they spoke, catching a little more between the lines than Jon had hoped. "Oh yeah," the ward chuckled, "he's caught somethin', alright."

Jon kicked his shin under the table, "Don't," he hissed a warning.

Theon and Jon both turned their gaze toward Daenerys. She had been studying Jon exactly the way she had confessed to doing. Oh, no, Jon thought, her eyes had looked far too sultry for the setting.
Jon held her gaze like a frightened pup, willing her to stop. She didn't. He wondered if she even saw Theon, judging by the way she hadn't peeled her eyes from him at all. The thought made him flush deeper.

Theon looked back to him, shaking his head in utter disbelief, "You've got to be shitting me. *Daenerys Targaryen* is eye-fucking the bastard of Winterfell."

Several of the men in earshot tried to steal glances to discern whether or not the Valyrian beauty had, indeed, been making eyes at the scruffy, brooding bastard. The men then turned their gaze back to Jon, seemingly waiting for an answer. Jon cleared his throat, "You think every woman fucks with her eyes 'cause fucking's all you can think about. She's simply lookin' over."

Jon pursed his lips for a moment but felt his point had not been strong enough. He continued, warning, "And *don't* talk about her that way again."

"Alright, *what* happened last night?" Theon asked, not at all impressed with Jon's defensive explanation. *Of all the times the thick-headed ward could've chosen to be observant, Jon thought, he chooses now?*

Jon looked down at his lap, nearly wringing the stale piece of bread in his hands. "She didn't feel well. Robb told me to take her to her room."

"*And?* " Theon nudged him, expectantly. Robb didn't know what to make of these accusations, unable to fathom how a highborn lady could have interest in a Snow. But something in Jon's reactions to Theon had him second-guessing. Theon had always been an ass, Jon usually didn't indulge that side of him this much.

"We talked. She fell asleep. End of story."

"What'd you talk about, then?"

Jon didn't answer, he was too busy watching as Daenerys rose, excusing herself early again. He felt a pang inside him as if some kind of magnetism had been responsible for urging him to chase after her. Without thinking, he rose from his seat.

"Jon?" Theon had a sickeningly smug look slathered across his face. "Seriously, no one else sees it?"
he barked at the table of men, before turning back to challenge Jon, "You're going after her right now."

"I'm going... for more bread," Jon lied. It wasn't convincing. He hadn't even finished what was on his plate. Jon had always been a terrible liar, not that he minded. He didn't like lying, anyway.

"Oh. Okay then," Theon seemingly relented, at least long enough for Jon's glare to relax. Theon rose, placing his thumbs underneath his belt in a suggestive manner. "Guess you won't mind if I go after her, then?"

At this, Jon thrust his shoulders forward, clenching his fists, fighting back the urge to hurl them right into his smug face. There was no hiding the fury that furrowed his brow and twisted his mouth into a snarl. Jon tried his best to suppress a growl while glaring at the ward, willing him to take the first shot.

Instead, Theon broke into a fit of laughter, which did nothing but stoke the rage Jon had felt. Ever the antagonist, Theon knew all the right buttons to push to stir Jon up, or Robb, or anyone, really.

Jon sat back down, feeling defeated. He had wished Daenerys were here, she'd know exactly what to say to get him out of this mess, and to somehow convince everyone around them that he should be in her room alone with her, for whatever reason. At that, he felt another pang of guilt. That's exactly where he should be. With her. He found himself calculating an escape route that wouldn't arise further suspicion, coming up short.

Theon sat back down, too. "Look," he started, "all's I know is, somethin's up with you two."

"She's my friend," Jon grumbled.

"Oh yeah?" Theon teased, "And Ros, she's my friend, too."

Jon briefly remembered the voluptuous redhead from the local brothel, the one he couldn't bring himself to lay with when given the opportunity. "She's not a whore," he muttered under his breath.

"And what's wrong with whores?" Theon's laughter was grating.
Jon clenched his teeth. Standing up once more, he straightened himself before the ward. His voice was gruffer now. "Nothing's wrong with 'em, but she isn't one, and I don't like the implication."

"Theon, fuck's sake. Stop it," Robb shook his head, hoping to mediate, giving Jon a curious look all the while. "My brother is seconds away from knockin' you to the ground. Let it go. And if you imply Daenerys is a whore one more time, I'll be the one knockin' you down."

Theon may have shut up, obeying Robb, but he still eyed Jon knowingly. A sense of victory was clear in his expression. The ward had gotten into his brother's head, too. Great, Jon thought. Throwing caution to the wind, Jon glared at Theon one last time before excusing himself. He wasn't obligated to answer to Theon or even Robb. He rose quickly, without indulging any of the eavesdropping men, and stomped out of the hall.
The Lucky Bastard

Jon paced around his room alone, still exhausted from the previous night, but unable to sleep. The sun had long since gone down, which meant Daenerys was almost certainly expecting him.

What a mess he'd made. He grappled with ways he could sneak to her without being noticed, as well as forgetting about all of it and sticking to his original plan: Castle Black. This all seemed too complicated for him. Now he had to look forward to Theon pestering him and ruining all the sweet glances Daenerys had saved for him each supper. *Ugh.*

There was a soft rapping at his door. His heart fluttered, almost certain of who he'd find on the other side. His face softened at the prospect, his entire body relaxing as he imagined her warm embrace. He swung the door open.

*Damn it,* he thought, disappointment slowly washing over him.

"...Jon?" Robb stood before him, feeling quite odd before his brother's lustful gaze. "You expecting someone?"

Jon snapped out of it, shaking his head and clearing his throat, "Not exactly."

"Maybe Theon went a little too far with his mocking, but you didn't look right tonight. I thought I should check on you," an honest concern in his tone.

Before Jon could even ponder a response, another knock sounded at his door. *Oh, no,* he thought, panicked. Though Jon looked genuinely shocked at the sound, Robb cocked his head. Jon closed his eyes, sighing, and cracked the door open to see who it was.

"Jon," Daenerys started, unable to see anything past his face. "You'd *really* keep me waiting? I told you, as *soon* as the sun went down—" He opened his door further, revealing Robb behind it before she said too much. Jon shrugged, shaking his head at her in a wordless apology. Daenerys pursed her lips, entering the room before shutting the door behind her.

"Dany," Robb nodded to her, eyebrows raised in disbelief.
"Robb," she muttered shyly, refusing to meet his eyes, pursing her lips again.

A moment of awkward silence passed before Robb broke it, "So... are you two really an item?"

"What?" Daenerys snapped, visibly flustered by the question. Turning to Jon, she almost felt betrayed that he'd go bragging to his brother about them so soon.

"Theon got the idea there's somethin' between us... he was taunting me pretty hard at supper," Jon trailed off meekly.

"Since when?" Robb asked, ignoring their feeble attempts to avoid just admitting it. He scanned his memory, trying to place when it all started.

"I wouldn't say that we're an item..."

"You wouldn't?" Daenerys challenged him bluntly, bringing a boot to the ground with an audible thud. Jon's eyes widened in warning. She realized her mistake as soon as she caught Robb smirking at her small tantrum.

"You're sure doing a terrible job at hiding whatever this is," Robb waved his hands between them, still shaking his head in disbelief. "I'm not going to say anything to anyone. I'm not sure how much good it'll do you, since Theon already figured it out. Just... be careful."

Jon and Dany looked to each other as they shook their heads in agreement.

"Alright, I'm... going to get back to my room," Robb offered, a twinge of jealousy in his tone.

"I should go, too," Daenerys chimed.

"What? Why?" Jon sharply protested, blocking them both from the only exit.

A third knock sounded at Jon's door. "Seven hells," he exclaimed, a bit too angrily. Expecting Theon, Jon felt his hackles rising. He swung the door open, startled to find his Uncle's kind face
smiling down at the three of them.

"Throwing a party, are we?" Benjen chuckled nervously after finding his nephews alone with the Targaryen girl. "I don't mean to interrupt, but I was hoping I could have a word with you alone, Jon."

"We were just leaving," Robb interjected, nodding to Daenerys, gesturing for her to lead the way. She took one last look at her lover, pleading him with her gaze. A gaze which lingered much too long, as she knew all too well what Benjen's presence implied. She turned to leave as Jon noticed the tears pooling in her violet eyes.

Benjen took note of the pained expressions that encapsulated both Jon and Daenerys as she walked off, alongside Robb. Jon placed his hand to his stomach as she left, almost as if nursing a physical wound. The door shut behind them.

Outside, Robb insisted on walking Daenerys to her room, hopeful he'd work out a few more details, as the curiosity ate away at him.

"Alright, have at it," Dany sighed, feeling she could trust him, too, if Jon had.

"Jon?" Robb asked, "I... kind of thought you liked me."

"There are few women who could resist your charms, Robb. I've never counted myself among them."

"So you say," he teased. "Still, it seems an odd pairing."

"He thinks so, too, I can tell. But not to me," she said, with certainty. "The Targaryen name used to mean something in the seven kingdoms. It's been snuffed out, and I'm the last ember. The ghost that forever haunts the Usurper," disgust clear on her tongue as she spat the word. "Could you think of a safer fate for me, than to marry a bastard, no claim of any kind? A ghost in his own right."

Robb pondered her words. Ghost, he thought. The direwolf's namesake felt all the more appropriate. It struck him that the double meaning had likely been Jon's intention all along. Daenerys had almost certainly pieced it together long ago, clever girl she was. It dawned on him, now, that the pair saw more in each other than others could see. "So you intend to marry him?"
"I don't know what I intend, or what he intends. I just know that the thought of him running away to Castle Black—I can't bear to think of it. I'd never see him again..." her voice trailed off, laced with a deep, genuine sadness.

Sighing as they reached her door, Robb even felt the heaviness of the situation hit him. "No matter what your father did, your brother—that's not you," Robb held eye contact with her, to drive the point home. "I hope you do marry him. Aside from our father, he's the best man I know."

Daenerys believed him. She threw her arms around his neck. "Thank you," she cooed, feeling like she had a brother again, though she had lost both of hers a lifetime ago.

"I'll talk to him for you," he assured her, unsure whether or not it would actually help.

They took one last look at each other before parting ways. Robb smiled warmly as he nodded to her as if admiring her for the last time, looking a touch wistful as he slipped away.

... Robb approached Jon's room again, hoping to put a word in for Daenerys, but also for himself. Jon had been his best friend, not just his brother. Somewhere far in the distant future, Robb had pictured himself, Warden of the North, and Jon alongside him, somehow, perhaps as his Captain of the Guards. He hadn't found any good arguments against his brother joining the Night's Watch before now, but there'd never be a reason as compelling as Daenerys Targaryen. Ned was probably the only man about the castle who wasn't entranced by the beauty. Even Bran and Rickon followed her around whenever permission was granted.

The brothers literally ran into each other as they rounded the same corner. "Robb," Jon gasped. Robb rubbed his arm after the impact. Jon spat, "Where'd she go?"

"Safely to her room."

Jon put his hand to his chest, steadying himself as he caught his breath.

"How in seven hells did you manage it, Jon?"
"Manage what?"

Robb scoffed, "Daenerys Targaryen, that's what."

Jon fought back a sly smile. "I didn't. She did."

"Huh," Robb rubbed the back of his head, considering. "I guess she'd have to, wouldn't she? You could barely muster a sound in front of her, before."

"I know," Jon agreed, just as perplexed. "Trust me, it doesn't make sense to me, either."

"She doesn't want you to go."

"Oh," Jon breathed, a pained look as he glanced in the direction of her room. Despite everything she had confessed to him, done to him, and let him do to her—he was always quick to dismiss himself entirely, and jump to the wrong conclusions.

"No," Robb laughed, "to Castle Black."

"But I'm not going. I just told Benjen."

"What'll you do, then?"

"No idea," he laughed, picking up the pace as he made his way back to Daenerys. "Lucky bastard," Robb muttered under his breath. Continuing in the opposite direction, he felt a mixture of envy and happiness for his brother.
Upon reaching her door, Jon struck a fist into it, rapping frantically. Each second that passed before she opened it felt like its own eternity. He used the spare time to catch his breath and compose himself.

With a soft click, Dany opened her door, half-hiding as she moved backward with it. She stepped out of the way so he could enter. Gaze never leaving the floor, she wouldn't look at him.

Cautiously, Jon stepped in, gently returning the door to its frame. "Daenerys?" he asked, no choice but to slink himself into the sullen atmosphere of the room. Finally, her eyes met his. Her eyelashes stuck together above bloodshot eyes, tears still clinging to them. She had been crying.

"What's wrong?" he asked. He followed her like a pup as she bent to sit down. Unable to bring herself to answer, Daenerys pursed her lips together. He knelt before her, clasping her hands in his.

"Please tell me," he willed her, voice shaking with anxiety.

"I don't want to lose you," she said weakly.

"You won't. I'm not going anywhere."

"But," she started. Jon cringed a bit internally, he always hated the word. Anything before the word but is horse shit, his father's wise words floating to the forefront of his mind. "I feel awful selfish seducing you just so you'd stay here with me."

"You did no such thing," he tried to soothe her.

"I did."

"You didn't."

She sighed, "You think I don't see the way the men look at me? I knew what I was doing to you."
"You're being ridiculous. If I had any clue how you felt all that time, maybe I would've seduced you."

"Jon," she said his name in a way she hoped would stop him. It didn't work.

"No. I'm not going to sit here and let you think you ruined something, or took anything away from me. I wouldn't be any happier at Castle Black. I was running away. All you did was show me that."

Dany looked down, hoping to disguise the few tears that had wriggled free from her lashes. She didn't respond, closing herself off again. Jon wasn't having it.

"Tell me what to do, Dany. I'd marry you this instant if that's what you wanted."

Without lifting her head, her eyes shot up to meet his. Violet orbs peered at him from under dark lashes, "Is that what you want?"

Jon couldn't help but smile, "We'll run away together."

"Now you're being ridiculous," she laughed, lightening briefly before slipping back into a somber, serious tone, "You know I can't leave Winterfell."

"Then we'll sneak off to Dorne. To Essos. Asshai by the Shadow..." he whispered. It was Jon's voice, but the words hadn't felt like his own. He reminded her of someone she couldn't quite place. He extended himself to kiss her, finally feeling relief as she kissed him back. Sweetly, at first, but inevitably they could both feel that familiar craving beginning to overtake them as they tasted each other's lips for the first time that day.

After a few moments, Jon broke their kiss to struggle out of his leathers, while Dany worked to unlace her gown. Free of his doublet, she helped lift his tunic over his head. She brought her hands to his curls, massaging his scalp as she pulled his face back into her kiss.

"Make love to me," Dany breathed, her heart spinning. Unmoving, he looked as if he were far away as he held her hungry gaze. "Please," she pleaded, squirming with anticipation.
Jon had nearly frozen, a sudden internal conflict festering within him and holding him back. He'd already stripped away most of his clothes, he couldn't turn back now, could he? And yet, the consequences kept swirling through his mind, a sick feeling forming in the pit of his stomach.

Frustrated, Dany tugged his hair a bit, sending her nails over his scalp to provoke some sort of response, to shake him out of whatever trance he had slipped into. She wrapped her legs around him, pulling him into her. Shivering as the silks caressed his skin, he clasped his arms around her back. "Please," she whimpered again.

Snapping out of it completely, Jon feverishly tugged free the last of her laces in the back of her gown, the ones she couldn't quite reach. He stood up to pull the fabric over her, surprised to feel Dany's hands already untying his trousers from underneath her skirts. He let loose a small gasp to see that she had been completely naked underneath. Not even stockings to cover her feet.

Jon knelt back down, placing his hands on her thighs as she spread them open before him. Already clinging to her thighs, her wetness hung in strands like honey. Dany's arousal was something no amount of boorish brothel stories could prepare him for. Jon felt pretty certain you couldn't just pay for that kind of thing. Without any prompt other than her enticing scent, Jon began moving his mouth toward her again.

"You don't need to do that," she cooed, "I'm ready for you."

"I want to," he replied, prying her legs open further. "For at least a moment."

Before she had any time to protest, he hungrily kissed her cunt like he did her mouth, his tongue sparring with the sensitive flesh. Dany let out a familiar wail at the suddenness of his attack. Already feeling as if she couldn't take any more, she tried to move away from him. He chased her with his mouth, never letting his lips part from hers. He forcefully grabbed her hips, pulling her closer to his face. He lapped at her, cut loose like an animal. Dany began flailing again, kicking at his shoulders as she tried to find a place for her legs. Thick strands hung from his lips as he finally pulled away.

"Seven hells," Dany managed to curse breathlessly before she could brace herself for the collision of his wet face against hers, like glue holding their mouths together. Between her shaking hands, she held his head, likewise lapping at his face. Her scent on him, her taste, the beads of sweat pooling in the groove of his upper lip; the combination was enough to signal the retreat of her irises, leaving behind only two milky white pools. My skinchanger, Jon thought, smirking to himself.
Clawing her way further up the bed, Jon followed in close pursuit, struggling to remove his unlaced trousers as quickly as possible. Dany leaned forward to help him wriggle out of them, but he pushed her back against the bed with another hungry kiss. He managed to maneuver out of his remaining clothing solely with the aid of his feet. Once free, he pulled away, stopping to examine her face. He lowered himself onto her, their completely naked bodies pressed together for the first time. Dany lifted a hand to push Jon's curls from his face. For a moment, they both felt lost amongst the other's gaze. And just as she had braced herself for the brunt of his cock, she felt him seize up again. He was still looking right at her, but suddenly, he wasn't there.

"No," Dany barked, her voice gruff and upset. "Keep going," she urged. Though he had been facing her, his eyes fell somewhere to her side, as he lay frozen in place above her, looking worrisome and sick.

"What is it?" her tone harsher than usual, frustration engulfed her. She could feel his cock pulsing against her lower abdomen. _So close_, she thought. At this point, she was not above weeping from anticipation.

"What if you get pregnant?" Jon whispered, as low as he could manage, afraid that even saying the words aloud meant they'd manifest as reality. Dany had finally understood his apprehension.

"Then we'll have a child," she answered simply, as _if_ it could be so simple. Writhing her hips, she tried to work him inside of her, to no avail.

His body fought against her efforts, his heart beating wildly, conflicted, "I can't father a bastard."

"Then _don't_. We'll marry. We'll run away if we must," she spat in haste, her words felt hot against his skin. She pulled his body to hers with arms wrapped tightly around him, crooning, "To Dorne. To Essos. _Asshai by the Shadow..._"

Needing no further convincing, Jon locked eyes with her once more. Here they both were, on the cusp of something they couldn't turn back from. Somewhere behind their eyes, there was a full surrender to whatever consequences fate already had planned. Dany closed her eyelids tightly, having saved her wish to use on the red comet that wandered the sky somewhere above them.

Jon slipped his hands underneath Dany's arms as he centered his body above her. Their breaths naturally fell into sync together as he gripped her shoulders. All sense of time ceased. She bit her lip, letting her hands wander along his back. Very slowly, he began to roll his hips backward. Jon exhaled through a small, knowing grin. The tip of his cock slid, painfully for the both of them, along her exposed flesh. Without even entering yet, she had already soaked him through. He knew exactly
how far down to go, courtesy of his mouth. He paused there a moment, bringing his eyes back up to hers.

Jon thrust into her, careful not to go too deep, but with enough force to make her gasp. Upon his arrival, he immediately succumbed to a small whimper, already overwhelmed with how she felt wrapped around him. Nearly hot enough inside to burn him. He felt submerged in her torrent, he could feel it rushing against his skin; soft, like velvet, like silks. Just like with his fingers, her tightness fought him, encouraging him to keep thrusting against it. And so he did.

Dany had been panting, small cries escaping her with each thrust. Her body shook, likewise unable to handle the inescapable fullness she felt. She nodded her head in what looked like agreement with each thrust. They took turns clenching and unclenching their eyelids, stopping to grin each time they caught the other with open eyes.

The walls inside of her pulsed in unison with each thud of her heart. She wondered if Jon could feel it on his cock. *He could.* Her moaning grew throaty as she dug her nails into his skin. Jon fought with each breath, none of which could come or leave quick enough. He picked up speed, finally thrusting with his full length. Dany cried out, gripping him hard from the inside, as well as the outside. She clapped her legs on either side of him, maneuvering them in such a way as to work him even deeper inside of her.

She grabbed onto his ass with both hands, encouraging his rough movements, despite her pained expression. Jon felt his toes curling again as his breathing became erratic. His thrusts began to falter as his muscles tensed, growing weaker and uneven as he lost control. He obeyed the urge to pull away from her before it was too late.

"No," she locked her legs around him, fastened with her feet. She helped plunge his full length into her, "*don't pull away.*"

As his cock quite literally crashed into the very back of her cunt, Dany let out a sharp cry of pain to match. Feeling completely enveloped in her, now, that was all Jon could take. With her legs still locked tightly around him, he had no choice but to spill inside of her as his body convulsed beneath her grip. He collapsed onto her chest, still whimpering. Dany felt utter contentment under his full weight, feeling him slowly soften and jerk as he remained sheathed inside of her.

Running her fingers through his dampened curls, she kissed his forehead gently. Jon rolled his hips backward again, allowing himself to slip out of her. He adjusted lazily, angling to spare her some of his weight before collapsing back onto her, nestled between her breasts. Dany continued stroking his hair and scalp, willing him to sleep. She stayed awake a bit longer, hoping to weld every detail of the night to her memory.
The boy Jon had been sparring with, one of the guard's sons, had fallen too easily from his blow. Sighing, Jon found himself wishing he had better opponents to practice with. As he reached to help the boy to his feet, he noticed that all training amongst the courtyard had ceased. The group of men all began staring off in the same direction.

Jon turned around to see what all the fuss was about. *Daenerys*. She had been coming from the library tower, Sansa to one side, Jeyne Poole to the other. The sight of her swaying toward him made him feel as though he had the wind knocked out of him. It had been over a month, now, since their first night together. He wondered if there'd come a time when he'd look at her without feeling as though he'd been struck.

Their gazes locked as she passed. Even their bodies leaned toward each other as she approached, drawn together like magnets. With eyelids half-mast, Daenerys donned a slightly furrowed brow, her mouth parted, head cocked a bit to the side as if awaiting a kiss. She looked intoxicated. And so did Jon, who had eagerly returned the gaze with quivering lips and sloshed eyes.

Robb cleared his throat. Plummeting back to reality, Jon whipped around to face a courtyard full of boys with wooden sparring swords hanging limp at their sides, staring in disbelief. Nervously, he ruffled his hair, averting his eyes as best he could.

"Either she's fucking with *us*, or you're fucking *her*," Theon accused him, arms folded across his chest. Jon rapidly blinked his gaze to the ground. None of the boys carried on with their training, either. They kept on staring at him as if he were a grumpkin or snark.

Jon heard heavy footfalls above him. He looked up to see his father had gone from the perch he'd watch them from. Lady Stark was left alone in his wake, glaring down at the bastard as he grimaced in response. Theon had noticed Ned fast approaching, too. "*Now* you're in for it," he warned, relishing the moment a bit too much.

"Jon. I would have a word with you, *alone.*" Ned's voice boomed as he appeared before them, commanding the attention of everyone in earshot. And maybe further. It wasn't often Jon had upset his father. He was used to floating about the castle, more or less unnoticed. His heart slammed into his rib cage. *Oh, no*, he thought to himself, dread washing over him.

Ned guided Jon down to an empty corridor toward the armory, far out of earshot of the curious boys in the yard. As his father began, Jon found Ned's tone to be much softer than he had been expecting, "I heard some troubling banter amongst the guards. I had dismissed it as utter rubbish. Something
about the bastard of Winterfell sneaking around with Daenerys Targaryen."

Jon gulped. He felt his blood leave him. Unlike when he was with Daenerys, it didn't have anywhere else to go. It simply left him. He felt dizzy, certain he was about to be scolded, ordered to stay away from her. Jon finally met Ned's gaze with an involuntary scowl. He needn't answer his father, for his eyes had said it all.

"Gods, it's true," Ned had nearly whispered, "What have you done?"

As he looked into Jon's eyes, he could tell how far gone the boy was. He felt a brief pang of understanding as he remembered Harrenhal. The way the dark-haired beauty had felt in his arms as they danced. The Lord of Winterfell was certain Daenerys had bewitched Jon with those same violet eyes, just as Ashara Dayne had done to him all those years ago. Ned straightened up, inwardly kicking dirt back over the memory he had buried long ago.

"It's clear there are urgent issues we must discuss, in detail. I will come fetch you in the morning, and we'll head to the crypts to discuss matters in private."

"The crypts?" Jon bemoaned, he had always hated the place. It gave him nightmares, in fact. Was it some form of punishment? "Surely, there must be some other place we could..."

"No," Ned interrupted the boy. "It is the only place. You'll know why soon enough."

"Will you punish me, then?" Jon couldn't bring himself to meet his father's gaze.

Ned harrumphed, in a way that gave away his smirk, "Not me."

"Who, then? Lady Stark?"

As if simply saying her name had been enough to summon her, Jon heard Catelyn's voice behind him, "Ned," she interjected, not even acknowledging Jon's presence. Like usual. Ned redirected his gaze to his wife.

"What is it, Cat?" he asked, concern apparent in his tone. Jon tried to slink out of the way, and into
"It's the King," she held up a scroll between her fingertips as she explained, "Stannis Baratheon had been waiting at King's Landing upon his return, abandoning Dragontone. The brothers," Cat paused to catch her breath, "have made amends."

"What does this mean for us?" Ned narrowed his gaze in a careful, measured manner as he awaited her response.

"He no longer needs a Hand..." Cat's voice trailed off as she began softly sobbing. Ned threw his arms around his wife. Buried in his embrace, Jon could hear her laughing through the tears, looking as if a ten tonne weight had been lifted from her shoulders. Even Ned chuckled, rocking his wife back and forth, soothing her. At that, Jon quietly backed away, leaving them to it.

**Had Jon Arryn died?** Jon could only assume, though he hadn't heard anything about it, himself. He had been like a father to Ned, so much that he had been Jon's namesake. Arya's, too. As his father and Lady Stark held each other, he felt it best to retreat back to training with Jory Cassel and the others. As per Robb's suggestion, Jon would train to replace the captain of the guards one day, after all. Best to glean as much as he could from the man before the time came. Jon's dedication to his training had recently overtaken most of his time as of late, much to Dany's chagrin.

Jon wandered back to the yard, finding everyone still loitering about as Jory was absent from his post. Perhaps the guard captain had heard the news about Stannis, as well. Whatever any of it had meant. He'd decided to ask Robb for more details at supper.

"Jon," Robb hastily approached him, "I was afraid father had Ice take your head after that display."

"I live to see another day," Jon laughed, at least until he remembered the crypts that awaited him in the morning.

"What happened?"

"Nothing, really. Your mother interrupted us before he could lay into me."

"That's not like her," Robb looked concerned. "What did she say?"
"I'll tell you at supper," Jon assured him. As the brothers noticed Theon meandering back over, Robb nodded.

"And what did Lord Stark have to say, eh?" Theon shifted his weight between his feet in a way that got right under Jon's skin. Gods, he was annoying.

"Is that any of your business?" he challenged. After a month of dealing with his near-constant antagonism, Jon had gotten better at not letting the ward get to him so much.

"Say, Jon," Theon started, "Mind telling us what it is you do to Daenerys to get her to look at you that way?"

Jon was shocked. Theon's voice was serious, not even a hint of his signature snark. "Looking for love advice are we, Greyjoy? Why don't you stick to what you know—disappointing Ros."

"Come on, then. Tell us," Theon pestered, uncharacteristically ignoring Jon's jab. Robb looked inquisitively at Jon from underneath a raised brow. They're actually serious, he thought, bewildered.

"Maybe later. We've got training to do," he replied with a sly smile, as he reached for one of the wooden swords.
As Jon took his usual seat in the dining hall, Robb couldn't help but notice him beam at Daenerys from across the room. At this point, they had something of a secret language of glances that only the pair could fully decipher. Though Robb's guesses likely weren't far off.

"If you're not going to bother hiding it, the least you could do is stop flaunting it."

"Would you?"

"No..." Robb grimaced, tearing into a roll, finding Jon's consistent good mood to be a bit off-putting.

"I hear father's been considering matches for you," Jon elbowed his older brother with assurances.

He sighed, "Yeah. Funny how few details I get about my own future. I heard the name Tyrell, though. The ones from The Reach."

"They're a strong house," Jon nodded.

"Tyrell?" Theon asked, awaiting clarification.

"Yeah. What about them?" Robb asked, already taking on a defensive tone.

"Fucking Starks," Theon shook his head as if damning their luck.

"What?" Jon and Robb asked, in unison.

"I hear Lady Olenna was the most beautiful woman in all seven kingdoms, in her day. She's old now though. Chances are good her granddaughter takes after her."

"And where'd you hear that?" Robb's eyes lit up.
"Around," Theon replied vaguely, scooping stew onto his spoon with his finger. He could be messing with the young lord, but he seemed too preoccupied to be bothered.

The table was unusually quiet as the boys ate. Jon used the time to spy on Daenerys, who had likewise been preoccupied. This time she didn't look back at him. It looked as though she had been trying to calm Sansa down. The redheaded girl had thrown her hands in the air, upset and shouting, "What kind of a name is Dickon, anyway? If I have to marry him, I'll die!"

Sansa stormed out of the dining hall up in arms, Daenerys chased after her as Lady Stark looked on, clearly embarrassed by her daughter's outburst.

"What in seven hells was that about?"

"The Tarlys," Theon answered, sounding bored.

"How do you know all of this before even we do?" Robb demanded.

"Always listening," Theon chaffed, cupping his hand around his ear in demonstration.

"The Tarlys, they're from Horn Hill, right?"

"They're something of a package deal with the Tyrells, or so I gather. I don't know what either house would want to do with the Starks, though. Randyll Tarly supported the Targaryens during the Rebellion." Jon's ears perked up at the name.

"What's this about Dickon?"

"That's the son. Well, one of 'em. The eldest is going off to Old Town to become a Maester."

"Well, that's odd. Is he not the heir?" Robb asked, genuinely confused as to how an heir could just relinquish his titles or positions.
"Eh, southerners," Theon dismissed Robb's observation with a simple shrug. Robb and Jon looked to each other as they nodded in Theon's direction, exchanging perplexed shrugs about Theon's sudden interest in gossip. Jon's expression dropped as he dwelled on the bit about Targaryens. Could it be that the Tarlys wanted something to do with Daenerys? He tried to shake the idea, feeling the paranoia chipping away at his mood.

All Jon had really heard was that one of Stannis' first acts as Hand had been to find a more suitable match for Joffrey. Ned, being Robert's closest friend and confidant, and one of the most honorable men in the kingdom, didn't need a marriage alliance to keep loyal. Stannis thought marrying Joffrey to Sansa would be a waste. Everyone but Sansa seemed happy that her future was free of the royal twat. It was still up in the air who Stannis had picked out for the young stag. At least Jon didn't have to worry about the Baratheons where Daenerys was concerned. She, a perpetual thorn in the Usurper's side.

Jon felt his skin prickle as if someone had been watching him. He scanned the room, startled to find it had been Ned staring back. He motioned for Jon to approach. Jon rose from his seat without hesitation and wandered over to the Lord of Winterfell.

Ned waved him in close and whispered, "Bran never joined us for dinner. I don't wish to alarm Cat by leaving, myself. Would you go find him and send him in?"

Before he could finish nodding his head, Jon had already gone. His stomach had sunk with worry. He broke into a run as soon as he was sure he was out of Lady Stark's line of sight.

... 

Jon's feet collided with the ground, nearly throwing it behind him with his boots as he ran. He knew exactly where to find his little brother. "Bran! " he shouted to the boy, somewhere in the distance. He didn't expect an answer, he just wanted Bran to know he was on the way. He could hear Summer's yelping clearer the closer he got.

Upon reaching the broken tower, Jon shouted once more, "Bran? You up there?"

Even in the darkness, Jon could see the small boy hanging for dear life, clutching the side of the tower. Summer paced along the bottom, distressed and crying.

"Bran! " Jon yelled to him.
"I'm scared, Jon," he called down to his brother, the boy's voice quivered. Jon felt helpless, the fear in Bran's voice was unmistakable.

"It's okay, Bran. I'm here. I'm going to help you."

"What do I do?"

Cursing the darkness as he paced beneath the tower along with Summer, he tried to find a solution. Bran's feet scraped against the stone as he struggled to find footing that just wasn't there. Jon didn't have much time, who knows how long he'd already been hanging from the crumbling heap of stone.

"Bran, you're going to have to jump. There's no other way," he called up to the boy.

"I can't," he began to cry.

"You can. I'm going to catch you."

Bran's feet kicked against the stone, as he fought to steady himself. Jon could hear his brother sniffle as he cried. His heart crumbled in his chest. "You can do it, Bran. Kick off and jump down. I promise to catch you."

As the boy began to fall, Jon's heart nearly stopped. He mustered every ounce of his coordination to safely catch him as they slammed into the hard ground together. Jon hit with such force that it drove the air right from his lungs. As he struggled to inhale, Bran rolled off of him. He tried to speak but found it impossible without breath.

"J-Jon!" Bran stuttered, this time he was afraid for his big brother. Hearing the worry in Bran's voice was just what Jon needed to fight harder to draw a breath. He started gasping for air as if he'd been pulled from the water after nearly drowning.

"Does anything hurt?" Jon spat, panting all the while.
"I'm only a little sore," Bran murmured through a thick cloud of guilt.

"Good," Jon breathed as he collapsed back into the grass. His lungs were aflame, afraid he might start spitting fire. Bran moved to stand up but had been stopped as Jon's hand closed around his wrist.

"Bran," he started, his tone firm, despite the ragged breathing. "Do you remember how scared you felt up there?"

The boy shook his head, his expression still pained with guilt.

"That's how your mother feels every time she sees you climbin' like that. Every time she can't find you, that's how she's feeling."

Bran nodded, staring at the ground.

"I won't tell you to stop climbing, but, I will ask you to come get me if you want to go that high again. Do you understand?"

Jon used a thumb to lift Bran's chin, so the boy could see his sternness and his fear. Bran nodded again, "Yes."

"Go on, get back to the great hall, father's worried sick about you."

With that, Bran scampered off, Summer following close behind him.

Jon shook his hands out, they had still been trembling with fear at the thought of anything happening to Bran. He lay in the grass a moment, trying to recover. His chest ached from the collision, his lungs still burned from having the wind knocked from them. Calm down, he's okay, he scolded himself for dwelling on it any longer than necessary.

Suddenly, Jon heard a small, strange whimper nearby. Ghost, he thought, able to identify his direwolf immediately. He made so few sounds that when he had, there was a bit of an unnatural bent, almost like a person doing an impression of a direwolf. He smiled as he rose to meet his loyal
"Daenerys," he clutched his chest, shocked to see her standing alongside Ghost. She wore a white cloak, silver waved tresses pouring from her hood like water from a fountain. The violet had almost glowed against the whites of her eyes, against the pale of her skin. Ghost looked more suited to her in that moment, like her gallant protector. Jon smiled at the thought.

"What're you doing with Ghost?"

"I left Sansa after hearing yelling outside. I knew something was wrong. That's when I spotted Ghost. I knew he'd know where to find you. So I followed him."

Jon shuffled to his feet, still clutching his chest in pain. Dany moved in to wrap her arms around him, "Are you alright?"

"I think so. I'm going to have one hell of a bruise, though. Maybe a broken rib or two."

Careful not to touch his chest, Dany rubbed her hands along Jon's back to soothe him. "I saw what you did for Bran. You're going to be an incredible father one day, Jon Snow."

Jon frowned, "You know I don't like to think about that."

"Why not?" she demanded, perhaps a bit more vehemently than the conversation called for. Her irritation waned as soon as could see the sadness and conflict that stirred behind his dark eyes.

"Lord Stark knows about us," Jon warned, changing the subject.

"Ned knows about us?"

"Yes."

"How?"
"From your look this morning."

"Shit," she spat. Jon couldn't help but laugh. "What did he say?" she interjected.

"Nothing yet. He said we're to discuss matters in the crypts in the morning," he nodded toward them, the entrance had been just across the field from where they stood. A shudder overtook him as he remembered his nightmares all too vividly.

"That's ominous," Dany concluded, taking note of Jon's uneasy expression.

"Yeah. Place gives me nightmares," he confessed. Still looking toward the crypts, Jon's skin started to feel hot, prickled again with the familiar feeling of being watched. It felt different when it was her, though. Without so much as a touch or even a look, Dany could stir his blood within him, simply by being close.

"Does it hurt very badly?" she asked, placing her hands on his chest as gently as she could manage.

"I get the impression you're asking because you have something in mind."

"Don't I always?" she teased. A smile flashed across her face before she took off running. Toward the crypts. Seven hells, Jon cursed under his breath, unable to resist chasing after her as his feet whisked him away.
She had been faster than him, beating him there by a wide margin. Jon never thought he'd find himself at the mouth of the Winterfell crypts alone. At night, no less. He slowly approached the open ironwood door, pulling it closed behind him. The dank, ancient air nearly repelled him. Everything about this felt wrong. The things I do for love, he chided himself.

He stood just barely inside the entrance, listening to his breath. Where had she gone? He couldn't hear or see anything. A light suddenly flickered up from the bottom of the winding steps. "Daenerys?" he called, his voice echoed too loudly, bouncing off of the stone walls of the cavernous tomb below.

"Time to face your fears, Jon Snow," her voice likewise echoed back to him, sending shivers up his spine. Always unable to resist her advances, he slowly descended the steps, his heart thudding in his chest, though he honestly couldn't discern whether it was from fear or anticipation. Jon kept his hands outstretched to grip the walls of the narrow passage as he made his way down.

Her naked legs were the first thing he could see in the dim light, as he finally reached the bottom. He approached her cautiously, as she held her skirts a loft with a knowing glare. She looked almost wicked, perhaps it was just the setting. No matter how many times he had already taken her, he'd always found himself a bit nervous to approach her when she looked at him insatiably. She leaned further against the stone wall, rubbing her legs together in a suggestive manner. Oh, no, Jon thought, his nerves had been getting the best of him.

He had nearly forgotten where he had been as she kept lifting her skirts higher, giving him a peek of her curls, smiling sinfully by candlelight. She had even removed her boots, which had cast a long shadow beside her.

"How often do you walk around like that? With nothin' underneath," he gulped before letting his mouth hang agape.

"As often as I need to," she explained, reaching a leg out toward him, running her foot along the inside of his pant leg, from his knees to his thighs.

"We should be getting back," Jon lamented, stopping her foot before it traveled too far.

"No. We should stay here."
"This feels wrong."

"I know," she moved closer, licking her lips before pressing them gently to his, "That's what I like about it."

Feeling his restraint, she pulled him roughly into her kiss. "Ouch," he cried softly.

"Right. I'm sorry."

Jon had a pained look, alright, but not about his sore chest, "I don't think I can," he muttered regretfully.

"You don't have to. I will," she assured him, guiding him to the ground without hesitation.

"They'll notice we're gone."

"Shh," she quieted him, "Quickly, then. You haven't touched me in days," she reminded him. He had been too worn out to sneak to her after training as hard as he could each day with the Cassels, it was true. She moved her boots and cloak underneath his head for cushion, before feverishly moving to unlace his trousers.

Jon watched the light from the small candle bouncing off of the vaulted walls around him. Thankfully he couldn't see any of the eerie statues staring back at him as he glanced around. He vowed to find time to visit the godswood and apologize to the gods for what he was about to do, here of all places. By the time he looked back to Dany, she had managed to strip her dress off entirely, her breasts swaying above him as she shimmied his trousers down. During moments like this, he still pondered the possibility he might yet wake from all of it.

Holding true to her word, she moved quickly indeed. She took him in her mouth long enough to wet him. The suddenness sent a shudder through him, an odd combination of pain and ecstasy in his wounded state. Without letting go of his cock, she climbed atop him, guiding him inside of her. Something about her completely naked body above him as he remained fully clothed made his pulse quicken. It felt especially indecent in the crypts. She melted into him slowly, moaning as she inched her way down. She rocked her hips, grinding further as she adjusted to that delicious feeling of fullness. It wasn't long before his cock had slammed into the walls inside of her from every angle as she writhed. Making love to Dany had always felt like a battle.
Jon broked into a series of rough groans, her favorite kind. They typically eased slowly into lovemaking, plenty of teasing and touching as they built to the moment. This time, his body nearly reeled at the suddenness of such a full-blown assault. He grasped her hips hard, pushing her even further into him, helping guide her as she rocked. *Quickly,* he considered. That wouldn't be a problem at this rate.

Since he was gripping her now, she was free to let her hands wander. And so, her hand dropped between her legs, letting go of a throaty chuckle at Jon's bewildered expression as he realized what she was about to do. His thrusting wound down as she stroked herself in a hurried and somewhat sloppy manner. Jon watched on, mesmerized and distracted, nearly drooling. "*Keep going,*" she urged him.

Snapping out of it, he sat up, pulling her into his lap. He bent his knees to get a better grip on her, clasping his hands behind both of her shoulders, her hands all the while bumping against his lower abdomen as she caressed away. The feeling of her pleasuring herself in his lap, against his skin, all while he had been buried deep inside of her—it was enough to send his irises fleeing to the back of his head. He protested their involuntary departure, as he struggled to uncross his eyes so he could keep watching her.

He kept pulling her body harder onto his, lifting himself off of the ground as he thrust deeper. I'm too close, *he thought,* trying to fall back. Just in time, he felt her body tense up the way it always had before she began to tremor. She sounded hoarse as she moaned and convulsed on top of him. He fastened his hands behind her shoulders as she shook, making sure she couldn't get away. She pulsed and squeezed him from the inside, coaxing him to climax with her. His body obeyed. Dany kept stroking herself and writhing until finally, she could feel the burst of heat deep inside of her.

Both unwilling to break apart, he cradled her against the back of his knees as they recovered. Dany lifted her hand to wipe the sweat from her forehead as Jon caught it on the way up. He took her wet fingers into his mouth, sucking them dry. Dany's eyes fluttered closed, her heart skipping a beat as his tongue swirled around her fingertips. She withdrew her hand, "You'd better stop, Jon Snow. You're getting me worked up again."

Jon laughed heartily, chasing it with a pained grimace, "I'm *really* going to feel this tomorrow."

Daenerys lifted herself off of him, pulling his trousers back up before lacing them. Shaking his head, Jon couldn't help but blush as she squat there, completely bare, helping him dress.

"Are you shaking your head at me?" she asked as she reached for her dress.
"Maybe a little," he smiled as he watched her slip her gown over her head. Back facing him, she knelt beside him. At the cue, he helped lace her up. Her gowns swished around her legs as she rose, turning to face him before helping him to his feet.

Dany pulled her boots on and drew her cloak around her before grabbing the small still-burning candle as she turned to leave. Curiously, she had remained unfazed as hot wax dripped down her fingers.

Ghost had been waiting patiently for them outside the ironwood door. The direwolf began escorting the pair back to the great hall. They got about halfway before Jon broke the silence, "Daenerys..."

"Not Dany ?" she teased.

"Alright, Dany," he corrected himself, pausing briefly, before finding the right tone to show his gratitude, "Thank you."

"For what?"

"For not letting me run away," Jon muttered, his voice almost as sad as the night he first whisked her away beyond the gates.

"Thank you," she countered. He raised his eyebrows as if to ask her for what, But he didn't need to. "For not running away."

Still following Ghost's lead, Dany reached for Jon's hand as they walked together. He exhaled, certain he'd never grow tired of her touch or the tantalizing way it had seared his skin. He liked the burn. And she liked it, too.

"I love you, you know," she offered meekly, in a voice hardly above a whisper. They had a mutual understanding, but she knew how self-loathing Jon could be and thought now was as good a time as ever to finally put words to the feeling.

Jon stopped in his tracks, squeezing her hand as he drew her to where his feet were planted. Wrapping his free hand around the back of her neck, he pressed his forehead to hers, "I love you,
too." The hood of her cloak fell around her shoulders.

Gazing into her eyes, now, he nuzzled his nose against hers, "More than anything," he added, before kissing her deeply once more. The kiss had started innocently enough, though passionate. As per usual, it quickly and inevitably evolved into another torrid sparring session. Sensing how inappropriate this was so close to the great hall, Jon pulled away from her mouth with a disgruntled groan. He kept his fingers in her soft hair, massaging her scalp as he tried to will himself away from her.

As he finally broke free from the pull of her, Jon turned to see Theon leaning against a wall not far from the doorway. Arms folded, head cocked to the side. A smug smile slowly drawing itself across his face. He watched the pair for a moment, utterly pleased to have finally caught them in the act.

Jon, as well as Ghost, stared back at the ward, unflinching. Theon relented, ducking back into the dining hall. He had always felt unease around the red-eyed beast. Most people had. Everyone but him. And Daenerys.

"What's his problem?"

"He wants to know what I do to you, to get you to look at me that way," Jon teased, squinting his eyes a bit, trying to extract the answer for himself. He had a couple ideas of his own, but only Daenerys had known for sure.

"It's not just what you do. It's what you are," her eyes were glistening, wide and childlike.

"And what am I? Just a very lucky bastard," he shook his head, grinning with his mouth, but there was no trace of a smile in his eyes.

"You're not a bastard. Not to me."

For a moment, he could almost believe it.
Back Into the Crypts

After a sleepless night, Ned retrieved Jon from his room and they started off on a silent journey toward the crypts. Dawn still lurked beneath the twilight, stalking it like prey as it crept below the tree line, waiting. The darkness only heightened the uneasy feeling Jon had as he followed his father. It wasn't a terribly long walk from the great keep, but the silence made it seem longer. Not a single thing stirred in the early morning, save for him and his father. Jon shivered.

Outside the ironwood door, Jon held a torch out as Ned placed steel to the top before striking it with a flint stone. Jon watched closely as the fire engulfed it, hypnotized by the dancing flames. Ned took the torch from the boy and gestured for Jon to lead the way as Ned pulled the heavy door shut behind them. As he descended the narrow stairwell a second time, he expelled nearly all the air from his lungs with a heavy sigh.

At the bottom of the steps, Jon could see the imprint he had left with Daenerys the night before, as well as traces of dried candlewax. He tried to kick dust over the evidence before Ned could see. But his father never looked down.

Guiding Jon down the corridor, Ned stopped in front of the likeness of a cloaked woman. Her hand was outstretched, the other grasped to her shoulder. To Jon, she looked like the embodiment of elegance. So much so, that she felt out of place amongst the usual frightening effigies that inhabited the crypts.

Ned handed the torch back to Jon, as he grabbed one of the nearby candles to borrow its flame. With it, he lit the rest of the many candles adorning the shrine. Jon could tell Ned did this often, both from how quickly he managed to light each candle, as well as how many candles had been little more than stumps. Melted wax hung from her altar like a frozen waterfall.

"Do you know who this is, Jon?" Ned finally broke the awkward silence.

"Your sister," Jon guessed.

Ned looked down at the boy as if awaiting a better answer.

"Lyanna Stark," Jon clarified, half-afraid to speak her name aloud. His father had always kept a tight seal on the memory of his sister, glaring into silence anyone who dared broach the subject. Jon wasn't even sure he had gotten the name right, it had been so long since he'd last heard it. It must've
been sometime even before Daenerys had first arrived at Winterfell.

"Lyanna," Ned whispered, more so to her likeness, than to Jon. He turned back to the boy, "Tell me what you know about how she died."

Jon felt his face flush. Everyone at Winterfell knew how much Lyanna's death had haunted Ned. This was one odd punishment, indeed. Jon knew better than to keep his father waiting, however. Besides, he wanted to get out of the damned crypts as quickly as possible, his skin was crawling.

"She was taken against her will. She was raped," Jon frowned as he said the word. "And then murdered. You found her in a pool of her own blood, but you were too late."

The pain of the memory was clear on Ned's face. "Do you know by whom she was taken?"

Jon had tried to avoid saying the name. It felt like a betrayal to Daenerys, somehow.

"R-Rhaegar," he finally stuttered after a moment, "Targaryen."

Ned sighed, he looked at a loss for words.

"She's not like him," Jon quarreled, taking a wild guess as to what Ned's lesson today had really been about. Why had Ned insisted she be raised at Winterfell if he would just reduce her to a monster, like her brother?

Ned didn't bother to stifle his chuckle, "She is. She is exactly like him," he said, smiling. Something in the way he said it, without so much as a trace of sarcasm, made Jon even angrier.

"Right," Ned said, as he looked down to see Jon fuming. "That was exactly the version of events that the kingdoms would come to know. The safety of my entire family rested on it. Yours, most of all. It still does."

Jon's anger relented, but he still braced himself, unsure where any of this was headed.
"But I can't have you believing that rubbish any longer. You need to know the truth. So you can decide."

Jon's stomach dropped. He didn't feel clever enough to decipher whatever it was Ned was hinting at. "What do you mean?"

"Rhaegar didn't kidnap Lyanna. He loved her. And she loved him."

Jon ran his fingertips over his forehead in confusion, almost as if massaging the new information into his mind. "Then how did she die?"

As his father turned from Lyanna to him, Jon felt daunted by the sudden and intense eye contact.

"Please understand that I had no idea what Rhaegar's intentions were with my sister. Everyone had thought she had been kidnapped, even though that just didn't seem like the prince I knew. Not that I knew him well. When I heard he had stolen her away to Dorne, my men and I set off on something of a rescue mission. Rhaegar had already lost his life on the Trident by the time we heard where he had been keeping her."

Jon listened intently, feeling as though he was the only other person alive who would know the truth.

"When we came upon several members of the Kingsguard defending a tower, I knew she had to be inside. Rhaegar's most loyal man sat outside, Arthur Dayne," Ned paused as Ashara's eyes flashed in his mind, "the best sword in all seven kingdoms. I knew we were done for. After taking down most of my men, he had disarmed me. I knew Dawn would be the last thing I'd ever see, as it came rushing in. Just as I had accepted my fate, Arthur had collapsed to the ground. Behind him stood Howland Reed, a bloody dagger clasped in his hand. He saved my life."

Unsure what to make of it, Jon pondered the scenario. He had grown up thinking Ned had triumphed against the Sword of the Morning. Either way, he felt thankful that his father came away from the ordeal unharmed, though the mission must've been a lost cause. After all, here they were, standing in front of Lyanna.

"I heard a cry from inside the tower. Lyanna's. I ran up the steps as fast as I could manage. The room she was in was red, covered with blood. The sight of it crushed me. I ran to her side and grabbed her hand. She thought I had been a dream," Ned's voice cracked as he struggled with the memory.
"She didn't have long. I told her she was brave as I held her hand in mind. We were both covered in her blood. As if witnessing my only sister losing her grasp on life hadn't been bad enough, with her dying breath she made me promise her..."

Looking back to Lyanna, Jon was unable to imagine how it must feel to lose someone so close. He thought of the fear he felt as Bran fell from the broken tower, and he simply couldn't fathom it. In that moment, he knew Ned was the bravest man he'd ever known.

"What did you promise?"

"To care for her baby child. Lyanna died after giving birth to a son. She named him Aegon Targaryen."

Jon winced, afraid he had finally found the thread that promised to unravel everything he thought he understood as reality. He waited for Ned to clarify, but in his heart, he already knew the answer.

"I brought the boy back to Winterfell in my arms. Aegon wouldn't do. Lyanna was right, Robert would kill him if he knew. So I did the only thing I could, I claimed him as my own and gave him a northern bastard's name. Jon Snow."

Jon's gaze had never dropped from Lyanna's as Ned spelled it out for him plainly. Jon scowled hard, tears welling in his eyes faster than he could blink them away. His life all but flashed before his eyes, a new perspective shaping the context of every situation he'd ever been in. It made both no sense, and all the sense in the world.

Ned gave the boy a moment of silence to work it out. Jon's mind flitted between Lyanna, Ned, Catelyn, Rhaegar, Daenerys. The thing Jon had wanted most in life was to meet his mother. And here she was, finally before him. Lyanna. She had been with him, here at Winterfell, all his life. Ned. The man who had risked his life and the lives of his entire family, all for Jon's sake. Jon continued staring at his mother, his vision blurred by the onslaught of tears. His entire face was soaked. Catelyn. She hated the boy all his life. Ned compromised his honor and reputation, though he had never been unfaithful to her. Rhaegar. The only image of the man Jon had in his mind was that of a monster. Daenerys. His best friend, his first love. Rhaegar was her brother. And she, his aunt.

At the revelation, he closed his eyes, letting his final tears fall from his lashes as he struggled to get ahold of himself. He wiped his face dry with the back of his hand.
"I'm a Targaryen," he whispered with a mixture of sadness and disgust. He had spent his whole life wishing he hadn't been a bastard. This twist of fate was a cruel irony he wanted no part of. It turned out he did have a last name to give Daenerys. *The same one she already had.*

"And you are a Stark. You might not have my name, but you have my blood."

Jon finally looked back to Ned. The boy looked utterly crushed under the weight of the truth.

"And here you thought I'd scold you about your girl, eh?" Ned smirked again, "I told you, it wouldn't be me punishing you. Now you get to decide whether you would punish yourself."

"But she's..." Jon gulped, "my aunt."

"Have you ever asked yourself why I fought for her to stay with us, all those years ago?"

"You couldn't have possibly known that we'd- That she'd-"

"No. That I didn't know. But she's your family. There was no better place for her than to be here with you. It is as true now as it was then."

Jon's face scrunched as if he'd bit into something sour. "Ugh," he groaned.

"Just think it through before you make any rash decisions. There are few men across the seven kingdoms who can marry for love rather than duty. Your father tried to do just that. It was the death of him," Jon winced as Ned said the word in reference to another man entirely. He didn't like being someone else's son. "After much consideration since we last spoke, I can honestly think of no safer match for the girl than to wed a bastard. Assuming you stick with Snow."

"Of course I'm sticking with Snow. I'd be killed. What kind of a name is Aegon?"

"A king's name," Ned said flatly before turning to his nephew, "We'd best be getting back."

"If you don't mind, I'd like to stay a while."
With a nod, Ned left toward the narrow stairwell as Jon knelt below Lyanna. He folded his arms tightly around his knees, rocking himself gently as he sat in the presence of his mother for the first time.
"Jon?" Daenerys called as she descended the steps into the crypts. She had followed Ghost from the kennels, certain Jon must be somewhere inside the tomb as the direwolf guided her further in. Dim candlelight flickered from across the corridor. As she approached, she could see Jon slouched against a wall in front of the figure of a cloaked woman.

"This is the last place I thought I'd find you. I've been searching all over."

Jon didn't respond to her.

"You've been down here since the morning?"

He nodded.

Daenerys sighed and knelt beside him. Ghost settled in, too, resting his head in Jon's lap. She reached to scratch the pup's head.

"What did Ned say to you that's got you hiding?"

"What didn't he say?"

"If he forbade you from seeing me, I will run away with you, Jon Snow."

"That's not it."

"What is it then?"

"He thinks we're a good match."

"We are a good match," she elbowed him. "So what's the problem?"
"I can't say."

"Why not?" she grabbed at the bit of his thigh that Ghost's head hadn't been covering.

Jon gasped. No, he thought. Despite everything he'd just learned about who he really was, her touch seared him the same way it always had. His blood started rushing to all the wrong places.

"Dany," he whimpered as she dug her nails into his thigh, inching her head toward his neck. He quickly thrust his hand between her mouth and his neck, stopping her. He pleaded, "Please don't seduce me right now. I can't resist it."

"Then don't," she pried his hand away from his neck, not that he tried much to fight her off. His body was compelled by her and had so far been winning the fight against his mind.

Ghost, annoyed with all the jostling the pair had been doing, had left in favor of a better place to settle. He curled into a ball at the base of Lyanna's shrine. Jon felt abandoned in that moment. Wasn't Ghost supposed to protect him?

Meanwhile, Daenerys kept stalking her prey. She pulled herself into his lap and began massaging his scalp as his eyes fluttered closed. He groaned as she successfully found his neck with her mouth, swirling her tongue underneath his earlobe. The new sensation sent a familiar jolt through him. She felt him harden underneath her as his cock twitched involuntarily. It had become like a game to her to elicit that response as often as she could, particularly whenever she found herself straddling him.

Jon opened his eyes to see his mother's face. No, he thought again. Mustering all of the will he could, he pushed her off of him. The motion felt utterly unnatural and wrong. Rejecting her felt even more wrong than incest, somehow. He felt sick to be so hopelessly drawn to his own flesh and blood. Blood. It rushed under his skin as he looked into her eyes as if it would burn him from the inside out.

"I can't do this right now."

"That's not what your cock says," she teased, though it was clear in her expression that the rejection had hurt.
"Dany..."

"Fine," she said. It wasn't fine.

"I'm sorry. I truly am," his voice quivered as he spoke, his accent enveloped the words.

"It's fine, Jon," her tone was scalding hot. "You're lucky you haven't eaten all day and I care more about getting you fed than I do about conquering your reluctance. It's almost time for supper, in any case. You win."

She helped Jon to his feet. Ghost perked up, starting out of the crypt before them. Jon took one last look at Lyanna before blowing out the few candles that had still been burning since the morning.

After closing the ironwood door behind them, Jon clasped his forearms together behind his back, hoping to avoid holding Dany's hand as they walked together. After having been alone with his thoughts all day, he had mentally distanced himself from her so much she had felt like a stranger. The feeling seemed so absurd now that she was back beside him. He felt whole again.

Jon wished for nothing more than to discuss it with her. It was too dangerous to tell her the truth, but he didn't know if he could live his whole life as a lie, the way Ned had done. He could trick her easily enough by simply never telling her of his true identity. He could go on acting as if they weren't related. But that wasn't fair. If he told her the truth, it could put them both in danger. Or worse yet, it could repel her entirely. He felt a pang of guilt that he hadn't been repelled by her. *Wasn't he supposed to be?*

"You know I'm going to drag it out of you."

"What? There's nothing there to drag out," he lied. Poorly.

"You're even walking strangely, as if you're heavier all of a sudden."

"I am heavier all of a sudden."

Dany sighed, clearly unhappy with his ambiguity.
Jon cleared his throat, trying to grasp for some way to glean her advice, "Dany?"

She looked him square in the face, her violet eyes disarming him as he continued, already feeling stupid for asking, "What would make you stop loving me?"

She broke into a fit of laughter as Jon winced, "Nothing you're capable of."

"I'm serious," he hissed.

She sighed, "Alright. If you murdered, raped, left me for someone. If you hurt children, or animals. Or Ghost."

"I'd never hurt Ghost," Jon snapped, feeling protective of the fluffy white pup who happily trotted in front of them.

"What about the rest of it?" she teased him.

"Of course not. Sorry, hearing his name just struck a nerve."

"I know," she said, "I was trying to rile you up. But you needn't worry about it, Jon. I know you're not capable of hurting anyone who doesn't deserve it. It's one of the many reasons I love you."

Jon flushed, lingering on the compliment only for a moment as they came upon the great hall. "But what else would give you pause? About me?"

"I don't know what else. Nothing I can think of. What are you trying to get at?"

Jon stopped. Daenerys, following his lead, planting her feet not far from his. He looked deeply into her eyes, hoping to measure her disgust as he broached the topic. "What if we were related—if I were your brother?"
She laughed again, but not for long after noticing his dry, solemn expression, "But you're not my brother."

"It's an odd question, I know, but I've been trying to work something out. Humor me, please?" he begged, as he saw figures approaching the hall from all directions.

She inhaled deeply, scanning her mind for an answer, "Well," she began, "before Viserys died, I was under the impression we'd be married one day. I never really minded. My parents were brother and sister. I know to some that sounds revolting, but, to me it wasn't. As legend has it, Targaryens kept their bloodlines pure because only we have the power to tame dragons. Like on our sigil."

There was something in the way she said the word our, in reference to the Targaryen sigil. As if she had meant the pair of them. As if she already knew.

"You believe in dragons?" Jon asked, unsure why that had been the detail he had chosen to expand upon.

"Don't you?" her eyes looked spellbound at the mere mention of the mythical beasts.

Jon averted his gaze a bit, trying not to get lost in them, "No. I can't say that I do."

"I'm not sure I did either. Not until you brought home an entire pack of direwolves."

"But direwolves are real."

"So are dragons," she breathed, her voice set his blood aflame. He considered her words as hot blood coursed through him. He could hear his pulse beating in his ears, he could feel the burn as his face flushed. Maybe he did believe in them. She was a dragon, slowly burning him alive with her flames.

Ghost began anxiously pacing, Jon tore his eyes from Dany's to see what the fuss was about. Nymeria ran toward them, tackling Ghost, Arya fast on the wolf's trail. She excitedly ran to Jon as he and Daenerys stood before the great hall.

"Jon!" she shouted to him with delight in her voice as she spotted him. The girl never failed to bring
a smile to his face.

"Arya," Jon greeted her warmly, "Have you been practicing with Needle?" It was the name she had given the sword he gifted to her weeks ago. He intended it to be a parting gift, back when he thought he'd still join the Night's Watch. Now he'd get to watch her grow into it.

"Every night in my room!" the girl beamed.

"You'd better be careful," Jon warned her before continuing. "I'm working on Jory. I'll convince him soon enough to let you come down and train with us, I swear to all the Gods, the old and the new. You could take any of the boys, I'm sure of it. Even the ones as big as me."

Arya smiled ear to ear as Jon reached out to ruffle the girl's hair, stopping short to examine her face. He had once heard that Arya looked just like Lyanna had as a child. Jon stumbled as the sudden force of her weight came crashing into his chest.

"Oof," was all Jon could manage, delighting in the waves of pain that rippled through his sore ribs. He felt at home with his sister wrapped around him. Cousin, he corrected himself as he set her back down. He ruffled her hair, pushing her in the direction of the dining hall.

Just then, Sansa brushed past Arya, nearly knocking her down, had she not been quick enough to jump out of the way. Jon couldn't help but admire the girl's agility. She has promise, he thought, vowing to make a fighter out of her yet. Sansa's sobs echoed from inside the great hall. Unsurprisingly, Daenerys ran into the hall after her, but not before giving Jon an apologetic shrug. He sighed, wondering what the fuss could be about this time. Theon's voice sounded behind Jon as he approached, "You hear the news about Joffrey?"

"Joffrey?" Jon spat the name from his mouth like food that had gone bad.

"Stannis says the Twins are essential in securing any rule. Turns out Joff is betrothed to a Frey girl, now," Theon snickered, emphasizing the disreputable house name.

"Don't laugh at the Frey girls," Jon muttered. He had never liked it when people laughed at another's expense, knowing all too well how it'd felt.
"Right," Theon's chuckling ceased, throwing Jon off.

Jon raised an eyebrow, "Is this why Sansa's crying?"

Theon nodded, not even bothering to take a jab at the overly sensitive redheaded girl. Jon leaned in a bit closer, "Theon, something's up with you lately. Every time I see you I keep bracing for some snide comment that never comes. It's like you're less annoying now. Nicer, even. And what is with all the gossip?"

Theon sighed, though somewhere in his eyes, Jon could see the compliment had not been lost on the ward, "Been talking to Jeyne. Her father hears a lot as a steward."

"Jeyne Poole? Sansa's friend."

Theon nodded, pursing his lips to hide a smile.

"What is she, fifteen? A bit young, no?"

"She'll get older."

"Until then?"

"I'll wait. Where else am I going to go? Back to the Iron Islands?" Theon looked a touch forlorn as he said the name. "I'm a prisoner here, as much as Daenerys."

"There are worse places you could live," Jon grumbled, though his voice sounded grave with understanding.

"I know," Theon smiled, he really didn't mind. He had hardly thought of Pyke at all, anymore. "I like the way she looks at me. And she's pretty, too. Jeyne's the only one who doesn't think I'm an ass."
"We wouldn't think it either, if you stopped being one."

Biting back a retort, Theon paused, and then agreed, "I'll work on it."

He dipped into the dining hall to join the others. Jon had started after him until he noticed a large shadow drawing across the stone wall. Hodor, he thought, turning to see the lumbering giant escorting Bran and Rickon to supper. The boys raced each other inside, but Hodor took his time as he followed behind.

"Hodor," Jon called to him.

"Hodor?" he asked, stopping to listen.

"Keep an eye on Bran. Don't let him wander off alone, alright?"

"Hodor," the hulking man smiled, nodding in agreement, before shuffling into the dining hall after the boys.

Jon waited outside the doorway a moment. These were his siblings, and Ned? His father. He loved all of them with all his heart, even Sansa, though he'd never dare admit it to her. Jon felt tears well in his eyes as he cursed himself for being so sensitive. He lingered for a moment longer outside as he worked to compose himself. It didn't work. He had only felt more emotional as he remembered how he wanted to run off to Castle Black. Maybe he wasn't a Stark, like his brothers, but Winterfell had been his home.

"Jon," a woman's voice called to him in the distance. Jon thought he recognized the sound, but certainly not the defeated tone with which she had said his name. He turned around to face her, unsure what to expect.

"Lady Stark," he called back to her as her figure loomed from the entrance of the sept. Jon dipped into something of an awkward bow as she fastly approached him. No matter how badly she had treated him, he had always treated her with the utmost respect. That fact had not been lost on Cat, who had nearly closed the distance between them, now. Part of the reason she found Jon so objectionable was that he had favored Ned far more than her own sons, both in looks and in his solemn, honorable nature.
"She told me what you did for Bran," Cat's voice shook as she spoke. "Daenerys did."

"Oh... well," Jon struggled to find the right thing to say as he nervously ruffled his curls, "It was the least I could do for my brother."

Cat noticed Jon frown as the word passed through his lips. She grabbed his forearm as if to tug the look off of his face, "He is your brother."

When Jon had finally mustered the courage to meet her gaze, he saw she had an emotional intensity about her like he'd never seen. Holding back tears, a lifetime of guilt overtook the Lady of Winterfell. In that moment he had wanted to hug her.

"I spent the day in the sept begging forgiveness, apologizing to the Seven, to the Mother, to Lyanna," a couple tears fell from her eyes as his mother's name left her lips. She wrapped her arms around Jon, the same way she had done to her own sons.

"I beg your forgiveness for my behavior. Even if you had been his child, it had never been your fault that you weren't mine." Jon thawed long enough to return her hug. It felt awkward, in a sense, but in another way, it was comforting. Had she still been here to embrace him, Jon wondered if this is how it would've felt to have Lyanna's arms wrapped around him. For a moment, he considered telling Lady Stark there was no need to apologize, but thought it might make her feel even worse if he denied it.

"I forgive you," Jon whispered to her. And he meant it. Cat spotted her husband and eldest son approaching. Both men had flabbergasted looks on their faces as Cat released Jon, wiping her tears away. Before joining her husband, she took one last look at her nephew. The boy nodded back at her, his eyes narrowed warmly as he smiled. For a brief moment, Cat looked as if she had seen a ghost. The eyes of Lyanna Stark peered at her from behind the pitch-dark eyes of her only son.

The Lord and Lady clasped hands as they entered the dining hall, leaving Robb and Jon alone. Before Robb could even ask, Jon explained, "She was thanking me for saving Bran."

"What happened to Bran?" Robb demanded, a familiar look of fear washing over him, the same as had done to Jon.

"He was climbing too high on the broken tower and he fell. I thank the Gods I had been there to catch his fall."
"I'll have to thank them, too," Robb agreed as the look of fear had left him.

"You and father were later than usual," Jon observed.

"Yeah," Robb started in, unable to suppress a smile. "We're expecting another round of visitors, this time from The Reach. Apparently, they've already been traveling quite some time. They're expected within the fortnight."

"Have you been betrothed to someone already?" Jon asked, cutting to the chase.

"Well, no, not yet. Lady Olenna is uneasy about promising Margaery to anyone without both of the women having met the man first. Word has it she's coming herself to personally judge the Starks."

"That's smart," Jon thought aloud. "Well, consider yourself betrothed. You're like a damned prince who walked right off the page of some storybook. Even Sansa would be in love with you if she weren't your sister," Jon's laugh caught in his throat. Oh, no, he thought. He had almost forgotten about his revelation regarding Daenerys. His aunt.

"Shut up," he muttered, face flushed. Jon rapped his brother on the back as the pair entered the hall.
Daenerys hesitated outside Jon's door. Not a soul stirred this late hour. The only sound she could hear was that of her own breath. She waited alone, pondering whether it had been wise to wake him so late after he'd had such a long day.

Suddenly, she heard a shuffling from inside his room. She held her ear close to his door to listen, hearing what she thought might be grunting. *He's awake,* she thought, raising a hand to knock.

Jon had almost immediately appeared from behind his door, looking startled.

"I couldn't sleep," Daenerys explained.

"Me either," Jon said, reaching for her hand to draw her inside as she shivered.

The room smelled like sweat as she entered. Jon's sweat. It was unmistakable. She felt the familiar ache stir within as the scent slowly enveloped her. Jon leaned against his door, lifting his leg as he rested the sole of his bare foot against the wood. Daenerys examined him for a moment.

His hair looked longer. It was wet. Glistening with sweat from head to toe, he wore only a tattered pair of dark linen trousers that hugged every curve of his lower body, particularly his thighs. It looked as though someone had spilled a mixture of red and violet paint onto his chest. She found herself wincing at the sight of the bruise that stretched over the length of it, as he folded his arms beneath the discoloration.

"What were you doing?"

"Exercising. It helps me relax."

"I could help you relax."

Jon scoffed at the idea, as if it were the most absurd thing he'd ever heard, "You're why I need relaxing."
Jon, in turn, examined Daenerys. She wore her white cloak over a muddy grey silken robe. The fabric was thin and did nothing to obscure her hardened nipples. Inevitably, his blood began to churn inside him like magma, as his too-tight trousers started chafing against his groin. Dany's gaze shifted to the bulge as Jon tugged the fabric away from it, trying in vain to find some kind of give in the fabric that wasn't there.

He shifted uncomfortably under her gaze, as she all but drooled watching the bulge thicken beneath the nearly threadbare linen.

"I need to throw them out. I've long since grown out of them," he explained self-consciously, bringing his foot back to the ground.

"They look great on you," she breathed, still staring at the bulge as if it were her next meal and she hadn't eaten in weeks.

Jon cleared his throat. Dany snapped out of it.

"But, they'd look a lot better on your floor," her voice rattled from within her chest, flame licking each word. She let her fur cloak fall to the ground as she glided toward him, searing his flesh from the inside out. She looked into his eyes, startled to find the same deep indigo color staring back at her. Examining them further, she thought she could flecks of amber like hot burning coals. She had always found him wolflke, but there was something more there tonight. Something that had almost frightened her.

Retreating from him by only a few paces, Jon bared his fangs again in the same wicked smile he exhibited the first time he had attacked her. Ravenous, it was the word that sprung to her mind as he glared at her. He folded his arms tighter across his chest, narrowing his gaze.

"Take off your gown," he growled, his voice sounded deeper than usual.

Dany might have considered running away had she not trusted him with her life. Something about his demeanor had her truly frightened but had also deeply intrigued her. The anticipation of what was to come made her hands tremble as she untied her robe. She let it fall open, exposing one of her breasts and the thatch of silver curls that had always driven him mad with lust.

"Take it off," he repeated. Dany obeyed, letting the silk fall to her feet with haste. Vulnerability
washed over her as she stood bare before him. Usually, when she was naked in front of Jon, she had felt entirely in control. Tonight, he had all of the strings tightly wound around his fingers, leading her wherever he wished to with a simple tug. She his puppet, and he, her master. She gulped.

"Come here," his tone had softened a bit. Good, she had thought, as it soothed her enough that she felt she wouldn't stumble as she moved toward him once more.

Dany ran her tongue over her trembling lips. She kept her hands at her sides, waiting for the next instruction as he eyed her.

"Turn around," he groaned. Dany's heart slammed into her ribs. Jon noticed the skin on her neck jump with her pulse, the way his wrists had done the first night. He grinned devilishly as she turned her back to him.

Anticipation gripped her, as she stood still before him, feeling subdued without her sense of sight. He didn't touch her. Rather, he examined her backside as he slowly unlaced his trousers. He pulled them off as she stood waiting there, bracing for whatever he had planned, his willing prey.

Dany nearly stumbled as she felt his fingertips grazing softly against the back of her thighs. Jon quickly secured a hand to her waist to steady her before returning it to her thigh. Just as she had eased into the gentle sensations of his fingertips dragging gently along her skin, he dug nails into her flesh hard as he grabbed two handfuls of her ass.

Before she could even gasp at the suddenness of the groping, Dany felt a hand wrap around the front of her neck, drawing her head backward. Jon's hand moved up the length of her neck and over her chin, finally resting his fingers against her lips. Wriggling one into her mouth, Dany began to suck his finger as she had his cock, swirling her tongue around his fingertip. Jon's breath quickened as she gently dragged her teeth down the length of his finger.

Suddenly, his other hand had found her clit without warning. She hadn't felt his hand make its way there, it had just suddenly appeared. She wanted to look down to inspect how he'd managed it, but he held her neck tightly as he restrained her. Jon's breath was hot against her ear, the air around them, humid. She felt his palm graze her opening as he rubbed his hand between her legs from behind. There had been something indecent in the way his hand had found its way to her cunt. It throbbed inside and out as he stroked her. Dany's ears began to ring as the torrent of her arousal came rushing to meet his eager hand.

The lascivious way in which he handled her had felt sublime. He held her still as his hands explored her from behind, dipping his fingers into her. She could feel her walls tugging at his fingers as he
entered her. Jon cut to the chase tonight, using two fingers on her right off the bat. She felt trapped in this moment, unable to move or think or feel anything other than her mind slip away from this world and into some other realm. Though Jon couldn't see it, she had been skinchanging again.

She faltered a bit as he let go of her neck, sliding his hand down the front of her body until he found her clitoris once again. He kneeled a bit, so he could keep thrusting and massaging his fingers inside her from behind. Jon's other hand wandered around her clit; pinching, rubbing, pulling, stroking, swirling...

Whimpering helplessly, Dany felt desperate as she searched for a way to brace herself against the volley of sensations. Jon clenched the muscles in his biceps hard so she could hold onto them like railing.

She seized. Violent tremors coursed through her body as she gasped for air between fevered groans. Jon furiously rubbed her clit, in the same manner she had done to herself in the crypt. He extracted his hand from behind her as he grabbed her waist to steady her again. His pruned fingers slipped as he tried to hold onto her, the slickness had nearly foiled his efforts. Dany tore his hand from between her legs, stifling a scream.

"No more," she cried. Her body gave out as she fell forward. "No," Jon barked, just in time to catch her in his arms before she could fall. He pulled her back toward him. Dany let out another small yelp as she felt his cock against her swollen cunt. It had been unintentional on his part, but the unexpected convergence sent a shudder through both of them.

"Shh," he soothed her as he held her steady. As Dany focused on her recovery, Jon's eyes were free to wander down her back. Dany's ass was pressed against him, his cock had still been nestled between her legs, trapped in the delicious, sweltering heat. Jon groaned, seeing her ass against his body, right above his cock... he couldn't help but slip into one of his favorite daydreams. Taking her from behind.

There was something about the Wolf in him that longed to bend her over and barrage her with thrusts as she arched her back before him, tangling his hands in her hair... He tried to shake the dream from his head. Instead, the thought manifested another jolt that sent his cock upward involuntarily, hitting her right against the hood of her clit.

"Jon," she gasped, pulling away as she turned to face him. The cool air felt like ice against his wet and swollen erection, threads of her hanging from him in her wake. The saliva came flooding into his mouth, nearly as wet as her cunt. He swallowed it back as he bit his lip, assessing her arousal. Her thighs were covered again, it looked as though her groin had been splashed with water. The room reeked of her, and of his sweat. His head began to swirl, unable to control the carnal instincts he felt overtaking him. I need another taste, he thought to himself.
"Please," she begged with an inaudible whisper. He had to read her lips with his eyes, as the ringing in his ears had deafened him.

"Please what?" he managed to ask, attempting to rub the ringing away as he massaged his temple.

"I don't know," she whined. "Take me again. Please."

Jon paused to consider, trying to muster the courage to follow through with what his body had been begging him to try, "I have one idea."

"Do it," she spat. "You have the best ideas."

Biting his lip as he grinned, he couldn't believe his luck. Again and again, he found Daenerys Targaryen at his mercy, nearly begging him to enact his fantasies with her.

"Tell me what to do," she cried, desperate and disheveled. Jon sighed. Stop stalling, his mind shouted at him.

"Get on your hands and knees," he said, motioning toward his bed.
On Her Hands and Knees

On Her Hands and Knees

Giving him a puzzled look, Daenerys hesitated, seemingly unsure what to make of the command. Though they'd made love dozens of times over the weeks, Jon had almost always been on top. Not that he minded. Daenerys had climbed on top a few times, typically when he'd been hurt or tired, or when he awoke to find himself already sheathed inside of her. He wasn't sure why, but he needed to feel her from behind, bent over like an animal. The lewdness stirred his blood inside of him.

Jon found himself hesitating, too. He had done so well tonight, before this moment. Perhaps she was too proper for such an indecent position. After all, her violet eyes were made for staring into as they made love. Jon stifled a sigh. He had two choices. Insist once more she take on the position, or bury the fantasy in the depths of his mind, since, after this, he'd be far too embarrassed to ever bring it up again. Jon closed his eyes. All he could see in his mind's eye was Dany. On all fours. On full display.

"On your hands and knees," he had made his choice, barking his command a second time.

Relief washed over him as Dany climbed onto his bed on all fours. He exhaled.

"Stay just like that," his voice had been barely above a whisper.

He took a step back to take in the sight of her. Between her legs, her lips had all but blossomed open, her swollen flesh reddened, inflamed, and glassy with her wetness. Inviting him in. He found himself pacing behind her as if he had been hunting prey, just waiting to pounce. Jon dragged fingers from his hairline down his face, pulling at his skin, trying to get a grip on himself. He fought back the urge to rush her and thrust right inside... No, he thought. He'd ease her into it and make sure the position was added to their repertoire.

It was then that he spotted two frightened violet eyes over her shoulder as she looked back, likely waiting for him to do something other than ogle her. He wondered how long she had been watching him work to muster his courage.

"Spread your legs," Jon breathed, holding her gaze. She broke the eye contact first, turning her head back around. She moved her right leg a few inches further to the side, followed by her left. Jon made no effort to stifle his whimper as she did so, opening herself up to him further.

Jon moved to the side of his bed. He knelt beside her as she held the position. He twisted his body, sliding his way underneath her on his back, through the opening between her arm and her leg.
Straining to reach her breast with his mouth, Jon reached between her legs to drag his fingernails over her curls and lower abdomen. He dragged his teeth over her nipple as he sucked, letting his hands wander around the front of her torso and her back. Dany bucked her hips a few times, jerking around under his touch.

He switched his attention to her other breast briefly, before kissing his way back down to her curls, nuzzling his nose in them as he inched closer. His body stretched across the bed underneath her, half hanging off of the side, as he made his way back to her cunt. Dany dropped her head to see his swollen erection. The skin almost looked distended, he had been so hard. Dany felt her mouth watering at the sight, but she didn't dare reach for it, following Jon's orders to stay in this position.

He began licking his way from the hood of her clit up to her opening as she arched her back in response, making it more difficult for him to reach. He strained in that awkward position underneath her, finally deciding to lift her right leg as he dipped his body beneath it. Mouth never parting from her lips as he sucked away. Dany brought her leg back down as he moved into a deep crouch behind her. She flushed hard as she looked back to see his face right up to her backside. She dropped her head between her shoulders. That's when she saw that Jon had been stroking himself as he tasted her. She let out a whimper, feeling another torrential surge through her cunt at the sight of him tugging his cock, in just the way she had wondered whether he had done when he thought of her. Her ears whirred and rang like bells.

Suddenly, Dany gasped at the intrusion as his nose nearly bobbed in and out of her as he massaged her clit with his tongue. Jon had never been more delighted to be short of breath.

The tightness of his skin around his cock had become unbearable. Again, he felt as if it couldn't contain the blood rushing to it. It was time to take her again. Jon brought himself to his knees. Wiping the wetness from his mouth with his left hand, and grasping his cock with his right, he placed the tip right to her entrance. He took a moment to look at her as she braced herself. He pressed his hand into her back so she'd arch it, sending a shudder right through him as her ass further hoisted up to greet him. He took a moment to consider how much force he had wished to use before thrusting into her. Once he found his answer, he thought it best to use a small precaution beforehand.

"Dany," he called to her.

Rather than answer, she looked back at him, only her eyes and nose visible from beyond her shoulder.

"You're going to want to grab a pillow for this."
Without hesitation, she pulled one from the head of his bed, dragging it into her arms as she clutched it tightly.

"Keep it close to your mouth," he instructed her.

Jon took a series of staggered breaths as he dragged his hands down her waist, determining the perfect place to clutch her from. Jon took a moment to memorize every detail as he adjusted his jaw, trying to force his hanging mouth back shut.

He decided to bark one final warning. "If it's too much," he paused, "stop me at once."

Dany gripped the furs hard in her fists with anticipation.

With all his weight, he thrust hard into her scalding cunt, causing her to falter. The heat never failed to send a groan straight to his lips. Dany fell right into the pillow as she wailed, luckily muffling her scream. Jon thrust almost violently against her, likewise pulling her into him with all his might. Dany tugged harder at the furs with one hand, and freed the other up in order to clasp the pillow to her mouth to smother her cries.

Jon paused for a moment, worried he might be causing her pain by the sounds of her shrieking. Before he could ask if she were alright, she snapped her head back, growling, "Don't you dare stop."

She returned her face to the pillow. Jon bent his right leg, bringing his foot down onto the bed for better support. He began pulling her back into him with all his force as he collided with her over and over. Easing into his rhythm, Dany began arching her back as she swayed to meet each thrust. Jon cried out at the mere sight of her serpentine body slithering against his.

Abandoning her hips, his hands went straight for that silver-gold mane. He made sure to grasp thick handfuls of it as he tugged her into him. Without the aid of the pillow, Dany muffled her cries by clenching her mouth shut as needed. She hummed her whimpers between ragged breaths. Jon had been grunting like an animal with each thrust. Dany dug her nails back into the furs in a desperate fashion, unable to find a suitable grip. She began kicking her left leg and heaving it back down onto his bed, she never knew what to do with her limbs when the ecstasy had truly engulfed her.

Jon grimaced in pain as his cock slammed into the back of her cunt again and again. The pain did nothing to deter his wild thrusting. As a result, Dany kept slipping further down on the bed as her legs spread further, against her will. Jon followed her down, his thrusting winding down as he
closely approached his climax. He let go of her hair as he collapsed on top of her, his full weight on
her back as he clutched her ass, rolling his hips into her with his final throes.

Dany whimpered with a familiar vibrato as Jon thrust for the final time, not even attempting to pull
out before he came. He knew she wouldn't want him to. He lay on top of her a moment before
slipping out of her. Dany felt a rush of heat pour out from inside of her, like hot candle wax dripping
down her curls. She let out another small whimper from the sensation, enjoying the constriction of
Jon's full weight on top of her.

Finally, the cool air hit her back as he rolled off of her, panting. Dany turned to her side and pulled
him into her embrace, his hot skin burning her hand as she stroked his blotted, bruised chest. Gently,
so as not to cause him any pain. She began tracing his nipple with her fingertips. Jon suddenly shook
with laughter, "That tickles," he cried, batting her hand away.

Dany's eyes narrowed as she smiled back at him. He was soaked head to toe with sweat. She took
small tastes from his glistening chest, swirling her tongue in the salty flavor.

"Don't do that, I'm disgusting," he said, wiping the sweat from his forehead.

"No, you're not. You're delicious," she assured him, licking the salt from her lips.

"Stop that," he scolded her. "You drive me mad when you do that sort of thing. I don't have the
energy to do it again."

"But we will do it again? Just the same way?"

Jon averted his gaze briefly before struggling to meet her eyes, almost embarrassed by the lewdness
of what he'd just made her do, "Why, did you like it?"

"No," she said, grabbing a few sweaty strands of his hair to twirl around her fingers.

His eyes had drifted away, pursing his lips in hopes to disguise a frown. Dany on tugged his hair,
only a little, purring, "I didn't like it. I loved it."
Jon's face immediately contorted into a wide grin. He held her gaze as she stared down at him, with full lips wrapped around her smile. His blinking slowed as he struggled to keep opening his eyes to watch her. Finally, his eyes closed for a final time, succumbing to the pull of sleep. Dany lay there for a moment, watching his chest rise and fall as the sweat slowly evaporated. When her eyes felt too heavy to hold open any longer, she wriggled a sheet free from underneath the furs, pulling it around their bodies before yielding to slumber, herself.
Startled awake, Jon lay on his side, rubbing his hands to his eyes, opening them to a haze of dull grey. He came to as he felt a wet sensation around his erection before he could even blink away the blurriness. Finally, he focused enough to spot movement from underneath the sheet that had been covering him. He felt a hand tighten around him, tugging at him from below a wet mouth.

"Dany," he whimpered as his body tensed up. He watched her vague shape bobbing away as his heart began to hammer, sending all of his blood rushing toward her. Jon lifted the veil to peek down at her as a dizziness swept over him.

Just then, Jon's door flung open as Robb appeared in the doorway. *Shit*, he panicked. He must've forgotten to lock it last night after Dany had entered. Robb shouted excitedly, "Jon, get up. You're late—and Jory's pissed."

As Robb spoke, Jon held his sheet a loft to disguise Dany's shape, trying his best *not* to look as though he was sheathed inside someone's mouth. Luckily his shudders had been drawn and the room was still rather dark. Jon couldn't exactly tell her to stop, and she made no effort to, herself. This only heightened his arousal, despite his better judgment.

Robb's gaze narrowed in on Jon. "You look like *shit,*" he said, noticing his brother's flattened, greasy hair and bruised purple chest, with dark circles under his eyes to match. Jon looked tired. He had been. *Dreadfully* tired.

"Come on, then," Robb added, before closing the door with haste.

Jon exhaled in relief, collapsing back onto his pillows.

"*You're bad,*" he said breathlessly, trying to recover from almost having been caught in the act. Dany didn't reply. Rather, she moved away from his side as she maneuvered herself above him. The sheet hugged her body in a way that drove Jon's teeth straight into his lip as she slithered around beneath it.

He lifted the veil once more, watching her as she made the necessary preparations prior to initiating her attack. She sat between his bent legs, throwing her own legs over his thighs. She held his gaze as she licked both of her palms before grasping his cock with both wet hands. She began twisting them slowly, in opposite directions, as she moved them up and down his length, squeezing lightly. Jon's mouth hung open, as if in a daze or in disbelief. Dany's eyes rested on his chest, heaving away as he
fought against his lungs.

Struggling to find footing he didn't need, he dug his feet hard into his bed as he clawed at the furs beneath him, just as she had the night before. Dany gave him one last wicked grin before crunching her body to bring her mouth down around the tip.

Jon didn't last very long after that. Dany watched his abdomen clench and unclench as he convulsed, filling her mouth as he peaked. Dany devoured him with her usual enthusiasm, so pleased to please him. She emerged from her tent, nestling against him as he recovered, delighting in the rise and fall as his lungs. She purred, "Good morning."

"The best morning," he cooed back, staring lustfully at her swollen mouth. The skin around her lips was pink and chafed. He lifted his hand to drag his thumb across them, noticing the way Dany's eyes rolled back as she closed them. He felt his eyes start to slip too as he traced her mouth, fighting against the urge so he could keep staring at her. Her hair was still a tangled mess from the night before. They both could use a bath. Maybe even two each.

Jon closed his eyes as Dany nuzzled further into him. As he began drifting away again, an image of Lyanna flashed into his mind. His eyes shot back open as fear swept over him. No, he pleaded with his mind, unprepared to deal with the reality of the situation he kept slipping further into.

It was then that he realized what he'd done. Being with Dany had felt so right to him that he'd completely forgotten not to seduce her. He had vowed not to lay a hand on her until he sorted everything out. But then she came knocking last night, and there had been nothing at all that gave him any pause. He felt possessed as he ravished her, never once thinking of the implications, that he could possibly be leading her on against her will. All because he had been utterly lost in his own lust. Selfishness wasn't something Jon often indulged in, and in that moment he hated himself for inflicting it on Daenerys, of all people.

Rhaegar still hadn't felt like a part of him whatsoever. He had spent his whole life as Jon Snow, bastard son of Ned Stark. His true name, Aegon, still felt like some kind of cruel joke. He neither looked nor felt like an Aegon. He couldn't help slipping back into the only role he'd ever known, Jon Snow, whenever she appeared at his door ready to strip her clothes off without hesitation. And when Dany stripped away her clothes, she took half his mind right along with them, leaving behind only his carnal, selfish desires. It wasn't right for him to keep tumbling around in bed with her this way. The blood that seared through his veins when she touched him, it was her blood, too.

As they lay together, the heat inevitably emanated from their bodies. So, when Jon began to tremble, Dany felt an immediate concern. She lifted herself up in order to inspect him. What little color the pale boy had, had completely drained from his face. He met her gaze with frightened eyes.
"You look like you're going to be sick."

*Tell her. Just tell her*, he urged himself. He still hadn't been sure if it had even been only his truth to tell. Ned hadn't told him not to, and yet Jon hadn't gone over it in his mind enough to truly discern whether telling her would put her or his family in any danger. *What have I done?* he reprimanded himself internally.

Taking several deep breaths, Jon managed to stop shaking. Dany stroked his chest to soothe him. It worked. Under her caress, he could feel his muscles unclench. *If it were wrong, why had it felt so right?*

After a moment, Jon had managed to calm down enough to meet her gaze again, "I haven't been getting enough sleep."

Dany relaxed, buying his explanation. It wasn't a lie, after all. He was exhausted.

"Jon, I've been meaning to ask you," she began. He suddenly felt anxious again. "Why did you push me off of you in crypts yesterday evening?"

"I just couldn't go through with it there, is all."

"You did it there the night before it just fine." her voice trailed off as she relived the events in her mind. Almost letting his mind slip into the same memory of taking her in the crypts, Jon shook the thought away.

Pulling away from her a bit, he retorted, "I wouldn't say just fine."

"Something is still off. Your comfort with me comes and goes like the tide. Every time you come rushing in, you recede again. It has me worried. Last night when I came here you looked upset with me. This morning you're all smiles after I wake you, and now you're closing me off again. I don't understand what I've done."

"No. You haven't done anything," Jon crooned, his voice desperate with the urge to soothe her.
Daenerys began pondering the situation, searching for clues, since Jon wasn't going to provide any. He frowned, but never provided a further explanation.

"I told you I'd drag it out of you," she warned. The threat was not lost on Jon. He believed her.

Dany frowned, too, as Jon froze up in his signature way, "You thanked me. For not letting you run away."

Jon looked at her, nearly frozen solid with guilt, "I did."

"I'm not going to let you run away inside your head, either."

With a pained look in his eyes, Jon seemed on the verge of confessing something to her. She waited. It never came.

"When you pushed me off of you, it bothered me at first. But you looked so startled, as if you had seen a ghost."

"In a way, I did. My mother's..." Jon's eyes fell shut as his face twisted in anguish. He couldn't believe the comment slipped from his mouth before his mind had a chance to filter it. She made him feel too comfortable, so much so that he didn't bother thinking through what he said before it spilled, unwittingly, from his lips. There had been nothing inside of him that wished to lie to her or hold anything back, and his mouth agreed. He pried his eyes open one after the other to gauge her reaction.

"Your mother?" Daenerys eyed him suspiciously. "How could you see your mother's ghost if you don't even know who she is?"

Jon didn't answer. His eyes narrowed as he scrunched his face up. Dany seemed determined to piece it together since Jon would be of no help.

Daenerys rose to her feet, slipping on her silk robe and tying it tightly around her waist. She began pacing around his room, considering. Looking like a lost pup, Jon's eyes followed her intently as she opened his shudders to let the morning light seep into the room. She stopped pacing briefly to lock
the door. Another interruption wouldn't do, and she wouldn't let Jon leave until she got to the bottom of whatever was eating away at him. It pained them both, and to her, that pain was unnecessary.

Thinking aloud, she started, "Lord Stark caught me eyeing you. Rather than scolding you about it in the courtyard, he took you to the crypts before the crack of dawn, before anyone else had woken. The crypts." For a moment, she considered what that could mean.

"There must be something down there. Otherwise, he could've talked to you privately any number of places among the castle. There's no shortage of them. I can even picture you rejecting the location out of fear. Which means Ned might've insisted on it." Jon's mouth hung open, admiring the speed with which she extrapolated the information. She knew him too well.

His reaction did nothing but confirm she had been onto something. Dany smiled as she continued unraveling, "The crypts," she repeated as she rubbed her hands together. "We made love there the night before last. You had been uneasy about it because you hate it there. And yet, you stayed there all day alone yesterday. At first, I thought it was because Ned had said something to upset you, but you told me that he thought we were a good match. What could he have said then, that would cause you to slump against the wall of a tomb for an entire day?"

"Dany, please stop," he reached for her arm as her pacing brought her within his arm's reach. She shook him off of her.

"You looked defeated when I saw you. I tried to throw myself at you to lift your spirits, and well, because you looked appetizing," she looked back to him, clearing her throat so as not to get swept up in her inability to resist the boy.

"Though you were reluctant at first, I could feel that your body had wanted it. But you threw me off of you, looking upset and sick. You did this because you saw your mother's..."

Dany closed her eyes. She had finally found it. "The cloaked woman. She's your mother." After willing her eyes back open, she saw Jon nodding along in disbelief. She hadn't even paused to relish in her victory. "A cloaked woman in the Winterfell crypts. Who could it be?" She paused again to think. "Ned didn't have a first wife, and his brothers never married. Any other woman that might be down there would almost certainly be too old to have mothered you."

Jon adjusted the sheet wrapped around his waist, pulling himself to the edge of his bed, grabbing his
stomach in disbelief as he felt it not only drop, but *plummet*. She had solved most of it on her own. Now he had to decide whether or not to explain the part she probably couldn't guess. The thought of lying to her or hiding something so huge made him feel ill.

"Ned's sister? Your mother is his sister?"

Jon nodded glumly, tears welling in his eyes.

"That's why you're so freaked out!" she exclaimed, nearly shrieking with delight. "Because they're siblings?" She paused to sigh in relief, "That's what those strange questions had been about. The thing you were working out in your mind—about you being my brother? You wanted my opinion. It unsettles you."

Dany's eyes were alight with excitement as it all came together in her mind. Little did she know, she had still been missing half of the story.

"It *does* unsettle me," Jon exhaled, in total shock. He could choose to stop her right there and she may never question it further. For a moment, he considered leaving it as-is. But that moment was fleeting. The decision hadn't just been his to make.

"I have half a mind to be upset with you for keeping it from me. You don't have to wallow in pain and pity all alone, Jon Snow. Particularly not after learning *my* parents were siblings, as well."

In that moment, Jon thought of the Mad King Aerys. If ever there had been a true villain of Westeros, Aerys had been it. From what Jon gathered, he looked every bit the monster he was. Gaunt, unkempt, with unnaturally long fingernails that looked like talons. A sudden stab of pain hit Jon in the pit of his stomach when he realized the Mad King was *his* grandfather. Who had burned alive his *other* grandfather, Rickard Stark, while his uncle Brandon strangled himself at the sight. A deep shudder ran through the entire length of his body at the thought. All of this really had felt like a cruel joke.

Dany had said that the Targaryens kept their bloodlines pure for the sake of dragons. *But dragons weren't real.* Could all the intermarrying amongst them be responsible for the madness? Daenerys didn't seem mad at all. She had a sharper mind than anyone else Jon had known. Before he could muster the courage to broach the topic with her, Robb's knock rattled the wooden door once more.

"Jon!" he yelled. "Get out of bed. And for *fuck's sake*, get yourself cleaned up first."
The pair burst into a brief fit of laughter after they were sure Robb had gone from earshot. And just as the tide of the truth came to rush in, the repercussions receded right back into the depths of his mind. He'd have to deal with it later, there was no time now and he had already been late for his training. *Far too late.*

Jon rose to dress as Daenerys worked to untangle her unkempt hair with her fingers.

"Dany?" he gulped, turning to her.

"Yes?" she asked, wiggling her fingers gently through her tresses. *Gods, she's beautiful,* Jon thought as he examined her one last time.

"Please let me sleep tonight."
The Intruder

About a week had passed since their last night together. While Jon hadn't been avoiding Daenerys, necessarily, he'd gotten creative in finding new ways to keep himself otherwise engaged. Whenever they spoke, he'd keep it brief and polite as he scanned his surroundings, searching for a distraction he could excuse himself in favor of. It hadn't been terribly difficult, so long as he stuck to the busier areas about the castle, trying his best not to get caught alone with her.

Even though Ned knew about his feelings for Daenerys, and it still hadn't been appropriate to sit with her at supper, either. In the dining hall, he'd even begun sitting with his back to her. Though every time he had looked over his shoulder, she hadn't been looking at him, anyway.

Jon was exhausted, dripping with sweat after another long day of training, though his work was paying off. By now, he found that he could best Robb easily, and no other boy his age stood a chance against him, so much so that they'd started refusing to spar with him. Jory had to recruit guards to challenge him further, thoroughly impressed with the boy's dedication.

Jon had finally begun to feel like a true fighter, he had found his calling. He'd never be bookish like Daenerys, who had probably read half of the books in the Winterfell library by now. On the other hand, he excelled with his strength and agility and had been most resolute in honing those skills. During every match, he'd see her face, and the will to protect her transformed him the way she always had, the wolf would take over.

Whenever his body would allow, he'd push through training the entire day until supper time without so much as a break. Today had been one of those days. The sky had been slowly pushing down the sun, the dull glowing orb far beyond the grey cover of clouds. It had been dreary, threatening rain, and getting dark fast. Having slipped into his old self, Jon felt rather comfortable underneath the forlorn sky. One by one, the men around the courtyard began leaving in favor of the dining hall. It had all been a blur, each day the same as the last, dull, drab, numbing.

Before following them in, he took a moment to cool off. The breeze hadn't been enough on its own, as there had been an unusual humidity hanging in the air. Jon stripped his tunic off and leaned his exhausted body against a nearby wooden beam. Droplets started to fall onto his arms as he sat in silence, his mind utterly blank.

He began to feel that familiar prickling sensation as if he were being watched. He opened his eyes again, scanning the yard, finding it abandoned save for him. A soft sigh came from above him. He looked up to see a white cloaked figure looking down at him not far from where Ned and Cat had usually been perched when they'd observed the yard. Daenerys, he thought, as a few silver-gold strands of hair fell from her hood, though the shadow obscured her face.
She walked off nearly as quickly as he had spotted her. He waited a moment before his body compelled him to run up the stairs to meet her. When he'd made it to the top, she had already gone. He had no idea in which direction, and there had been no sound other than the raindrops hitting the stone and wood. Another ghost, he thought as he shivered, before slipping his tunic back over his head and making his way to join the others.

The rain started to fall harder. Jon stood under the archway, trying to disguise himself in the shadows as he peered into the hall. Sansa and Jeyne were present, but Daenerys wasn't there beside them. He waited a moment for her outside, to see if she'd show. That's all he could take. He broke into a run toward her room, feeling his stomach spiral with worry.

The ominous feeling continued as he paced outside her door. He couldn't bring himself to knock. Perhaps if he'd told her that he needed a few days to sort something out, she'd have been fine with it. Instead, he let the fear get the better of him like a coward, and it had gone on far too long.

He stood there a moment, considering whether to knock or to slump against her door the same way he had in the crypts. As he decided whether to bring his fist to the wood, he vowed to only do so if he finally confessed everything to her. Come on, he urged himself. Do it.

Suddenly, Jon heard footsteps approaching from down the hall. Too heavy to be Dany's. Shit. Dany's room had been at the end of the hallway, and nowhere near his room. Ned may have been okay with their relationship, but he wouldn't stand for Jon sneaking around and being alone in her room with her or lurking suspiciously about the hallway outside her chambers.

He knocked quietly on her door, pressing himself into it to try to blend into the wall. There had been no answer. The footsteps had almost rounded the corner now. He tried his luck at opening the door, surprised to have found it unlocked. He returned it to its frame as quietly as he could manage.

"Damn it", he chided himself in a barely audible whisper. He stood alone in her dark, empty room. Unsure what to do now and whether or not it had been safe to turn tail and leave, he moved to open her shudders, letting a bit of the twilight in before looking around. As he pulled away, he knocked an unlit candle over, spilling wax all over her desk.

"Shit," he cursed under his breath. He'd have to wait for it to harden up before attempting to peel it from the wood. She must've been here recently, he thought. He paced around her room, deciding whether to stay and wait for her, or whether to go out and find her. Worry gripped him as he had been unsure where else she could be. He had to find her.
Just as Jon approached her door, it swung open.

Startled, Jon leapt to the wall beside the door, flattening his back against the stone. Had Dany not been hanging her head, she would've seen him right away. Feeling like an ass hiding in plain sight, he froze. It had already been too late to speak up. Each second that passed would only make the reveal all the more awkward. He'd been in that very room dozens of times but something about waiting in the dark without her permission made him feel like a criminal, and he couldn't bring himself to speak.

After locking her door, Dany turned, startled to see the deluge of wax spilled across her desk.

"What?" she asked aloud to herself, knowing it hadn't been that way when she had left. She saw her shudders had been drawn open, as well. That's when she heard ragged breathing behind her.

She turned slowly. Jon had himself pressed against her wall, looking as though he had been there to burgle her. Even in the dim light, Jon could see her eyes and nose were puffy. The whites of her eyes were webbed with red, clashing hard against the violet. It looked as wrong as it felt. Jon stopped bracing the wall to bring his hand to his chest, his heart broke at the mere sight of her, knowing full well it had been his cowardice that had reduced her to tears.

"What are you doing here?" she spat, her voice was hoarse and laden with anger.

Jon didn't say anything. Her tone frightened him, she had usually been patient with him, though after this week he understood that her patience had finally run dry. He felt every bit the intruder that he had been in that moment. His eyes kept darting away from her gaze like the frightened pup he was.

"I'm going to have to insist that you leave," she said coldly. Her glare sent a shiver down his spine, and not in the good way it usually had. Usually, when she eyed him, his blood felt hot as it quickened, coursing through him. In this moment, it felt like ice, slicing away at his veins as his heart thudded unevenly in his chest.

Feeling dejected, Jon turned to open her door, still unable to resist taking orders from her. He took one last look at her seething glare before making his way out wordlessly.
As he trudged away from her door, Dany stamped into the hallway after him. Her tone hadn't lightened at all, "Jon!" she shouted. "What could possibly be worth giving this up?"

Jon turned his head but kept his back to her and his voice low, "Absolutely nothing."

"I don't want you to leave. But this is completely unacceptable."

He turned to face her, "I don't want to leave, either. And, I know it is."

"What is going on with you? And don't you dare give me another vague answer. I've gone over everything dozens of times in my head. I cannot place a single thing I could've done to make you avoid me like this."

"You haven't done a single thing. I'm so sorry, Dany. I never meant to let it get this far out of hand."

"Oh, stop it," her voice still seething, a different sort of flame licked her words, now. "You said sorry once before and carried on treating me the same way. I'm tired of you running away with your tail between your legs. It isn't like you. It's like you're scared of me all of a sudden."

"I am."

"Why?"

Jon instinctively ruffled his hair as he searched for the right words.

"No. I forbid your silence. Say it. Tell me why."

Jon walked toward her, "Because I could lose you."
Dany nodded as she let out a small laugh that had sounded more like a mocking cackle, "So instead you would beat me to it?"

"No, that's not it," Jon's tone was pleading and desperate. Before she could scold him further, more footsteps sounded in the distance.

"Quickly, come inside if you must. But know that you're not leaving until I get answers."

Jon hurried in past Daenerys and took a seat on the very edge of her bed. After locking her door, Dany stood before him with folded arms, waiting. In the dim light, half of Dany's face had been obscured by a shadow.

Jon looked down as he began, gripping his hands together in his lap, "The reason I've been avoiding you is that I knew the next time we really spoke, I'd have to tell you the truth. What I have to say could change everything. And I'm not ready for that."

"I wasn't ready for it either, and then you went and changed everything on your own without me."

"I'm not here to defend my behavior."

As Jon glowered, Dany became rather dispirited. Her anger began to wane when she saw how upset he'd been by his own actions.

"Jon," Dany knelt before him and grabbed his clasped hands. Everything about her demeanor had thawed, "I'm going to love you, no matter what you say. Do you understand?"

"Don't be so sure until you hear it," he replied. Jon took another moment to enjoy the warmth of her hands in his, looking as though he feared it might be the last time he'd get to do just that.

"It's about Lyanna. Or rather, Ned," he muttered, taking his hands from her grasp to shake them out, expelling the air from his lungs. No turning back.

Dany rose to her feet, trying not to let Jon's skittish behavior rile her, now that she could see how much it had truly been eating away at him. "I had a feeling. I thought I had solved it, and then you
made it feel too personal."

Something had clicked once the words left her lips. She scanned her mind again, "It is personal. Why would Ned need to tell you who your mother was immediately after catching us in a look? What would it matter? Why choose that moment to come clean with you, after all these years? It does have something to do with me."

Without hesitation, Jon interjected, "Lyanna Stark is my mother. But Ned Stark... is not my father." Jon's tone was bleak as finally offered her the last clue, knowing she had more than enough acuity to take it from there.

Dany clasped her hands together in front of her chest. She stood completely motionless as she considered. She didn't even blink. Jon squirmed uncomfortably at the strange, vacant glare. Spooked at how much she resembled a stone effigy, he felt a shiver run along his spine.

Finally, she blinked her eyes closed, the rest of her body holding the pose stiffly. "Oh," she muttered, flattening the back of her skirt before taking a seat beside him. No matter how often Ned had tried to silence anyone who had ever mentioned Rhaegar or Lyanna, he couldn't be everywhere all the time. Dany had no doubt heard the story about the castle, having grown up there.

"Ned brought you to Winterfell because you're my family," he confessed, in as soothing a tone as he could muster.

"And he risked us falling in love. Why?"

"Come on, it was hardly a risk in his mind. What would a highborn beauty want with a bastard?" Jon scoffed as if the mere insinuation of Daenerys falling in love with him had been absurd, even though that's exactly what had happened.

"Are you even a bastard?"

"No," Jon scowled as Dany smirked knowingly.

"Perhaps you're right. What would a highborn girl want to do with a bastard?" Dany's tone was frustrated and laced with snide sarcasm. "A bastard with a gorgeous mop of black curls that hang over his dark eyes. A bastard with pouty lips and a perfectly sculpted body. Surely, no risk at all
unleashing such a beast on a defenseless *highborn* girl."

Jon clasped the bridge of his nose as he hung his head, blushing hard and fighting back a grin. If nothing else, he found comfort in her candor. Then it struck him. She *hadn't* been repulsed. When she pieced together who his father was, she sat beside him. And then flattered him.

"It doesn't unsettle you? That I'm your... *nephew*?"

"Perhaps it's not ideal, but I wasn't lying when I told you I'd love you no matter what. It's surprising in many ways, mostly because I thought I had been the last of my kind. In another way, it's strangely comforting."

"The most unsettling part for me is how much it doesn't bother me. It's almost as if I've been convincing myself into it, like there's some expectation of me."

"But it's a secret no one can ever know. Why should it matter?"

"Maybe because it would be easier that way. It feels like me simply being alive puts everyone I love in danger. I didn't get to choose who my parents were, but the King wouldn't care about that if ever he found out. And, sometimes when I look at you I still can't believe any of this is real. Most days I still expect to wake up, or for you to. One day you might wake and decide I'm not worth the risk."

"I *am* awake."

Jon took her hands into his, massaging them gently with his thumbs. The touch of her skin made his hands tingle, and it had been the same for her. He pulled them to his mouth, kissing the back of each hand apologetically.

"I have a question for you, Jon."

Keeping his head down, he braced himself as he awaited the inquiry. Dany pulled one of her hands free to grasp his chin between her thumb and index finger, guiding his head upward to meet her gaze.
"What would make you stop loving me?" She scanned his eyes as he slowly inhaled, drawing the breath necessary to answer her.

"Nothing you're capable of," he whispered.

She drew her eyebrows together, sharply exhaling in relief. She thought of the way her body pulled her into him every time he was near, the way her blood boiled under his touch, or even his gaze. She knew he had felt it, too. Fire and Blood. Melting into his kiss, her own words echoed through her mind, but with his gruff, northern voice, rather than her own. Nothing you're capable of.

Breaking from the kiss, Dany breathlessly reminded him, "Just remember I said it first, the next time you consider hiding from me."

As Jon smiled at her, she felt a jolt in her lower abdomen. She placed her hand there, rubbing the sensation away. As she looked to Jon, she saw that the burden of the truth had finally ascended from his shoulders. Dany, in turn, felt it slide from his onto hers. Unlike Jon, she wouldn't let it fester. Though, she would let him enjoy the peace a few moments longer before moving in to splinter it.

"What do we do, now, Jon Snow?"

"I have no idea."

Dany held Jon's gaze, unsure whether now had been the right moment. She inhaled as deeply as she could, mustering her all of her courage. Fear danced across her violet irises.

"That makes three of us."

"Three?" Jon paused, meeting Dany's unblinking stare. "Oh," he said as it hit him. "Oh," he said again after it had sunk in.

Jon's eyes began to water as his outstretched hand found its way through her hair, gripping silver-gold tresses as he pressed his forehead to hers. His free hand found its way to her fingers, still tightly pressed against her stomach.
"I tried to pull away, I... "

"I know you did. I was there. I was the one with my legs wrapped around you to keep you from doing just that, remember?" she teased.

"You planned it, then?" he moved away from her to examine her face as she answered.

"No. I just did whatever felt right in the moment. And I'd do it all again."

"I would, too," Jon breathed, without hesitation, still rubbing his hand against hers as they cradled her stomach.

"You would? Even though we're related?" she spoke each word more quietly than the last. Not because it upset her, but because she'd have to get used to never alluding to the truth for the sake of their safety. And their child's.

"I wouldn't change a single thing," he offered with a stone cold certainty that made her shiver.

"You're not scared?"

"No," Jon said without a moment's hesitation, his own eyebrows raised in disbelief as he spoke the word. Dany, knowing Jon to be a poor liar, found no trace of dishonesty in his answer.

Unexpectedly, Jon climbed into her lap, clasping her head with both hands. Careful not to apply his full weight as he straddled her, he slipped his fingers further into her tousled mane. "Marry me," he breathed. His love for her dripped from the words like honey.

Rather than answering him, she feverishly pressed her mouth to his with such force his teeth drew blood inside his mouth. Their tongues sparred away despite the metallic taste. After a week, her hunger pangs for Jon's kiss had been unbearable. He broke away after another moment, insisting, "Marry me, Daenerys Targaryen," he paused briefly to exhale, his voice trembled, "Be my wife."

Reveling in the sound of his begging, for a change, Dany's only reply thus far had been a smirk. The moment the fear started to trickle back into his eyes, she relented without hesitation. "Of course I'll
marry you, Jon Snow," she nearly sang, as they collapsed onto her bed in each other's arms.

Before the pair could savor the sweetness of their pledge, they realized they'd arouse too much suspicion if they stayed locked up in her room any longer. Jon left before her, sneaking his way back toward the dining hall, slinking in the shadows trying to avoid crossing anyone's path as he made his way out of the great keep. Daenerys waited a few moments before chasing after him.
Where It All Began

Jon had lingered behind after supper, the last to leave the dining hall that night. He didn't eat much. Rather, he grappled with his carnal daydreams, knowing full well he couldn't just stumble into Dany's room and simply roll around with her after the promise she'd made him. She had not only given him her hand, but also a child. There's nothing comparable he could give her as a show of thanks, but perhaps letting her slip away into lustful euphoria would suffice on such short notice.

In his mind, he dreamt of his lips meeting every inch of her body, scalp to toes. And now he'd have all the time in the world to explore her, to memorize her. As his mind swirled, he felt the familiar cramp as his trousers constricted around him. Luckily, his tunic hung low enough that no one should notice.

Though, there hadn't been a single soul as he made his way outside. At least not as far as the eye could see, which hadn't been far this night. The air was unusually warm, a heavy fog rolled through, blanketing the castle grounds. The few lit torches along the stone walls flickered from the droplets, but there hadn't been enough rain to extinguish any of them entirely. They cast an orange glow onto the mist, which gave Jon an eerie, foreboding feeling.

It was then that he noticed Ghost emerge from the cloud beyond him, half-obscured by the haze. *Ghost, indeed,* he thought. For a moment, the strange sight had left Jon convinced it must be a dream.

"*Ghost,*" he scolded lightly. "How did you get out of the kennels? Come here, boy."

Ghost let out a small whimper before turning away from Jon and running further into the fog. "*Just what I needed,*" he whispered to himself as he chased after his companion. He could no longer see the wolf, and Ghost had been notoriously quiet, which didn't help.

"*Shit,*" Jon muttered under his breath, searching the fog, wishing his pup had just stayed put tonight, of all nights, so he could be with Daenerys again. A week had been far too long at this point. It wasn't like Ghost to misbehave like this. Suddenly, he felt a pang of worry grip him.

"*Ghost!*" he shouted to the wolf, utterly unsure which direction to try next. The warm air had been stifling, and he felt nearly blinded by the limited drawing distance the fog had allowed for. Something about the unseasonable weather gave him an inescapable, claustrophobic feeling.
"You'd better keep your voice down, Jon Snow."

Jon moved toward her disembodied voice, though he couldn't see her. Suddenly he felt a rush of nervousness, remembering that's what he'd said to her not long before whisking her far out into the trees their first night together. He finally spotted Ghost running further past the great keep. He wanted to call out to him, to Daenerys, but thought it best to keep his voice down and play along.

An unmistakable cloaked figure emerged from behind a tree as he approached. Dany donned her favorite white cloak, and the same long light blue dress she had been wearing the night they first kissed, amongst many other firsts.

"Small and sneaky, remember?" she echoed the words she had said to him before knocking him to the ground all those weeks ago. Jon began to tremble with anticipation, silently making his way toward her. She slipped out of her boots and took off running. He picked up pace, chasing right after her, Ghost hot on his trail. She had still been faster than him.

Ghost made it to a clearing before having gotten distracted sniffing around the leaves. Jon tried to catch his breath for a moment but found the unusual humidity in the air to be suffocating. Dany emerged from out of nowhere, grabbing him by the waist and knocking him down with all her force. He let out a familiar grunt as he hit the ground. Rather than rolling off of him like she did the first time, she began feverishly kissing him, tangling her fingers in his hair and grinding into his already stiff groin.

"Dany," he gasped as if coming up for air.

"That's what I wanted to do that night, but I lost the will to do it then."

Jon kept breathing unevenly as he looked up at her, "I'm glad you couldn't do it."

"What?"

"I might've died. My heart had nearly stopped when I hit the ground and realized it had been your arms around me."

Dany pressed her lips to his once more, "Mmm," she hummed, delighted to get her lips back on his signature pout. She rolled off of him and to his side. They both nestled into the grass, Ghost likewise
settling not far from them under a nearby bush. Together, the pair gazed up at the stars which
glimmered faintly through the fog. She half-expected to see the red comet still streaking the sky, but
it had long since gone by now.

"Shame the comet's not still up there," Jon offered, almost as if he could read her thoughts.

"It served its purpose."

"How so?"

"You had told me you had wished you weren't a bastard."

"Ouch," Jon said in response to what had felt like a jab. "I guess I hadn't thought of that. What did
you wish for?"

"It hasn't come true yet, but it will."

Jon nudged her, "Oh come on, out with it."

Dany raised herself up onto her elbows. "Alright. I'll tell you. Just give me a week to wallow alone,
and then I'll say."

"Oof," Jon said, clutching his hand to his heart as if he'd been dealt a physical blow. "I yield!"

Dany laughed, "I'm only teasing you. But I'd like you to remember how silly this feels the next time
you try running away. I'm not scary."

"I'm not so sure about that last part, but I'm done runnin' away. Besides, husbands can't run away
from their wives."

Dany laughed harder, "Jon. You can be so naive."
Even though she had been right, Jon couldn't help grimacing a bit, "I remember you being a lot nicer the last time we were here."

"I'm sorry," she worked to curb her giggling, "I'm delighted to hear you would take your vow to me seriously. Know that I intend to do the same."

As Jon turned to examine her face, they exchanged grins. He looked down to see their hands had been mere inches away from each other, just as they had been last time. He took a moment to remember how badly he had wished he could've just touched her then. This time, he'd had more than enough courage to clasp his hand with hers, caressing her fingers with his thumb.

"That's what I wished for, by the way."

"What's that?"

"That I'd be your wife. And that we'd have a family someday."

"I warned you not to get too greedy with your wish, that's two."

"Well, maybe the other one was just pure luck."

"Or plain old irresponsibility," he offered with a sideways glance.

Dany laughed at his jab, she'd deserved his counter-attack. She began caressing Jon's hand with her thumb, as well.

"Dany?"

"Mmm?" she hummed, turning her head toward him. But he had been looking toward the bush Ghost had settled under, likely to avoid the light drizzle on his fur.

"How'd you get Ghost to play along?"
"We've been spending a lot of time together this past week."

"Oof," Jon said, again. "I guess I had neglected you both."

"Don't beat yourself up about it any longer. What's a week, at any rate? If I've got you for the rest of our lives?"

With that, Dany turned to her side, bringing her free hand up to his curls. The most beautiful hair in the world, she thought. Her fingers dove into his messy hair, massaging his scalp gently with her fingertips. Jon's eyes fluttered closed, reminiscing about the first time she'd ever touched him, her hand deep in his tresses then, just as it had been now.

He opened his eyes to examine her, nearly eye level with her cleavage. Her breasts had been pressed tightly together. His teeth began to ache with the urge to bite into them, to taste that bitter, creamy flavor of her pearly skin.

"What had you been thinking, when I ran my hands through your hair?"

"That it felt more like home than anythin' else ever had," he whispered, leaning into her hand the same way he had then, feeling the same warmth and comfort from her caress.

"It was like you'd never been touched before."

"I hadn't, really. At least not like that. I've only ever really held Arya, Bran or Rickon. But the older they get, the less they want to be babied, especially Arya. They're all growing up too fast."

Dany smiled as she imagined their baby wrapped in Jon's arms. She found herself wishing he or she would have Jon's same black curls.

"What about that look you had when I accused you of wanting to stow me away?"

"I had been trying to memorize every detail of your face. I thought if I looked too long, I'd get lost in
those eyes of yours," his voice carried off, his gaze had drifted from her chest up to her irises. Her pupils were large and dark, obscuring two violet petals bobbing along the milky white pools. The clamp had returned, tightening around his chest, shortening his breaths as he willingly wandered too far into her gaze, this time. She smiled down at him as she brushed his curls from his face.

Inevitably, the heat had begun to stir in their blood as it always had. Jon felt his grip on her hand slip, as their palms began to sweat. He broke his grasp on her hand as he propped himself up on his side to face her. With his other hand, he began running the back of his fingertips along her jawline, and slowly down her neck. When he reached her cleavage, he slid his finger between her breasts, eliciting a series of whimpers from Dany the further down it went. To alleviate the tension in his teeth, he bit down gently on her breast, using his finger to tug the fabric further.

He brought one of her nipples into his mouth, swirling his tongue stiffly around it. Her elbow began to give out as she shuddered. Guiding her down to the grass, Jon shifted himself closer against her side, gently scraping his teeth along the sensitive skin. Dany brought her wrist to her mouth to bite down on, muffling her soft cries. With her free hand, she tugged at her hair, already feeling unsure what to do with her limbs. As Jon nestled further into her side, she could feel his cock hard against her thigh, despite all the fabric.

The rain began to pick up, turning from a drizzle to warm, thick droplets that landed on her skin and his leathers with a resounding thud. Jon broke his mouth away from her breast, looking up to confirm the sudden shift in weather.

"We should be getting back," Jon suggested.

"No, we shouldn't. We should stay. Exactly as we are."

"As you insist," he laughed, moving his body on top of hers, attempting to shield her from the rain as best he could. Dany took his bottom lip between her teeth, pulling him into her kiss. Rain streamed through his hair, down his face, and into their mouths.

He broke away, pulling himself up to shake his hair out, causing it to fall flat against his cheeks. As he looked down at her, she had been wincing through the raindrops as they hit her face.

"My Wolf," Dany cooed, smiling deliriously with her signature look of intoxication. Jon leaned in for another tongue-sparring session, tugging her skirts up enough so that he could slip his hand underneath. But before he could press his mouth to hers once more, he quivered as he discovered the bare skin of her legs.
"Nothin' underneath," his voice accusatory but playful.

"I possess the gift of foresight," she breathed as his hand slid further.

"This is what I had wanted to do that night after you tackled me. Get my hands under these skirts..."

Dany felt a surge of warmth between her legs as her head spun, all of the feelings from their first night rushing back, as well as knowing he had finally been all hers. As Jon's hand found its way between her legs, it quickly became saturated, and not from the rain. He brought his mouth to hers once more. Though, as his fingers explored around beneath her skirts, Dany hadn't been present enough in her mind to kiss him back with the ferocity she'd usually muster when their mouths met.

As he slipped his fingers inside of her, he looked through the dark shroud of his wet hair to see Dany's eyes fluttering closed against the rain, exposing only milky white between the cracks as she fought to keep them shut. Every time she went skinchanging from his touch, he could feel the Wolf taking back over. Another low growl reverberated from deep within his chest.

He pulled himself off of her in haste, nearly throwing her skirts up as he crawled underneath them. He lapped at her swollen flesh. Pulling her lips into his mouth, he sucked away vigorously, the vibrations of his growl sending her body quaking prematurely. Dany tried to pull away, though Jon knew those weren't the right tremors yet. He pulled her hips back toward his mouth. She turned her body in an effort to get up, tangling him up in her skirts as she shifted onto her knees.

In response, Jon twisted his body too, turning onto his back to chase after her, dragging her hips down and pressing her right into his face.

"Jon," she gasped as she found herself unwittingly straddling his face. She kept trying to get away, afraid she might be restricting his breathing, if not from her weight, then from her skirts. She lifted the fabric to give him air. He had been feverishly working at her as the rain fell onto his face. The moment he opened his eyes to meet her gaze, fiery and animalistic, was when the tremors began to take her. She clawed at his hair with talons, as she convulsed further into his mouth, her curls brushing against his face. He closed his eyes again, keeping his rhythm up until she collapsed forward into the grass.

Jon slid from underneath the fabric, admiring his hard work as she lay nearly lifeless before him, save for the quick rise and fall of her back as she caught her breath. Jon couldn't help the wicked feeling overtaking him as she lay there helpless. He unlaced his trousers, pulling them down just enough,
and moved behind her. Once his cock had found its way to her opening, he reached for a handful of her hair.

Instinctively, Dany balled up the fabric of her cloak to muffle herself with. Jon thrust hard into her from behind, clutching onto her sopping, tangled mane as he pulled her into him. Dany broke into a series of hoarse, possessed cries and grunts. She had been flat on her stomach but struggled to lift herself up on all fours as Jon kept thrusting, adjusting his position higher behind her as she moved up. Dany began her slithering against him, though much less gracefully than the last time she'd tried it, as her shaking hands slipped along the wet grass.

Noticing the trouble she had been having, Jon pulled out and adjusted her position, helping her on her back in order to give her quivering limbs a break. He slipped back inside with ease after repositioning above her. Dany worked her hands through his wet hair, scratching her nails down his body starting with his scalp. She held his gaze as she grabbed at his back, hips, then finally gripping his ass hard as she pulled him into her with each thrust.

Jon cried out as she dug her claws further into his skin. She drew her legs up to wrap them around his waist, urging him deeper inside on each pass. Completely enveloped within her without any room to spare, the heat inside had been as stifling as the humidity hanging in the air around them. Dany moved her arms up, tightening them around his chest, tightening every muscle she could as she clung to him with her legs. Reveling in the constriction, he groaned as he fought against the pressure, his cock throbbing in pain as her walls closed in firmly around him. Finally, he succumbed to her efforts, collapsing onto her as he came.

He lay there a moment, listening to the sound of the rain as Dany stroked his back with one hand, and his hair with the other. The weather had transitioned back into a mere drizzle as they held each other in the grass, completely soaked from head to toe.
Dressed head to toe in dark linen, leather, and fur, with a tangle of black curls covering his face, Jon could barely be visually separated from the shadow of the corridor. Ned rushed past him toward the east gate. Luckily, the man had grown used to the way Jon blended into his surroundings when he had otherwise hoped to go unnoticed. Ned turned tail to approach the shadow.

"How's your punishment going?"

Jon sighed, emerging from the darkness as a deep, warm crimson light enveloped him. In the north, the sky had almost always been a muddled grey, lighter some days, dark the others. Gone were the clouds that had notoriously draped the sullen sky like a blanket, leaving only a few white wisps suspended amongst the sunset. The sky had been streaked golden orange, red and pink. Jon wondered for a moment what the view might have been from atop The Wall to the north. Though on this night, he felt particularly glad not to know.

"It's beautiful tonight," Jon said with an awe usually reserved only for Daenerys.

"A rare sight, indeed," Ned agreed. "It's like the Tyrells brought their sky north with them."

"Is that what it looks like in the south?" Jon asked, the awe still dripping from the words as his mouth hung agape at the sight. He had never been south. Dorne, he remembered. At least, he'd never been south since having been born there.

Ned simply nodded, taking a moment to likewise appreciate the sky's spectacle.

"I thought we still had well over a week before they arrived. Robb had said within the fortnight. It took the King ages to get here, just from King's Landing."

"Likely stopping to inspect every tavern and brothel along the way," Ned laughed. "I don't imagine Lady Olenna has much need for either."

Jon couldn't help but think of Queen Cersei and how she must feel. Everyone in the seven kingdoms knows of the King's debauchery and whims. Jon vowed never to do that to Daenerys.
Cradled in the warm glow, everything seemed to keep falling into place for Jon. He'd never get used to the feeling. He spied Daenerys wandering toward the east gate with his sisters, all preparing for the Tyrells' arrival. She was bathed in red light. *Red suits her,* he thought, feeling a tugging sensation at the corners of his lips. He couldn't fight the smile.

Ned took note of the way Jon had looked as he spied the Valyrian beauty, "Your feelings for her haven't changed at all."

"No," he stated flatly. Now was as good a time as any to broach the topic. Jon stood as straight as he could, pushing his chest forward before declaring, "I've asked her to be my wife."

Ned clapped the boy on the back, "I'm glad to hear it."

"I know now is not the time, but I'd like to soon. With your permission, that is. As soon as possible." Jon warmed at the thought of his unborn child that stirred within her womb. He wanted to spare her any judgment that might come her way as an unwed mother. They didn't have much longer before she started to show.

"I've already made arrangements."

"You've what? " Jon looked aghast.

Ned let out a hearty chuckle, "You don't think I knew what my own son would decide?"

Jon averted his gaze back to the sky, trying to hide the tears that pricked his eyes.

Ned continued, "I've sent two ravens to summon a pair of guests for the event. One for you, and one for her."

"But everyone we know is already here, at Winterfell."

"Perhaps not," Ned replied in an ambiguous way. Jon had thought to question him about Daenerys' special guest, whether or not it might put her in danger. But, he trusted that Ned would do no such thing. First, he had apparently gleaned that she would be Jon's wife, and second, Ned was the one
who had rescued the girl from Essos in the first place. He sighed, trying not to let the curiosity get the better of him.

"What did you mean when you said Daenerys was exactly like him?" Jon asked in a soft whisper, changing the subject.

Ned looked around to see who had been in earshot before continuing, "Well, for one, she looks just like him. The same hair, but lighter eyes. Clever as the day is long, beloved by anyone who crosses her path. Kind to high and lowborn, alike. That's what I meant." Ned leaned in, his voice quieter still, "He was a good man, Jon."

Jon grasped his chin with his hand. It sounded more like Daenerys had been Rhaegar's child, rather than him. She certainly didn't seem like Mad King Aerys' child. Then again, neither had Rhaegar after the clarification Ned just offered. For a moment he felt daunted to carry on the legacy of such a man. He already knew Rhaegar was a talented knight and fighter.

Then, Jon remembered that it would've been the same had Ned been his true father. Either way, he'd still have to walk in the footsteps of someone who had been renown across all the kingdoms, for better or worse. He had finally felt ready to learn more about Rhaegar, but he wasn't sure how other than from Ned. Dany had never met him, she had been born after he had died. Before Jon got too carried away in his thoughts, he turned back to Ned, "Thank you. For telling me about him."

The sound of neighing horses could be heard approaching from beyond the east gate. The pair of men made their way over to join their family to greet the entourage, forming into the same lineup as they had to greet the Baratheons and Lannisters weeks ago. Hodor towered over Bran, who stood next to Arya. Sansa, in turn, towered over Arya as she stood next to Robb. Then followed Ned, Lady Catelyn, and little Rickon. Behind them had stood Jory Cassel, captain of the guards. Theon to Jory's side, and Jon, to Theon's.

As there had been no need for Daenerys to go into hiding on this visit, she fell into place next to her would-be husband. Jon grasped her hand tightly in his as Maester Luwin fell in line beside her, careful to wrap part of his cloak around their hands to hide it from onlookers.

The guards stood at the entrance of the gate as the Roses of Highgarden began to pour in. Leading the bouquet was Loras Tyrell. He had long, dark golden curls that bounded as he strode by on horseback. He was unmistakably beautiful, piercing blue eyes, and a face chiseled similarly to Robb's. He had the same princely look about him. Instinctively, Jon gripped Dany's hand tighter, feeling a twinge of worry as Loras traipsed past.
Turning to Dany to inspect her gaze, he saw she had already looked away from Loras and onto the
ornate wooden wagon that had come to a halt. It looked awfully similar to the one that had carried
Queen Cersei and her children. Except, it had been decorated with green and gold flags rather than
red and gold. Jon admired the brightly colored flags, which were adorned with what looked like a
combination of a shield and a rose. In the north, there was no shade of green so bright, not even the
grasses or leaves, which likewise took on the same dreary, muted hues. Something about the vivid
color spoke to him in a way he couldn't quite understand.

After the party had finished spilling in through the gates, one of their guards moved to open the
wooden door of the wagon. With an outstretched hand, the guard retrieved a young woman. That
must be Margaery, Jon thought. She was breathtaking, just as Theon had predicted.
Like Daenerys, she had long, waved tresses. In the crimson light of the sunset, he couldn't tell what
color—maybe a dark blonde, or a light brunette. Loose braids wrapped around her head like a
crown. Her eyes sparkled like blue crystals. Her lips were thinner than Dany's and curved into
something of a sly smirk. It looked intentional, though the longer Jon spied her, he could tell that it
had just been the way her face naturally fell. Jon admired her beauty, but nothing about Margaery
stirred his blood, however. Not even her cleavage peeking out from the very low-cut floral brocade
of the gown beneath her cloak. Women in the north don't dress like that. Jon gripped Dany's hand
tighter. The only stirring he felt in his blood had been the feeling of her warm hand clasped in his.
Jon smiled down at Dany, so as not to make her jealous for eyeing Margaery for too long. He had
only been inspecting her out of curiosity, after all. However, Dany hadn't even noticed Jon staring,
since she, herself, had been spellbound by the beauty. Jon glanced at Robb. His brother appeared as
though he'd been struck. Jon fought the urge to snicker, understanding the feeling all too well.
Margaery waited with hands folded gracefully, for her grandmother to emerge. The same guard
helped the old woman out of the wagon and to her feet.
"She's beautiful," Dany whispered, with utter reverence. "They are roses, the whole lot of them."
Lady Olenna, despite her age, had the same light blue crystalline eyes, which matched the soft blue
headdress she wore. She likewise donned an ornate floral brocade gown beneath her cloak, but in a
more modest cut than Margaery's. They must be rich, Jon thought. He studied the older woman a bit
more. Theon had been exactly right. Margaery had Olenna's same face, only younger.
Loras dismounted his horse, locking arms with his sister. Another man had dismounted, blonde-ish
and balding. He looked vaguely like the Tyrells, but without any of the beauty. Clasping his arm
with Lady Olenna's, the four of them approached the Starks. Jon's family greeted the Queen of
Thorns with deep bows and curtsies.
"Lady Tyrell," Ned began, "It is a great honor to have your family join us at Winterfell. It is yours
for as long as you wish to grant us the pleasure of your company."

Lady Olenna waited a moment to respond, taking her time to eye each Stark up and down, inspecting them thoroughly. She took extra care to examine Robb, though her expression gave nothing away. Robb didn't shift at all under her gaze, holding a strong, straightened pose with his head held high. Jon was sure he'd have faltered under such scrutiny, himself.

Margaery and Loras, on the other hand, likewise examined Jon's older brother. The pair exchanged a knowing glance, a wordless language of expressions not unlike Jon's with Dany. Margaery had one eyebrow raised far above the other, her devious smirk all the more prominent as she and her brother exchanged looks. Jon couldn't tell exactly what it meant, but he was pretty sure the Rose had fancied the Young Wolf. In that moment, he felt a different burning sensation, and now he knew how Robb and Theon felt as they probed him about Daenerys. He already couldn't wait to talk to Robb about Margaery, and the pair hadn't even exchanged words.

"I am most pleased to finally stand in the presence of the honorable House Stark," Lady Olenna started. "I could do without the chill of the north though, it is most dreadful. I trust you've stocked enough wine to warm us feeble southerners?"

Ned laughed, "Of course. My ward will escort you to the great hall. We've already prepared a feast. We'll join you as soon as we've welcomed the Tarlys."

Lady Olenna nodded to Ned as Theon pushed past the Starks to show the Tyrells to the great hall. Just then, the second wave of horses poured in through the east gate. A smaller party, to be sure. Sat atop the first horse was a grizzled looking man, imposing in every sense of the word. Randyll Tarly. His face naturally fell into a scowl.

Behind him, two more horses approached. One held a portly boy wearing a simple robe. The Maester, Jon assumed. The other horse held a princely looking boy, a bit older than Sansa. Dickon, he thought. The boy was much more attractive than prince Joffrey, who Jon had thought resembled a weasel. Dickon, on the other hand, had a strong jawline like Robb, and a kind face. Jon tried to glean Sansa's expression as she spotted the boy. Sansa pursed her lips, averting her gaze but sneaking peeks of him from under her eyelashes. Uh huh, Jon smugly thought to himself, certain the whole of Winterfell had finally heard the last of her sobbing.

After greeting the Tarlys, the crowd dispersed toward the great hall. Jon noticed that Robb had not moved an inch from where he had stood poised through all the greetings. The rest of the Starks had since abandoned him, rushing off to entertain their many guests. Jon wandered over to Robb, smiling ear to ear with anticipation to hear what he'd thought of Margaery Tyrell.
Robb clutched his hand to his chest as he exhaled.

"How have I not collapsed, Jon?" he gasped as if he were short of breath despite not having moved a muscle. "My heart has stopped beating."

"I know just what you mean," Jon chuckled, as he admired Dany's swaying hips as she made her way toward the dining hall, arm in arm with Sansa.

"Margaery," he breathed her name as if it were with his dying breath. "She may be a Tyrell, but she's *not* a rose," Robb's voice nearly quivered as Jon examined his pained, lovesick expression, wondering what his brother had been getting at. "Roses have thorns."
The Last Dragon

Jon lingered outside the great hall listening to the music, the voices growing rowdier as everyone poured into the overcrowded space. He took a few more moments to admire the unusual warmth and the equally unusual sky. A violet hue now streaked the canvas as the sun dipped further below the trees. He thought of Daenerys.

"Come inside, Jon, join us for the feast," Lady Catelyn's head popped from the entrance for a brief moment before disappearing back inside.

He'd been an embarrassment to the Lady of Winterfell mere weeks ago, and here she had been, cordially inviting him inside to sit amongst their honored guests. Jon could count on one hand how many visitors they'd received in all his years at Winterfell, and this grand celebration in honor of the Tyrells and Tarlys was second only to the King's visit. He'd finally know what went on inside the hall during those rare parties. Wandering inside, he couldn't believe he'd actually get to see the great hall in all its glory, full of light, life, and music, rather than the dark, quiet setting it usually offered each night.

As Jon entered, he was astounded to see the sheer amount of lit candles lining the tables and the chandelier above. The room was aglow with warm yellow light. Each table had platters full of food from end to end, some being passed around as guests filled their plates. The live music was blaringly loud, causing those in attendance to raise their voices and laughter, creating a cacophony of sound that resounded wall to wall.

Feeling overwhelmed by his senses, Jon scanned the room for his favorite silver-gold color. He'd been surprised to find Daenerys sitting in his usual spot, laughing with Theon, of all people. Dany shifted further down the bench to make room for Jon to sit beside her. After squeezing in, Jon was surprised to find her soft fingertips scratching at the scruff on his face, "I'm glad they didn't make you boys shave your faces this time."

Jon closed his eyes, relishing the small touch as it lasted, which wasn't long. He was glad, too. He looked too much like a boy with a clean face. Daenerys scanned the room, spotting Jeyne Poole looking awkward and forgotten as Sansa's attention had been focused on Dickon Tarly, who sat beside her.

"Say," Dany said to Theon, "Jeyne's looking awful lonely tonight. Shame she has no one to talk to."

Theon nearly whipped his head around to glance in the young girl's direction, "If I sat with the steward's daughter, Lady Stark would have my head."
"On a normal night without such a bevy of distractions, perhaps," Dany carried off, glancing in Catelyn Stark's direction. She'd been heavily distracted, indeed, sat with the Queen of Thorns, herself. Without another word, Theon grabbed his goblet of wine and pushed his way through the crowd toward Jeyne, squeezing in beside her.

"You're good at gettin' people to leave us alone," Jon commented, before taking a swig of his wine.

"Oh, that wasn't for our sake. Jeyne's my friend. As much as it pained me to see her alone, I'd rather use this night to be selfish and dine with you. Besides, she's got a thing for him."

"And he, for her," Jon added, bringing a smile to Dany's face.

"What did Sansa have to say?" he asked, "She didn't look too upset about Dickon this time."

"I'd say she's feeling a lot better all of a sudden," Dany said, still smiling as she looked over at the pair of girls blushing away.

"It was never Joffrey she liked. She just likes boys. Princes and Lords, at any rate."

"I think you're right. And there aren't many around here she isn't related to, other than Theon."

Dany's eye had twitched a bit as she let the word slip, but Jon didn't flinch at all as she said it. Something in Dany's eyes told Jon that the brief spasm had only been her fear that it might drive him somewhere back into the recesses of his mind, hiding away, unable to face the truth. Daenerys was his truth now, there'd be no more hiding.

Scanning the great hall, now, Jon rested his gaze on the ward sitting alongside Jeyne. Tonight, the entire dining hall had been like a living organism, guests pushing between the tables to greet each other, before moving onto some other introduction. Jon had liked it this way better. Most likely because he had been sat beside Daenerys without raising alarm.

However, the Lord and Lady were quite distracted by their guests, they paid no attention to Theon and Jeyne, or Jon and Dany. Lord Stark and Randyll Tarly looked deep in conversation alongside Mace Tyrell, Ned looking particularly absorbed in whatever they had been discussing. Catelyn and
Olenna had been throwing their heads back, roaring with laughter as their hands danced around to emphasize whatever stories had them engaged.

Ever since Catelyn learned the truth about Jon, she's seemed lighter. More free to enjoy herself, as well as Ned. Something about knowing he had always stayed true to her reignited their passion, and it was clear to everyone around them, though only Jon and Dany knew why. When they walked about the castle together, they were either hand in hand or arm in arm. Jon looked back to Theon and Jeyne. Jeyne had been red-faced and giggling as Theon threw berries into the air, trying to catch them in his mouth.

"Theon, he's not so bad," Jon added, long after the moment had already passed.

Dany raised her eyebrow. "Uh huh. And what if Sansa had gone all mad for him rather than the Baratheon boy?"

"Well, then I'd have sicced Ghost on him and chased him right out of Winterfell," Jon said, laughing.

"How about Dickon? Reckon he's good enough for your sister?"

Jon adjusted his gaze to Sansa and Dickon Tarly. The pair were both blushing and looked as though they had been struggling to keep conversation flowing through all the shy glances, or perhaps the loud music. Jon sighed.

"We'll see. I'm not sure I'd be happy about seeing her with anyone. I'd rather she never grew up at all," Jon said wistfully. As Dany studied his expression, she found herself wishing she could give him a daughter. The way he was with his brothers and sisters made her womb ache. Other than Ned, she knew of no man better suited for fatherhood.

"What's that look?" Jon inquired, noticing both his and Dany's expressions had become a bit too serious for the joyous setting.

Before Dany could answer, she spotted Robb walking toward them arm and arm with Margaery. He had a familiar fevered look about him, sickly pale skin save for his slightly flushed cheeks. He looked proud to have the Rose on his arm.

"Lady Daenerys, pardon our intrusion. I've found someone who has been begging to meet you."
Dany rose to her feet, raising her eyebrow at Robb's overly-formal greeting as Margaery playfully elbowed him. Though the jab hadn't been forceful at all, Robb swayed a bit, eyebrows furrowed and eyes clenched as her arm had found his ribs. He shook himself out of his daze as the Lady spoke through a wide smile, "Lord Stark, how **dare** you embarrass me in front of Lady Targaryen..."

Daenerys all but blushed as the Rose spoke, "Oh that is quite the mouthful, isn't it? Please call me Daenerys."

"I'm Margaery," she beamed back, the ladies exchanged small bows.

Daenerys moved out of the way to reveal Jon, who had been sitting behind her, sipping wine, "Margaery, this is Jon Snow."

"My brother," Robb interjected. Margaery paused, likely to take note of the bastard surname.

Jon quickly stood and bowed, "Lady Margaery," he breathed. Jon had been comfortable talking with Daenerys by now, but the sight of a girl so pretty still gave him the instinct to fumble over his words. He managed to form a question, "How are you finding the north so far?"

Margaery turned her gaze from Jon to Robb. Robb met her eyes almost with fright, not expecting the pleasure of her crystalline eyes back on him so soon. She then turned back to Jon before finally responding, "I've never shivered so much in my life."

"The cold takes some getting used to, I'm afraid. I can fetch you some warmer furs. Say the word and I'll go runnin'," Robb breathed with severe intensity. Jon pursed his lips trying to hide a smirk.

"Oh, I'm not cold," she said, slipping her fingers along the inside of her collar as if to air it out. "In fact, I'm a bit warm. Would you mind escorting me outside for some fresh air?"

Robb gulped. "Of course," he finally managed.

"Daenerys, Jon. It has been my pleasure," she dipped her head as if to bow. Robb pulled her away toward the archway leading outside. Robb briefly glanced over his shoulder, giving Jon a dumbfounded look as Jon and Dany exchanged knowing glances as they took their seats.
"She's devious," Jon said. "Just like you."

"What? I am no such thing."

"If believing that helps you sleep at night," Jon trailed off sarcastically, his eyes a bit too wide as he drove the point home with a sidelong glance.

In response, Dany gave Jon a stern, unenthused look. As soon as he settled back into his usual solemn expression, she broke into a small fit of laughter. Relieved, Jon began laughing along with her until he felt the heat of her hand sliding over his trousers along his thigh, under his tunic. With a surprised gasp, he batted her hand away like a spider.

"Maybe you have a point," she purred.

"Dany, we have to be careful," he spat, under his breath.

"No one's looking at us."

"There's no way you could be sure about every pair of eyes in 'ere," he scolded her with a particularly thick northern accentuation.

Dany pouted as she took her hand away, bringing it back up to her plate as she poked at her food. It wasn't food she had a taste for. Jon scanned the room again, feeling a bit of relief that no one seemed to be looking at them, as she had said. It was then he noticed one obvious omission amongst the crowd that made him uncomfortable.

"Where's the Maester?"

Dany looked up from her plate, quickly glancing around the room until she had found the kindly older man enrobed in grey, a long mismatched chain hanging around his neck. She used her finger to point him out, "Luwin's just there."
"No, not Luwin. The other Tarly boy."

"Oh," Dany replied, helping Jon to scan the room, likewise coming up short. "I don't see him, either."

"He should be here. I'll be back, I'm going to go find him." Jon rose to his feet and made his way outside with haste.

Dany thought to stop him for a moment but noticed Lady Tyrell had been drawing near. Her heart began to race, unsure whether she had, in fact, been the target of the Queen of Thorns' approach as she made her way over. Daenerys instinctively rose from the bench and adjusted herself as Olenna closed the gap between them.

"Daenerys Stormborn of the House Targaryen," Olenna's voice was strong yet graceful, just as her presence had been. Daenerys swept into a deep, wordless curtsey as a natural, rosy blush splashed across her cheeks.

Forgetting her manners, Daenerys started into the conversation, failing to use proper titles and greetings as she did so, "Stormborn, I haven't heard that since I was a child. I've hardly heard my own surname since I came to Winterfell. Targaryens are a touchy subject, I'm afraid. Best not to broach the subject."

"Why is it you came to Winterfell, if I might ask?" Olenna gestured toward the bench. Dany flattened her skirts before taking a seat, back facing the dining table. Everyone along the bench started squeezing closer together to make room for the Queen of Thorns. She took a seat beside the silver-haired girl.

"After my brother, Viserys, passed away, our custodian, Ser Willem Darry, had also fallen ill and wasn't long for the world. I'm unsure how Lord Stark came to know of my fate, as I was just a girl of five. So far as I know, he begged the Usur-" She caught herself before the insult could leave her lips. Olenna smiled knowingly, waiting for Daenerys to continue. "-King to raise me here under his protection and his word. I thank all the Gods, the old and the new. Who knows what pleasure house I'd have been sold into after Ser Willem passed and left me to the sharks."

"Instead, Ser Willem would leave you to the wolves. Why should Lord Stark bring the only surviving Targaryen heir inside the walls of his own castle to raise her as if she were his own child? For what purpose? He has more reason than King Robert to see you dead, after what your family did to his."
"Which is why Targaryens are a touchy subject. But Lord Stark doesn't fault me for my father's sins, or my brother's. I never knew either of them. I'm more Eddard Stark's daughter than Aerys', he's the only father I've ever known. While I cannot speak to the reasons behind his decisions, I can confirm that he's a good man with good intentions."

"So I keep hearing," Olenna shifted her gaze from the dragon to the head of the Wolfpack, Eddard Stark, as if she were trying to figure something out.

"Lord Greyjoy, too. You should ask him how he feels being Lord Stark's ward. He treats us well where lesser men might see harm done to the children of their enemies."

"Theon Greyjoy, of course," Olenna said as she likely thought back to the Greyjoy Rebellion and the circumstances that brought Theon to Winterfell about a year after Daenerys had arrived. "It's like a damned orphanage in here. The Dragon, the Kraken and the bastard."

Olenna took note of Dany's change in expression as she concluded her list, the last word visibly striking a nerve in the young girl. Dany averted her gaze, trying to avoid the subject. Olenna ignored her attempts, still focused on Dany's strange reaction, "So the Last Dragon fancies herself a bastard boy? How curious."

For what felt like the first time, Dany had been at a loss for words. She'd always been one of the more eloquent children around the castle, delving further into her studies long after the required lessons with Septa Mordane had ended. Arya would leave to climb trees with Bran, and Sansa and Jeyne would gossip about boys and dream of being ladies wed to knights and kings. The boys had their training to keep them busy. Daenerys had her books and her thoughts.

"Forgive me, sweet child. I couldn't help but notice. Though, I'm not here to pester you about your personal affairs. I find myself surrounded by the pack all vouching for the Young Wolf, but I'd hoped to learn the truth about him from the mouth of the Dragon, herself."

"Oh, Robb," Daenerys had said, relieved, "Of course."

"Not Lord Robb?"

Dany chuckled a bit, "No, no. Just Robb. He's like an older brother to me. If ever I fall ill, he's there offering an arm to escort me around. If ever anyone dared to insult me for my name, Robb would be
among the first to step in and correct their behavior. He's every bit Lord Stark's son. Noble, honorable, a man of his word."

"Might I ask then, why the bastard boy has won your affection and not the Young Wolf?"

"His name is Jon Snow," Dany said, a bit too forceful with her correction, given the company. Luckily, Olenna only smirked at the girl's impudence. Dany kept her voice low as she continued, "If Robb was among the first to step in to defend me, it's because Jon had been the first. Robb's charm and good looks are undeniable, but Jon is an outcast, like me. We both grew up with shameful last names. We have an understanding that goes beyond titles or banners or politics."

Olenna took a moment to herself before responding, likely considering the new information beforehand. "It's been a long time since I've seen a Targaryen, child."

"I imagine that's true for most people outside of Winterfell," Dany responded, her voice glum.

"We might've even shared the same last name, once upon a time."

Dany perked up. She hadn't had the pleasure of hearing much about her family while at Winterfell. Targaryen had been almost like a curse word to some of Ned's more loyal bannermen and guards. Olenna noticed the shift in Dany's demeanor, "I don't even know that I can recall his name so many years on. I only remember seeing his ludicrous silver hair. That's when I knew I had to break my engagement."

Dany's excitement left as quickly as it had come. She patted down her long silver tresses self-consciously, unsure how to respond. Though, it had been far from the worst thing she'd heard about her relatives.

"I had been most intrigued to meet the Last Dragon, expecting to get a taste of that Fire and Blood, but it appears the Wolves have tamed you."

"Tamed me?" Dany asked, unable to disguise a hint of offense as Olenna rose to her feet.

"As much as I've enjoyed speaking with you tonight, I'm afraid I must continue making my rounds. Don't be a stranger, Daenerys Stormborn. You'll find I'm much less boring than these others," she declared before gliding away, her light blue and gold silk skirts flowing behind her like banners in
the wind.
Jon brushed past Robb and Margaery on his way out of the great hall. Suspiciously, Robb cleared his throat as they broke apart after Jon's sudden intrusion. He let the pair alone, however, paying them no mind and sticking to his plan to find the Maester.

As he approached the library tower, he heard Ghost's unmistakable whimper from the kennel a bit further beyond where he'd stood. Jon sighed, approaching the anxious pup to let him out for at least a few minutes. As Jon retrieved Ghost, Grey Wind pushed past and started galloping toward the great hall. "Shit," Jon cursed, closing the wrought iron gate before any more direwolves could escape.

He wandered back through the courtyard and spied Grey Wind through one of the entryways of the long corridor. Robb was knelt beside his direwolf, who had been sat proudly before Lady Margaery. With an outstretched hand, she greeted the dark grey wolf. Jon smiled, certain Robb would take it from there. He'd explain what had happened later.

Crossing back through the courtyard, Jon could see a dim light from inside the library tower. He carefully made his way inside, Ghost sniffing along behind him as they entered.

"Maester," Jon said, announcing his presence to the stout boy sat alone by dim candlelight, with only the company of an open book.

"It's Samwell Tarly, actually," the boy introduced himself with a slight chuckle.

"I'm Jon Snow," Jon offered in return, extending his hand to shake Samwell's.

"Snow? Lord Stark's bas-"

Jon averted his gaze, as he'd always tended to do when people examined him upon learning his surname. He fought the urge to sigh.

Jon nodded, moving toward Samwell and taking a seat across from him. He gestured to the book beneath Samwell's hands, "What's that you're readin'?"

"It's a book chronicling the life and reign of Aegon Targaryen the First, the Conqueror."

"The one with the dragons?"

"Of course the one with the dragons."

"And you found that here, in the Winterfell library?"

Samwell nodded, pressing down on the crease of the book as he scanned it.

"You don't think all those dragon stories were just an embellishment or a... myth?" Ned and Catelyn had run a tight ship around Winterfell. Whether it be Ned hushing stories of the Targaryen Kings for Dany's sake, or the way Maester Luwin brushed off Old Nan's stories about the monsters that lurked world, somewhere along the way, Jon had lumped them together in the same realm of fantasy.

"How else could Aegon the Conqueror have united the seven kingdoms without them?"

"Have you ever seen a dragon, Maester? I believe only what my eyes and ears tell me."

Samwell grinned and shook his head at Jon, "Without the aid of his dragons, he'd have been just like any other man. You think Torrhen Stark would've bowed to just anyone strolling up to Winterfell? You know, the King keeps a collection of dragon skulls as trophies. I heard he even has the skull of Balerion the Black Dread. The Conqueror's own dragon."

"You've been to King's Landing? You've seen these skulls?" Jon prodded, still considering. If there really had been irrefutable proof of dragons by way of their skulls, had there been proof of White Walkers, somewhere, as well?

"No, but I've heard all about them, and I hope to see them one day. I can only imagine how terrifying
it would be to see the bones. I was also hoping to meet the last heir of Aegon the Conqueror. She's too pretty, though... I don't even know what I'd say to her."

"Oh, she's kind, Sam," Jon reached out to grab Samwell's wrist to emphasize his point, feeling comfortable enough with the boy to shorten his name, as if they had been old friends. "She's the warmest person I've ever met. I'm sure she'd love to meet you. She's bookish, too. You should ask her to show you around up here."

"You're in love with her," Sam accused him after seeing how animated Jon became as he spoke of the young Valyrian beauty.

"I suppose it is that obvious," Jon nodded along.

"Does she know?" Sam inquired, as Jon dropped his gaze and simply nodded. He didn't expound on the topic any further, unsure of the consequences of letting his relationship with her become public knowledge so soon.

"Alright. It doesn't seem so scary if you introduce us. I can't believe I'll have met both of the last surviving Targaryens."

"Both?" Jon felt a sudden hot flash, a pang of fear, as Sam spoke the words. Sam couldn't know, could he?

"I met Maester Aemon once before, the Maester at Castle Black."

"Aemon," Jon uttered, as a rush of forgotten memories flooded his mind upon hearing the name. He remembered being just a boy, sparring away with Robb as he pretended to be Aemon the Dragon Knight. How had he forgotten?

As a child, before he had heard any gruesome details of Rhaegar stealing away with Lyanna, he and his brother had been captivated by the stories of the Valyrian dragon riders. As he thought back, part of the resentment he felt toward Daenerys' arrival at Winterfell was how Ned put an end to all of their fun. Gone were the stories of the dragons, dragon riders, and silver-haired knights, all because of Daenerys.

He hadn't been lying when he told her he'd wanted to kiss her ever since he could remember, but he
felt some measure of jealousy toward the girl and the way the castle seemed to adapt to meet her needs. Jon eventually talked himself out of his resentment of the silver-haired girl, since it had been no different from Catelyn's resentment toward him. Though, he still felt jealous by how much more attention she had gotten growing up. Considering he'd harbored a secret affinity for her since first laying eyes on her, he couldn't quite blame anyone else for being taken with her, either.

Before Jon's mind could wander too much further, Sam continued, "My father almost made me join but Maester Aemon told him I had promise. He convinced him to let me go to Old Town instead, to study to become a Maester. My father couldn't really refute the man's advice as the long chain around his neck rattled. I don't think he cares too much, so long as I'm out of his way for good. I'll be headed there soon, to Hightower. My mother insisted I see Winterfell first, though. She says it's the grandest castle in the north. When she told me about the library, I knew I had to see it for myself."

"Do you want to be a Maester? Are you not upset that your younger brother has a stake in your claim by birthright?"

"I never wanted to be a Lord or a Crow," he said, referring to the black wardrobes of the Night's Watch brothers. "I wanted to be a wizard."

Jon laughed heartily, "Maester is as close as you'll get."

Sam started to laugh, but the laughter caught in his throat as he spotted a pair of glowing red eyes approaching from the darkness beyond.

"Is that a direwolf?" Sam asked, his voice full of wonder. "Do you mind if I pet him?"

Jon smiled, "Sure. Ghost, come here, boy."

Ghost trotted over, shaking his thick white coat of fur before settling in beside Jon, awaiting his next command.

Sam reached his hand out to let Ghost sniff him. After a moment, he bowed his head to let Sam stroke his fur, "Where in seven hells did you find a direwolf?"

"We came upon the babies after the mother died fighting a stag. Our father let us take them home if we promised to feed and train them, ourselves."
"Them? How many are there?"

"Six. Ghost here, he's mine. My brother Robb has Grey Wind, Brandon has Summer, Rickon's
direwolf is Shaggydog. My sisters each have one as well, Sansa has Lady, and Arya, Nymeria."

"Nymeria," Sam breathed, "Great name for a direwolf. You lot are lucky. My father would never
allow for something like that. He'd have butchered every last pup with pleasure. He thinks every
living thing north of the Wall is a savage."

Jon felt a twinge of worry for Ghost in that moment, but anyone who wanted to hurt Ghost or any of
the direwolves would have to go through him first.

North of the Wall, he considered. He thought of Old Nan's stories again, and of Will, the boy whose
head was taken by Ice for abandoning the Night's Watch to warn of the White Walkers. He
wondered if there had been any truth to it. Will had been riddled with fear before losing his head, so
much so that it still haunted Jon all this time later. If direwolves came down from beyond the Wall,
perhaps other things could, too. All of the monsters Old Nan had warned of. Jon shivered, hoping
Maester Luwin was right to shrug off her many tall tales.

Sam moved away from Ghost and back toward his seat. The book he'd been reading snapped shut as
his arm grazed it. Upon seeing the cover, Jon felt a stab of recognition as he inspected the
embroidered black leather. An embossed emblem of a three-headed dragon, colored with old red
paint that had chipped away at the edges of the menacing figure. As Jon traced his fingers along the
three heads of the dragon, he felt a tingling sensation in his finger.

"The Targaryen sigil," Sam explained.

"I know," Jon replied, not sure how he could be so certain, yet he was. He felt something stir within
him as he examined the leatherbound beast.

"Seems odd Lord Stark would keep a book like this here in the library, considering Rhaegar-"

Sam stopped short as Jon's pitch-dark eyes snapped up to meet his. Jon felt an unfamiliar anger
brewing deep within him. He wanted to defend his true father in that moment. He tried to mitigate
the odd reaction, knowing it was better for everyone if he let them all continue thinking Rhaegar a
monster.
"Maybe it's here for Daenerys. Whatever her brother did," Jon paused, lingering a moment before continuing, "It's not her fault. Her family seems to have an incredible history, aside from a few bad seeds."

"The most incredible," Sam agreed. "I admit, the book wasn't easy to find. It was hidden behind some others on a top shelf. I had to pull a chair out to reach for it. Maybe it's best I put it back there before anyone else comes in."

"Where was it?"

Sam pointed. Jon nodded, remembering to retrieve the book some other time. He briefly slipped into a daydream, flipping through the pages together, with Daenerys wrapped tightly in his arms.

"Sam?" The portly boy looked up at Jon as he rose, "When you meet Daenerys, you should tell her about Maester Aemon. She'd like that."

Sam shook his head, before taking another last look at the book on the table before him.

"We should be getting back to the great hall," Jon said before turning to leave, Ghost following closely behind.

Sam rose from his chair to follow him, "Wait," he called, holding the black leather book out to Jon, "You should take it to her. To Daenerys."

Jon grabbed the book with both hands, running his fingers over the soft leather before wrapping his cloak around it, concealing it as best he could.

After returning Ghost safely to the kennel, the boys made their way toward the great hall. Jon pointed out the different buildings as best he could in the darkness, promising to show Sam around in the daytime.

Somehow, the noise and commotion inside the hall had doubled. Sam seemed reluctant to enter. Jon couldn't blame him, thinking back to the overwhelming feeling of his senses going haywire, unsure what to focus on in the sea of moving bodies.
"We'll at least make an appearance," Jon offered with a half-hearted smile.

Jon walked inside first, scanning the room again for Daenerys' hair, as it was unmistakable, even in the midst of the general disorder of the room. She had still been sat at his usual spot. He felt a bit guilty having taken so long, knowing she had likely stayed put waiting on him. Theon had moved back to his original spot, this time with Jeyne, and they seemed to be keeping her company. There had been a few too many goblets in front of them, some knocked over with a bit of wine spilled across the table.

Jon slowly made his way over, Samwell in tow. Daenerys turned, nearly jumping out of her seat, "Snow!" she cried, fumbling off of the bench. Dany threw her arms around him as he relocated the hidden book under his arm to free up both hands. Sam's jaw nearly dropped as Jon pried Dany's wrists from around his neck, scolding her as he held them aloft with either hand, "What are you doing?"

She simply laughed and fell back onto the bench, giggling hysterically.

"How much have you had to drink?" Jon was furious with her. Everyone in their vicinity had gone silent, watching in awe as the bastard raised his voice to the highborn girl. For all of his lecturing of Daenerys to be careful, here he was being far too forward and aggressive with her in as public a setting as there'd ever been.

Jon raised his voice to carry far enough to all the people who'd stopped to eavesdrop, "Lady Daenerys, would you mind stepping outside with us where it's quieter?"

"Lady?" she snickered.

"Please. Come outside."

Jon held an outstretched arm as she placed her hand in his. He escorted her outside with Samwell tagging along behind them.

Dropping her hand as soon as the cool night air hit them, Jon tried to compose himself, "Sam, would you mind giving us a moment?"
"Sure," the boy said, wandering off toward the sept, out of earshot.

"Are you *drunk?"* Jon scolded her through a whisper.

"*No,∗" she lied.

"*How could you?∗" He dropped his gaze from her eyes to her stomach. Finally, it had struck her why he’d been so angry.

"No more wine, Dany. *Promise me,∗" he begged.

She simply nodded, her entire demeanor slumped as the guilt set in.

"Alright," he sighed. "I'd been talking you up to the Tarly boy in the library, try not to scare him off?"

Jon turned toward Samwell, calling out and gesturing for him to join them once more. Sam meandered over and swept into a bow before her, "My lady," he breathed.

"Pardon my *mann-∗," Dany stopped to clutch her hand to her mouth.

"Sam, *get back,∗" Jon warned, holding his arm in front of the boy's chest and moving him out of the way manually. Dany fell onto her hands, a flood of red liquid spilling onto the ground before her as she heaved it out of her system.

Rushing to her side, Jon dropped the black leather book on the ground. He aided in moving her hair out of the way as she expelled the last of it. He tucked her hair behind her ears gently before wiping her mouth with his sleeve. Jon looked to Samwell, who seemed bewildered at the sight.

"I'm so sorry, Sam. Wine... makes her *ill,"* he explained, and then turned to Dany to drive his point home, "She *shouldn't* have had any."

"Oh, it's quite alright, really. We've all been there before," Sam laughed nervously.
"I should get her to her room. Go on inside, I'll join you again shortly."

Sam nodded, reluctantly wandering back inside the hall alone.

Feeling a mixture of embarrassment and relief at Dany's scene, Jon had been thankful the rest of the wine was out of her system. Dusting off the leatherbound book, he re-wrapped it in his cloak before helping her to her feet. They made their way toward the great keep.

"You should stay with me tonight," she said, the scent of fermented grapes heavy on her breath.

"No, I shouldn't."

"Why not?" she whined.

"Where do I begin? First, you're drunk. Second, everyone in there saw you throw yourself on me. I probably shouldn't even be walking you to your room right now, but I don't trust anyone else to in your state, so here I am."

The rest of the trip had been silent, as they made their way through the dark halls toward her chambers. Once inside, Jon set the book on her desk before striking flint to metal, setting alight one of the small candles. He moved to help her out of her cloak, draping it over her chair as she took a seat on the edge of her bed. He knelt to remove her boots and set them by her door.

"We'll get you changed. What do you sleep in?"

"You already know that. Nothing," she purred suggestively.

"Dany, behave," Jon ordered her, searching through her wardrobe cabinet for one of the silk robes he'd seen her wear before. He'd found the same muddy grey one she'd worn the night she snuck into his room. Caressing the fabric for a moment, he thought back to that night and the way the silk gown cascaded down her body like water before gathering at her feet. Before he could get too worked up over it, he shook the thought from his head.
When he turned back to Dany, she'd managed to work her dress halfway off, having slid it down her body rather than over it.

"You're a mess," he laughed, as she sat half-naked on her bed trying to shimmy out of her gown helplessly. Jon pulled it the rest of the way off of her, followed by her stockings, taking note that she still had nothing else on underneath her dress. She had likely planned on him sneaking into her room this whole time. He took care to fold her clothes as well as he could, setting them on the seat of her chair.

"Stand up," he said, trying his best not to gawk at her nude body as he wrapped the silk robe around her, tying it securely at her waist. He peeled the furs from her bed as she slipped underneath the coverings. Jon pulled them tightly over her before gently kissing her forehead as her eyes fluttered closed.

Dany had almost instantly fallen asleep, leaving Jon free to admire her a moment as sleep took hold of her. He searched her desk for a piece of scrap paper and a quill, scribbling a quick note. Jon brought the paper to his lips, blowing the ink dry. Flipping the book over to hide the sigil from plain sight, he slid the note between the pages in a conspicuous manner, so that she couldn't miss it.

Jon blew out the candle before making his way out. He locked her inside again, pushing the key under the door as he left. Sprinting back to the feast as fast as his legs would allow him, he'd hoped he hadn't been gone long enough to raise too much suspicion.

Chapter End Notes

Quick note for those unhappy that Jon doesn't/didn't believe in dragons: I encourage you to watch Episode 7 of Season 1 about 28 minutes in! He ain't the only one! :)

Daenerys came to with a thudding sensation at her temples. Running her hands down her silk robe, she tried to remember how she'd gotten back to her room, half-expecting Jon to be in her bed upon waking. And then the rush of embarrassment hit her as she realized how her night had actually ended. After Lady Olenna left her, she had a strange feeling she couldn't shake. Rather than fill up on food, she filled on wine, delighting in the way it loosened both her lips and limbs.

Unaware what time it had been exactly, she knew she'd overslept just by the way her stomach felt. So empty that the walls felt as if they were imploding in on themselves. "Ouch," she whispered to herself in her dark room as she rubbed the feeling away. She hoped she wouldn't be too late to break her fast with the others this morning.

She rose from bed, dressing slowly, as every minor movement made the thudding in her head worse. After picking out a dull, modest gown and pulling her boots over her stockings, all that was left was her cloak. As she pulled it from the back of her chair and wrapped it around her shoulders, she noticed a strange black leather book sitting on her desk, back facing up. An odd color, she thought, as she ran her fingertips along the soft leather. Most of the books she'd had were varying shades of brown.

Deciding to inspect the book a bit further before leaving, she picked it up and turned it over in her hands, surprised to see an embossed Targaryen sigil painted in red. Dany had almost felt startled upon seeing the three-headed dragon, it'd been so many years since she'd last set eyes on it. She pulled out a curved sheet of scrap paper sticking out from the pages. A crudely scribbled series of words she read aloud, "Keep this safe. We'll read it together."

Dany grinned ear to ear imagining Jon leaning across her desk with her small quill in his hands. She noticed how neatly he'd folded her clothes from last night. Still grinning, she grabbed the quill and scribbled a note for him in turn. She tucked the book safely under some others before pulling her hood around her hair and heading out in search of something to eat.

The chill had returned to the air this morning, the strange warm spell winding down. Even the sky had returned to a haze of smoky greys and whites. Instinctively, Dany rubbed her arms after folding them, though she enjoyed the cool sensation against her flushed cheeks.

As she entered the great hall, she realized she had been late for breakfast. Though, everyone inside had been taking their time eating and enjoying each other's company, in no rush to meander around in the cool air outside. Lady Catelyn and Lady Olenna were at the main table again, their voices carrying much further as everyone else kept their whispers hushed.
The food had been consolidated to the end of one table, buffet-style. Dany grabbed some fruits and buttered a roll before spotting Jon sitting at the end of a nearby table with Samwell. Throwing caution to the wind, she walked toward them. In her mind, they'd be married soon enough and all the sneaking around had felt silly. Besides, they were the only other faces in the hall that she recognized. So long as she stayed away from the wine as promised, she could keep her hands off of him in front of the others. 

*Hopefully.*

After setting her plate down, she discreetly tucked her scrawled note into Jon's pocket. He raised a worried eyebrow in her direction, but she quickly pulled her hand away so as not to get scolded. Moving to the other side of the table, she sat beside Samwell, rather than Jon.

"Sam, I'm so sorry about-" Dany began to apologize in a hushed tone to fit the setting, likewise feeling comfortable enough with the boy to freely use his nickname. Sam's face flushed as she addressed him.

Jon brought a finger to his lips, hissing a barely audible "*Shh*," through gritted teeth. He furrowed his brow and nodded discreetly in the direction of Lady Olenna. Dany adjusted her gaze to the noblewoman who had been rather animated in conversation, despite the intimate setting the dining hall had returned to since the feast.

"King in all but name. I hear he's taken so much off of Robert's plate that the King has even lost weight from all the whoring," the older woman laughed. For a moment, Dany admired the way she'd boldly taken a blow at the *Usurper*’s expense. She stared in her direction while listening until she felt a gentle kick to her shin under the table. Shaking herself out of the daze, she tore into her bread feverishly, eavesdropping along with the boys.

"Stannis saw no benefit in what we had to offer. The Lannisters have more than enough wealth, after all. Thus the *Freys*, or more appropriately, *The Twins*. Stannis Baratheon, ever the Commander. I wonder what war it is he's preparing for."

The table sat in silence, listening in on the Queen of Thorns, though Lady Catelyn kept her voice low enough that they couldn't make out what she'd been saying in response. Dany knew Olenna hadn't been fooling them at all, certain she had been well aware of each pair of ears listening and just how far her voice carried. Though she hadn't been sure what good the information would do her, or anyone else in the hall other than Catelyn.

"That's enough of that," Jon broke the silence. He turned to Daenerys, nodding at the scant selection of food on her plate, "You should eat something more substantial."
"I will. I'm just being cautious after last night."

Jon nodded, deciding against lecturing her any further, "Did you get our gift?"

She began to shake her head excitedly, "Where'd you find it?"

"I didn't, Sam did. It was here, in the library tower, more or less hidden. He suggested I take it to you."

"Thank you, Sam," she beamed.

"It's mostly about Aegon the Conqueror, but there's a bit about other Targaryen Kings as well. I didn't have time to thoroughly read through it, but I thought it might be more suited to you," Sam explained, in an almost melancholy tone, as if he'd understood the loneliness she must've felt.

"Sam has something else to tell you," Jon nodded to the boy.

As Dany fixated on Sam with an intensity that made him visibly nervous, he stuttered his way through, "Maester Aemon, at Castle Black, I believe he'd be your great uncle."

"Another Targaryen? You've met him?" she grabbed his wrist similarly to the way Jon had seen fit to do the night before. Sam chuckled nervously, shaking her hand off of him as politely as he could manage. He gave Jon an apologetic look as he did so, taking a wild guess as to the true nature of their relationship.

Jon couldn't help but chuckle. He'd been happy to see Dany likewise feeling comfortable with Sam the same way he had, himself. Curiosity got the better of him as he fished around in his pocket for whatever it had been that Dany slipped inside.

"In a way, he saved my life. My father demanded I forsake all claim to my inheritance and take the Black, but Maester Aemon saw that I had promise after arriving. Somehow, he convinced my father that my skills would be better suited studying at Hightower. I spent only a few days by his side but he felt comfortable enough to tell me his true identity. I don't think many people know, so if you could keep it down," Sam raised his shoulders as if to plead her silence.
"That's not a problem," she explained in a hushed tone, "I'm well aware of the danger in simply bearing the name, myself." Dany popped a few small pieces of fruit into her mouth as she considered the news.

She turned back to Samwell, "Forsake all claim," she said with a layer of disgust coating her words, "Your father sure sounds like-" luckily, Jon's foot managed to find its way to her shin, nudging her again before she said too much.

"Whatever it was you were thinking, I'm sure you're exactly right," Sam laughed. Dany laughed along with him, relieved, she knew a fellow outcast when she saw one.

Jon tuned them out as they carried on talking. He retrieved the small scroll from his pocket, discreetly unrolling it in his lap. Beautifully scripted, it read, First Keep. After dark. Brushing his fingers over the words, he found his mind wandering, imagining what she might have planned.

His gaze drifted from Dany's hands, to her eyes, and finally, her mouth. She'd been happily carrying on conversation with Sam, though suggestively biting her lips between berries. She eyed Jon, knowing full well he had just read her note. First Keep, he thought. The old tower was abandoned, that was true enough. But it also sat right next to the guard's hall, which still made it a risky move, especially considering the influx of guests about the castle. Jon's eyes were transfixed on Dany's full lips, stained pink from the juice of the berries, almost suggestive of... No, he thought and shook the image of her naked body from his head. Now isn't the time, he reminded himself.

"What do you say, Jon?" Dany asked, shaking him further out of his daydream.

"I'm sorry, what?" he managed to inquire through the soft ringing sound in his ears as his blood stirred under his skin, hoping she really hadn't been asking him about their plans aloud.

"Sam asked if you'd still show him around the castle?"

"Oh," Jon said, "Right."

Jon simply nodded as he stood to leave as if in a daze, Sam shuffling to keep up behind him. Dany stayed behind, finishing her meal, considering going back up for something more substantial, as Jon had suggested. She'd need the energy later that night, after all.
As Jon approached the ancient stone fortress beside the broken tower, he took a moment to appreciate the worn gargoyles loyally guarding the grounds, the same as they had done for who knows how many decades or even centuries. This had been one of Bran's favorite spots to climb. The boy would sit atop the gargoyles and hang from them as if they hadn't been sky-high. Jon shivered at the thought, or perhaps at the cold wind whipping at his cheeks.

Dany had a knack for choosing the most foreboding locations for their trysts. Though admittedly, the dark and chilly tower had been abandoned as long as Jon could remember, and it really had been perfect for their needs. His eyes had adjusted to the darkness by now. He spotted Dany's white cloaked figure briefly in one of the windows as if she were the resident ghost of the eerie fort.

Without any further hesitation, Jon's feet whisked him up the winding spiral staircase to the top where he'd seen her ghost lurking. His legs had been shaking after the journey so far up, almost ready to give out as he finally reached the room she'd been in. He leaned against the wall, working to catch his breath after his impromptu workout. After his lungs recovered enough to form words, he reminded her, "I'm still upset with you, you know."

"Why?"

Jon simply folded his arms, giving her a stern look he knew she'd decipher.

Dany sighed, "It wasn't my intention to get... drunk. Lady Olenna came over to speak with me and she got inside my head. I kept drinking wine because I found it soothing, and before I knew it, I had had too much of it, and not enough food."

"What did she say to you?" Jon nearly growled through an angry scowl.

"Cage the wolf, Jon. It's Lady Olenna we're talking about, a noblewoman, not Theon, some stable boy or guard's son. There's nothing you can do about it."

"That doesn't matter to me. You're to be my wife and I'm not going to let anyone upset you, I don't care who it is."

"And you're to be my husband. I appreciate the sentiment, but I'm not going to let you lose your head
over some snide comment said in passing. It's not that I'm upset, I'm just..." she paused, abandoning the thought, "I don't want to talk about it right now."

"Why not?"

"We're finally alone again and you want to use the time to discuss some conversation I had?"

Jon unfolded his arms to push the mess of black curls from of his face, shifting his weight uncomfortably between sore legs. Jon had suddenly felt nervous back under Dany's wanton gaze.

"We can save the talk for later. Right now I'd like to get you out of those clothes."

"But it's cold in here." The breeze whipped through the open window, rattling the leaves on the vines that grew along the wall as well as those hanging down from the ceiling. Jon shivered.

"I'll keep you warm," she assured him, wrapping her cloak around him as she moved in for a kiss. The sound of the dried leaves and twigs on the floor crunched and snapped beneath her boots as she walked toward him. As promised, Jon felt the familiar surge of heat exuding from her as she pressed her lips to his. After a few moments, he'd almost forgotten there'd been a chill at all. Beads of sweat began rolling down his skin underneath his clothes. He broke their kiss to pull his fur cloak over his head, letting it fall to his feet.

"I need to see your body," she murmured, moving away from him enough to start working him out of his leathers.

Jon grabbed her wrist to stop her briefly, "We'll have to be quiet, there are open windows all over this room. Who knows how far the sound carries below."

Dany shook his hand away, giving him a sly smile as she met his gaze, "Yes, you will have to be quiet."

Jon's breathing faltered under her threat, his sudden ragged breaths like music to Dany's ears. She peeled the tight leather from his sweat-slicked torso, her mouth charging at his skin before he'd even managed to work his hands free from the constraint of his clothing. Running her tongue along his chest up to his neck, Jon bent his knees slightly as he leaned against the cold stone wall so that she could better reach him.
Her mouth had found his ear again, wrapping her tongue around the back and dragging it down to his earlobe before taking it between her teeth. Jon whimpered helplessly, bracing himself against the wall for support as his eyes began to cross of their own volition. Dany's breath hissed hotly against his neck as she dragged her teeth slowly down the soft flesh. She pressed her body into him so she could gauge how eager he'd been from beneath his trousers. *Hard as stone,* she thought, feeling satisfied feeling his hardness against her. She brought her hands up to his head, dragging her fingernails across his scalp. Tugging at his curls, she drew him into her kiss as he tried willing his pupils back apart.

Dany pulled away and studied his face. Jon's eyes fluttered open as he finally managed to uncross his eyes, panting all the while. He curled his lip in a hungry way, a smile slowly dragging across his scruffy face. Dany ran her fingernails from his scalp down to his waist, increasing the pressure the further they traveled, marking his skin with thin red streaks. She dipped her fingers just below the fabric, teasing him, as another series of small whimpers left his lips. He trembled, though he still hadn't felt the cold.

Dany removed her cloak with one hand, bunching up the fabric with her boots. She let her remaining fingers linger just below his waistline, brushing them against the coarse hair. She took a moment to inspect the bulge in his trousers, perfectly hugging his cock in a way that made her lips quiver with anticipation. Dany dropped to her knees. Jon braced himself further against the wall as she very, very slowly began untying his laces.

Each passing second had felt like a new form of torture, each thud of his heart like its own small collision against his ribs. His blood cried out from underneath his skin, begging him to bury himself in her warmth for some sort of relief. Dany dragged the fabric down at an equally agonizing slow pace, salivating all the while. Jon's face flushed hard as his cock all but tumbled out of his trousers, mere inches from her face, if even that. He could feel the warmth of her flushed cheeks hanging in the air between them.

Jon lifted one of his hands to shake some of his curls into his face as if to hide his embarrassment, but not so many as to obscure the sight of her before him. He had no choice but to listen to the sound of his unsteady breathing and the familiar whirring in his ears as he waited for her next move, completely at her mercy.

Dany wetted her lips with her tongue, pressing them to the tip the same way she'd done whenever she kissed him. Jon shuddered as she made first contact. She dragged the tip across her trembling lips, wetting them with him rather than her saliva, taking tastes of him with her tongue. Knowing how excited he'd already been heightened her own arousal, she could feel the torrent rushing between her legs, already aching for his full length inside of her. She ignored her body's command, relishing in the sweet anguish as she opened her lips, letting him slip inside her mouth.
Careful to shield her teeth with her lips, she began slowly sucking on him, adjusting the pressure of her suction as she made her way down his length. She brought her hands to his lower abdomen, steadying his shuddering body as best she could with her palms, running them over his smooth, pale skin. Muscles clenching and unclenching, almost to the rhythm of his fragmented breaths.

Dany pulled her mouth away, running her wet tongue along his shaft down to the base of his cock, making several passes as she wet him with her saliva. She moved her mouth down from there, running her tongue along his testicles, taking the sensitive skin into her mouth as she found her way around. Jon expelled the air from his lungs. And then took a deep breath. And then held the air inside — unsure what to do with himself other than groan and tremble under her touch. After running her tongue along the underside of his cock, she slipped it back between her lips. Now he'd been thoroughly coated in her saliva, making it easier for her to take him further into her mouth.

She grasped her hand around him, tugging at his skin as she found a rhythm with her mouth. She twisted her palm as she pulled at him, unsure whether it had been his skin searing hers, or hers searing his. Dany let him drop from her mouth, the cool air providing a bit of relief from the heat. She examined the way his skin had pulled back, exposing the head of his cock, swollen and red, begging for the warmth of her tongue.

She placed both hands on his abdomen, running her thumbs down over his testicles as she took him back into her hungry mouth, surprised at how wet she'd managed to get him with just her tongue. Jon was unsure how much more he could take without his tired knees buckling. Luckily, Dany had been working him steadily, taking him deeper into her mouth on each pass, still massaging his soft skin with her thumbs. Jon could feel the tip of his cock bumping against the soft tissue in the back of her mouth and throat, as well as the cool air rushing from her nose onto his shaft whenever she pulled back.

Once she locked eyes with him from beneath her dark lashes, he was a goner. He clutched his hands hard against the stone wall for support. Fevered groans left his parted lips, his body succumbed to a full body tremor as he came in her mouth. Once she was sure he'd finished, she pulled her lips away from him. Jon slumped against the wall, collapsing onto his discarded fur cloak with a pair of weak, wobbling knees.

Eye-level with Dany now, she took his head into her hands, placing small kisses onto his face and lips as he caught his breath. She moved down to kiss the sweat from his neck and chest, licking the salt from her lips, her silver-gold strands tickling his skin as she went.

"Dany," Jon pleaded with her, trying to restrain his mop of black curls with both hands as he worked to compose himself, "My heart might beat right out of my chest if you keep going."

"Alright," she relented, helping him push his tangled curls aside. She found a spot on his fur cloak
beside him, drawing her own cloak around them like a blanket as she settled in.

"Do you think I'm too tame?" Dany asked, breaking the silence.

"Tame? So asks the woman who just attacked and left me disarmed," Jon laughed.

Dany hadn't responded, still looking lost in thought.

"You're tame when you need to be," he assured her. "Does this have somethin' to do with what you were telling me earlier?"

"She said the Wolves have tamed me. That she'd expected more Fire and Blood."

"I hadn't let you alone that long. What would she have you do, spit fire the moment you meet someone new?"

"You're probably right. It's just that she knew members of my family. Our family."

"I've never met a single person more suited to our house words than you."

Jon pulled his trousers all the way up, lacing them tighter underneath Dany's outstretched cloak. She pouted a bit as she watched him shuffling around, unprepared to wander back to her room and sleep alone.

"We should be getting back," Jon suggested, reaching for his tunic.

"The most dreaded combination of words," she whined.

Kissing her quickly after sliding his tunic over his shoulders, "I know," he said, before also squeezing into his doublet, somehow feeling colder the more clothes he'd layered back on. "Soon enough we'll share a room together, and we can stop all this sneakin' around."
Jon rose, and Dany tugged on the bottom of his tunic. As he looked down at her, she said, in a soft voice, "No. Let's never stop sneaking around."
Reflections in the Dark

The courtyard had been more or less repurposed as a mingling spot for the guests as they came and went from the castle grounds. Jon slinked in the shadows nearby, feeling a bit out of sorts as the place he typically spent the most time had felt nearly unrecognizable, unwelcoming. He wrapped his cloak tightly around himself, trying his best to blend into the darkness as he spied Daenerys weaving in and out of the growing crowd. She'd been his perfect contrast; the light to his darkness, the white to his black, the fire to his ice. There was something about the way others had been gravitating toward her that made it feel as though the space between them had expanded, pushing him further and further away from her.

He watched as Randyll Tarly swept into a low bow upon drawing near enough to the silver-haired girl. As he rose, he grabbed both of her hands in his, deeply kissing the backs of them in a way that made Jon's skin crawl. Dany dropped her small, pale fingers from Lord Tarly's grasp with all the graciousness of a royal princess as she curtseyed before him, her smile wide, luminous. Jon's curiosity burned, wondering what he'd said to her, or why he felt it necessary to kiss her skin that way. He exhaled, working up the nerve to approach her.

Just as he took a step from out of the shadows, he spied Loras Tyrell drifting toward her. Jon's foot retreated back the way it had come. That familiar pang of jealousy had returned as the sun cast dark shadows on all the sharp angles of the knight's face. Likewise, the sunlight bounced off each of his loose ringlets as if they were actually made of gold. His curls fell perfectly around his face. Jon instinctively ruffled his own tangled, messy heap of curls as he watched them. Dany had been covering her mouth as she laughed along with Loras.

"Jon," Robb called out to him as he approached, arm in arm with Margaery. Jon wondered for a moment if Robb's arm had ever gotten sore escorting her around that way so often. "You look bored. Come to the godswood with us. Margaery's been dying to see it."

"It's true," she beamed, pointing beyond the guest house toward the looming weirwood tree, "I am greeted by those beautiful crimson leaves each morning, it's only right I have a proper introduction."

"Sure," Jon said meekly, forcing a smile through his otherwise glum expression. He took one last look at Dany. She, likewise, had a forlorn sort of look, taking note of Jon's expression as they locked eyes. Quickly looking away, Jon lead the trio into the direction of the godswood.

Sunshine cascaded through the thick leaves and brush, bathing the ground below with streams of soft white light that pierced the darkness. The godswood was alive with its own soundscape of singing birds and insects, and the soft crackling of leaves and branches as small mammals scampered through the thicket. Gone were the everyday sounds of the busy castle beyond.
The centerpiece of Winterfell's godswood, however, had been the ancient heart tree. A magnificent weirwood tree with thick white branches dressed with dark crimson leaves. An eerie face had been cut into the trunk, which cried dark red tears of sap. Some said the old gods used the faces to spy those who prayed before them. It certainly felt that way. The tree sat adjacent to a small pool of water so dark it appeared black and so cold it chilled the air above and around it.

Even though he'd been in the company of Margaery and Robb, Jon felt a pang of loneliness as he took a seat on the ground near the heart tree. Logic told him he shouldn't be jealous. He trusted Daenerys. It was other men didn't trust, especially not after growing up hearing all the crude stories and thoughts from the folk in and around Winterfell. Loras was still a stranger to Jon. He had no real reason to dislike him other than blatant jealousy. Randyll, a stranger, too, though he didn't like what little he knew about the man. And he certainly didn't like the way he'd kissed Dany's hands.

Jon's body involuntarily jumped as Dany sat beside him in front of the heart tree. He tried to shake the thoughts from his head, though he'd had little luck with it.

"Sneaky, sneaky," she teased. She had been quite stealthy. Just like Ghost. Jon didn't respond, rather, he tried to neutralize his expression, sensing it had almost certainly been too dreary for the current setting.

"What's wrong?" she asked him, likely expecting his mood to have lifted once she had joined him.

"I thought you didn't like him," Jon said without filtering his words, without thinking.

"Who?"

"Randyll Tarly."

"I don't. But he did aid my family in the war, for better or worse. He might be one of the few Lords who would treat me with respect, so I might as well engage with him. Of course, I'm fully aware of the despicable way in which he treats his true heir. Though, best not to stoop to his level, wouldn't you agree?"

Jon ignored her question, "And Loras? He lingered around a while."
"Are you jealous?"

Jon scowled.

"You are!" she wailed, jabbing his ribs with her elbow.

"Shut up," he said defensively, attempting to block her with his arm. Tilting his head in a way that let his hair fall into his face, he tried to work the scowl from his jaw.

"Why should you be jealous of Loras Tyrell?"

"A knight, an heir. Plus, my eyes work just fine. I know what he looks like."

Dany's smile had abandoned her face almost instantaneously. She closed her eyes tightly as she began, her tone soft and solemn, "Do you know what you look like?"

Jon simply shrugged. While he knew he hadn't been ugly, he looked a lot different from the princely types like Robb or Loras. His face was softer, no sharp angles to speak of. He'd always felt uncomfortable about the darkness of his eyes compared to the lighter eyes his family had. It was just another feature that set him apart and made him feel like the outsider he was. Same as his hair, much too dark, messy and unkempt. Robb and Theon teased him about his vanity when it came to his hair, but he kept it long because it felt like another piece of armor, easier to hide behind and go unnoticed. Lastly, as Dany pointed out many times, he'd had pouty lips. Which she did seem to like, at least.

"I'm plain," he said after a moment.

"You're not plain, you're striking," she said, crawling closer to the dark pool before them. "Come here."

Jon inched his way toward the water. Dany sat on her heels, knees bent, loosely braiding her hair to the side. She then anchored her hands in the moss by the water's edge.

Jon followed suit, moving slowly toward the dark water on his hands and knees. The pair leaned over the black expanse, which had been the perfect surface to reflect their images back up to them,
much clearer than the few small cloudy mirrors around Winterfell.

Tucking his curls behind his ears, Jon compared their features for a few moments. They both had large, round eyes under thick dark brows. They'd even had similar noses, though Dany's was much daintier. After comparing his lips to hers, he could see what she'd meant. He did look pouty. Though her lips held a much different shape, he thought she looked a bit pouty, too. He wondered which features they'd both shared with Rhaegar, though he assumed he must've looked much more like Lyanna. In a way, the pair looked similar, aside from the night and day differences reflected in their coloring. *Gods, she's beautiful*, he thought, though he still had no clarification regarding what she'd seen in him.

Just then, the breeze carried a few crimson leaves to the water's surface, rippling their reflections. They broke away from the mossy edge, settling against the heart tree once more.

Dany whispered breathlessly, "I hope our child has your hair. And your eyes."

Jon groaned at the mere idea, bringing a hand up to lazily brush the bottom of her braid, "That would be the biggest tragedy in all seven kingdoms. Your snowy hair and violet eyes are unrivaled."

"Oh, please. You've only seen girls from Winterfell and Winter Town, how could you be so certain?"

"You forgot the Reach," he reminded her. "Though it doesn't matter. I don't need to see any other girls to be certain you're the most beautiful."

Dany relented, taking a moment to stare into his eyes as they exchanged smiles. Just then Robb and Margaery meandered over toward the weirwood where the pair had been sat. "What are you two bickering about, then?" Robb inquired.

"We have an ongoing debate about who has the prettier hair," Dany beamed.

"That's easy," Robb said without hesitation, "Daenerys."

Jon erupted with laughter at how quickly his brother came to his defense, "See?"
Margaery stepped over to Jon, reaching out to gently ruffle his hair, "I kind of like Jon's," she said, redirecting her gaze to Robb in a suggestive manner. Jon's laughter caught in his throat at the sudden, unexpected contact. He shot an apologetic look at Dany, though she didn't seem to mind too much, in fact, she'd had a wide grin after Margaery agreed with her. Jon wished he could brush off his own jealous tendencies in the way Dany had been able to.

"Then it's a tie," Dany laughed, "I guess we'll have to break it another time."

"You like Jon's hair?" Robb interjected, making no effort to hide the jealousy that had been apparent in his tone. Dany discreetly elbowed Jon to make sure he'd been watching them. He had been.

"Of course," Margaery breathed as Robb closed the gap between them. She raised her right hand to Robb's face, brushing the back of her fingertips over his temples and gently through his flawlessly curled, dark chestnut hair. Twirling her fingers through one of his perfect copper coils, he closed his eyes and leaned into her touch as she cooed, "Though I like yours better."

When Robb finally opened his eyes again, he looked intoxicated and short-winded. Dany tugged at Jon's hand, persuading him to follow her further into the dense trees and brush, thinking it best to give the pair some privacy. They quietly sprinted on tiptoes until they found a thick black ironwood tree beside an even thicker oak stump. Dany lifted herself up onto it.

"Come here," she commanded Jon. He made no effort to deny her, moving between her open legs to better reach her mouth with his. As they kissed, she wrapped her legs around his waist as best she could under the restraint of her skirts. She pressed her body further into him as they kissed, delighting in the sensation of his growing erection as she pulled him closer in. Jon tried to break away, realizing they were getting carried away much too fast. Dany dropped her legs from his waist but held onto his bottom lip with her teeth as he pulled himself away.

In response, Jon took her top lip between his and bit down playfully. Dany let go before breaking into a fit of laughter, finding his counter-attack to be out of character for him. He moved away from her a few paces, catching his breath, "It's dangerous being alone with you, even in brief instants."

"Is it?"

"It's like I can't control myself."

"Come back to me, I'll behave."
"I might not," he reminded her, cautiously making his way back. Dany worked to unbraid her hair as Jon rested his hands on her thighs. Inevitably, they began to wander after a moment.

"Every time I see you I can't help but wonder what you've got underneath, if anything," he said, gently tugging at her skirts.

"Why don't you check?" she asked, lust dripped from each word.

Unable to resist the suggestion, he held her sultry gaze as he lifted her skirts enough to slip his hands underneath. He ran his hands over her stockings and slowly up toward her knees. *Bare skin*. His hands dropped from her legs, trembling. He backed away from her again trying to compose himself. *That was a bad idea*, he chided himself internally.

"I was wearing something underneath last night, actually."

"You were?"

"Yes," she laughed. "My plan hadn't involved taking *my* clothes off, after all."

Jon ran a hand through his hair, pacing around a bit before her as she nonchalantly combed her silver-gold tresses with her fingers. She liked watching him struggle.

"*Your plan,*" he breathed while pointing in the direction of her open legs, "*What's your plan, now?*

Dany smiled, quickly licking her lips before attempting to explain, "*Nevermind,*" Jon interrupted before she could even get a word out, "*It's better I don't know. It can't happen. Not here, or now. I shouldn't have checked.*"

"Why not?"

"Because all I want to do is stick my head under your skirts and return the favor," he spat, though he knew she'd been playing dumb to coax it out of him, to hear him say it.
Dany's eyes fluttered closed as she exhaled deeply, as if the mere imagery of what he'd said flashing through her mind had been enough to momentarily transport her to another plane. After seeing her reaction to just his words, Jon felt his tongue trembling for her taste. He could do better. He looked around the godswood quickly, checking behind the large black ironwood tree, twice to be sure. Nothing. No one.

He dropped in front of the stump she was sat upon. Throwing her skirts over his head, he buried his face between her legs without hesitation. Just for a moment, he reminded himself. Dany let out a startled gasp as he lapped at her, almost starving with desperation, clutching her hips to keep her close to his lips. She grasped the edge of the stump trying to balance herself as her body trembled from the already overwhelming sensation of his mouth against her. Exasperated groans broke from her mouth, the familiar cries that could hardly be distinguished from weeping.

That's when the sound of leaves crunching could be heard as soft footsteps approached. Dany gasped, kicking her boots to Jon's shoulders, sending him hurtling back into a bed of fallen leaves and branches. The pair noticed it had been Margaery advancing toward them. She wore her signature smirk, though she'd pulled her bottom lip into her mouth as she nibbled at it. She didn't say anything, she just stood there wide-eyed and intrigued, likely piecing together what she might have caught them at.

Jon had flushed crimson, a shade not far off from the leaves of the heart tree. Scrambling to his feet, he said, "I should find Robb," refusing to meet Margaery's eyes. He'd felt too embarrassed to apologize for whatever it was she might have seen—he still hadn't been exactly sure. Dany would talk them out of it, and he'd just make it worse by being there.

As Jon scampered off hanging his head in shame, Margaery followed him with her eyes, "But he seems so... reserved," her voice trailed off.

"I'm sorry you had to see that," Dany said, likewise blushing, finding herself at a loss for words beyond the simple apology.

"Oh don't be silly, it was my intrusion," she said, still eyeing the direction Jon escaped into, "How did you ever choose between them?"

"Who?"

"Jon and Robb."
"Robb is almost aggravatingly charming, isn't he? Undeniable good looks, too," Dany chuckled before slipping into a pensive tone, "But he isn't Jon."

Margaery nodded in understanding, "You have beautiful hair, too, you know. Jon just seemed too smug, I couldn't have him win so easily."

Dany smirked back at Margaery, and they shared a small laugh at his expense. Daenerys, herself, felt almost as captivated by the Rose as Robb had been. She watched as Margaery inhaled deeply, holding the air in the lungs as she spun in a small circle upon the leaves. Her skirts swished around her legs as she came to a halt facing Dany, "You can almost smell how ancient it is in the air alone—oakmoss, ironwood and that sweet smell of decaying leaves. I wish I could bottle it."

Margaery took another deep breath, inhaling the scent with partially closed eyes. Dany couldn't help but wonder, "What's the godswood like in Highgarden?"

"More lush, brighter. Beautiful and nearly always in a state of bloom, but it doesn't have the same timeworn atmosphere or scent. We have three weirwoods, as well. The Three Singers, they're called. They grew together, branches intertwined as if embracing," Margaery likewise intertwined her fingers gracefully, in a sort of show of demonstration as she described them. It looked almost as if she were playing a harp. Dany had felt spellbound by her in that moment, before a pang of jealousy rose within her as Margaery described her home far to the south.

"Daenerys, you're welcome at Highgarden anytime. I'd love to show you the godswood, and anything else you'd like to see. There's nothing quite like it."

"I can't leave Winterfell," she admitted, casting her eyes to the ground.

"Why not?"

"Because of the agreement Lord Stark made with the King," she explained in a somber tone.

Margaery moved closer to Dany, wrapping their arms tightly together, the way she'd done dozens of times with Robb, "And why should that be any of his business?"
The girls smiled at each other as Margaery helped Dany down from the stump. They set off, arm in arm, to rejoin the boys.

...  

Jon had found Robb not far from the heart tree. Noticing Jon's troubling appearance and crimson-flushed cheeks, Robb asked him, "What happened to you?"

"I don't want to talk about it."

"Where's Daenerys?"

"With Margaery," he responded flatly, trying to shake the look on Margaery's face from his mind's eye. "How's it going with her, anyway?"

"Oh," Robb smirked. "Well, I'd say."

"Well? I saw that look on your face when she touched your hair. I've made that face. I know what it means."

"I'm close, I think. It feels a bit like she's too poised, so worried about being a proper and charming lady. I know there's more to her than that, though, and I'd like to work it out of her."

"I'm sure you would," Jon laughed, nudging his brother's folded arms.

Robb's face flushed a bit, though still quite far off from Jon's deep red cheeks. He hadn't meant it that way, but it wasn't worth denying. He inquired, "Have you and Daenerys...?"

Jon nodded reluctantly.

"I almost can't believe it. You'd been so afraid of the mere prospect of bringing more bastard children into the world. How do you avoid it?"
Jon didn't respond.

"Moon tea?"

"I haven't," he finally admitted after a moment, in a voice barely above a whisper.

"Haven't what?"

"Avoided it."

Robb took a minute to consider the news before responding, "Well, congratulations, Jon," he added, "But also, what the fuck were you thinking?"

"I wasn't. I was at her mercy."

Robb exhaled, "Though I'm certain that's true, it's still a poor excuse. Father's going to kill you."

"Maybe. I've asked her to marry me. I'm hoping we can manage it before it's noticeable."

A look of horror slowly drew itself across Robb's stunned face. He'd had no idea about how serious Jon's relationship with Daenerys had gotten in such short order.

"Actually," Jon said, cringing as he thought back to Margaery catching them in the act, "I do have a tip for you."

"You do?"

Jon hung his head, refusing to meet Robb's eyes as he spoke, "Use your tongue instead."
Robb let out a small chuckle, though it didn't last long as Jon drove his point home with raised eyebrows above widened eyes.

"So that's your secret," Robb's voice carried off, looking lost in thought, perhaps spinning fantasies of his own.

"Secret?"

"Getting her to give you that look."

Jon laughed, "Well it's part of it. But I wouldn't call it a secret."

"What's not a secret?" Margaery called out to them as the girls approached, still arm in arm. Jon dropped his gaze to the ground, still feeling ashamed for not being able to control himself. He'd usually been much better at it than Daenerys.

"We've got a secret," Margaery announced.

"We do...?" Dany asked, confused.

"Indeed! A secret adventure, tomorrow. A prison break of sorts."

Robb looked worried, "A prison break? I don't like the sound of that."

"Lady Daenerys has informed me that she both has not, and cannot leave Winterfell."

The brothers exchanged an awkward, worried look, which they then shared with Daenerys, who had seemed just as confused by Margaery's idea.

She continued, "Well that just won't do. Let us four go into town tomorrow and give this poor girl her first taste of freedom! What do you say?"
Dany spoke up, her voice somber, "Oh, I don't know that that's a good idea."

"Robb wouldn't dare deny my request," Margaery breathed, raising an eyebrow that seemed to prick him as if he were the bait upon her hook. She left Dany's side as she floated toward Robb, whose hands were tightly folded across his chest in protest. She slid her fingers from his elbow to his tucked hand, the sensation causing him to shiver, dropping both arms to his side. The boy's entire demeanor softened as she unleashed the full power of her crystalline gaze upon him, lightly grasping his hand in hers as she continued, "Then it's settled. We'll sneak out tomorrow afternoon."
In the morning, Margaery sent one of her handmaidens to summon Daenerys to her chambers. It had been the first time Daenerys had ever set foot in the guest house. The scent of Margaery's perfume wafted from her open door further down the hall. It smelled of roses, peaches, grapes.

Daenerys timidly inched her way to Margaery's doorway. Before announcing herself, she spied the Rose's personal space and belongings. Her room was more than twice the size of Dany's cramped quarters. Hanging from the open door of a wardrobe had been an incredible set of floral brocade dresses, as well as silk gowns in nearly every color she could imagine, and even some she couldn't. Glass bowls full of potpourri were placed evenly throughout the room; dried rose petals, cinnamon sticks, and lemon peel. Lemon, Daenerys thought, delighting in the rare scent that had always taken her back to her childhood memories in Braavos. As she closed her eyes and inhaled, she'd been transported right back to the house with the red door...

"Daenerys!" Margaery yelped excitedly upon spotting her. "Please, come inside and take a seat," she gestured toward her bed, also easily twice the size of Dany's. The room was warm and glowing, with a few small logs set ablaze in the fireplace.

Margaery rummaged through a small chest of her belongings, taking a brief moment to turn to face Dany, "Good, you're not wearing your rouge today."

"Rouge? I don't... wear makeup," she murmured, blush began speckling her cheeks as she spoke.

"My lady," Margaery sang, "Women would kill for a glow such as yours." She'd grabbed a small canister from her belongings and popped the lid.

"Is that tea?" Daenerys asked, recognizing the scent almost instantly, even amongst all the heavy perfumed notes that hung in the air.

"You're exactly right. I'm not sure this will work, but we're going to have a little experiment. Take that towel there, and wrap it around your shoulders."

Daenerys shifted uncomfortably on the edge of Margaery's bed, though she did as instructed, grabbing the towel the girl had already prepared for her. Margaery floated over to her, holding the canister out to Dany to grab onto. Running her hands through Dany's silver hair, she lifted it from beneath the towel. Dany's scalp tingled from the gentle touch. Taking a small handful from the
canister, Margaery began to massage it into Dany's waved tresses.

"What are you doing?" Dany griped, yanking her head away from Margaery's hands defensively.

"A disguise," she breathed, further rubbing the tea grounds into Dany's hair, despite her protesting.

"Will it wash out?"

"I hope so," Margaery said in a tone that resounded with confidence, even though the actual words had not. Dany felt a bit disarmed in that moment, watching her platinum hair stained with the faintest of brown hues. It hadn't been a drastic change, but enough not to arouse suspicion. Once she had finished her improvised makeover, Margaery shook the towel out into the hallway before discarding it into a heap on her floor. She turned back to Dany, "Well, it's a bit uneven, but it'll do. Best to keep your hood drawn while we're there."

She studied Daenerys further, grasping her own chin between her thumb and index finger, "Better yet, switch cloaks with me. The white reminds me too much of your Targaryen hair." Daenerys untied her cloak and handed it to Margaery. She'd draped the white cloak over her chair before closing her door. Without any warning, she pulled her silk gown over her head before slipping into a more simple brown linen dress.

Daenerys tried to look away to respect her modesty, but rather, had more or less gawked, unblinking, at her nude torso as she changed. Margaery then unraveled the crown of braids from her hair with the aid of her fingers and used a handkerchief to wipe the stain from her lips. She glided over to Daenerys, turning to kneel in front of her, moving her hair away from her laces. Dany exhaled nervously as she tightened Margaery's laces before finishing them off with a neat bow. Margaery wrapped the white cloak over her dress, tying it at her neck and pulling the hood over her hair. Moving closer to Daenerys, she likewise wrapped her in a light brown cloak and drew it up around her darkened mane.

"Now we're ready to find the boys," she smiled, blowing out the few lit candles before leading the pair through the courtyard.

Jon and Robb had already been loitering near the east gate, looking uneasy, as the girls finally approached. Dany couldn't help but notice the sheathed swords hanging from their belts underneath their fur cloaks. Unfolding his arms, Jon lowered his head as if to get a better look underneath Dany's hood, after realizing Margaery had been the one donning her signature white cloak.
"Your hair?" Jon asked as she approached, it had been clear he wasn't thrilled about the change. As far as Jon was concerned, her natural hair color had been one of nature's finest achievements.

"A disguise," Margaery explained, dipping to the ground to drag her fingertips across the mud. As she rose, she rubbed a bit of it into Dany's cheeks to give her the look of an ordinary working woman. Dany's breathing faltered a bit as her warm fingers dragged the cool mud across her skin.

"Now me," Margaery said, holding her hand out to Dany while staring down intently into her violet eyes. She gulped as she dipped her fingers in the mud. Margaery slowly blinked at her, maintaining eye contact as Dany reluctantly raised her hand to rub the wet dirt into her cheeks the same way. She could be covered head to toe in mud, Dany thought, she'd still be breathtaking.

Once they were finished, the girls turned to face the brothers as they brushed away the remaining mud from their hands. The boys stood there completely still, staring with mouths agape, subdued by the sensual way in which the girls had just caressed each other's skin. Daenerys cleared her throat, causing them both to shake their heads and snap out of the daze.

"Right," Robb said, shuffling past the east gate. Jon sped up, falling in line with his brother's gait. The boys walked together in front of their dates as they approached Winterfell's outlying town, simply referred to as Winter Town by its locals. Though she'd never been there, herself, Dany was familiar with it. During the summers, most of its residents scattered back to their homes and work lives throughout the North, leaving only a handful of residents to occupy the homes, as well as staff the markets, inn, and brothel. As they made their way through, Dany could sense the absence of the winter residents, but it made her feel safer.

As the four approached the market square, Dany's eyes were alight with excitement and wonder. She tried to remember if she'd ever actually bought anything before. There had only been a few stalls selling fresh produce, as well as one with fresh baked goods. Walking past the fruits, Dany headed toward the baker's stall, trying to place the strange and enticing scent that could only be detected with the deepest inhaled breaths. Scanning the selection of carefully wrapped pastries, she asked the woman, "Which one is it? That smells so sweet?"

The woman picked up a small package, lifting it closer to Dany's face so she could get a better whiff. Lemon cakes, she thought as she identified the scent, "How much?"

"Ten pennies."

Jon sauntered over to Dany's side, slipping the correct change into the woman's free hand, without even bothering to bargain for them. The older woman dropped the package of sweets into Dany's
open-faced palms.

"You didn't have to do that," Dany insisted, flushing.

"I'll even consider sharing them with you," he joked, in a voice barely above a whisper. His gruff tone sent a ripple straight through her body. She felt a familiar hunger pang rising from within her, and not for the lemon cakes.

"Let's go get drinks," he said, placing a hand on the small of her back and leading her past the market square. The pair followed behind Robb and Margaery, who'd already made it to the entrance of the alehouse, the Smoking Log.

"Jon Snow," a soft, seductive voice called down from above them as the pair walked beside one another. Daenerys whipped her head in the direction of the sound. Hanging from the window of a large two-storey building had been a shapely woman wearing a dress that had hugged her curves like a second skin. As she leaned out of the window, her cleavage nearly poured from her bodice, her red waved hair flowed over her porcelain skin like summerwine. A prostitute, Daenerys thought, the mere sight of the woman stoked flames of anger inside of her after hearing Jon's name slip from her lips in such an intimate and familiar manner. Had they...?

Dany looked away from the woman and began staring daggers at Jon. The boy grappled between his manners and tempering Dany's outrage, which had clearly been bubbling just beneath the surface, threatening to spill over. With blood hot beneath her skin, her cheeks flushed red as she silently seethed.

Jon furrowed his brow in worry as he looked up to the red-haired siren. Ever the frightened pup, he winced as she continued, "I still owe you a go at it. Don't be a stranger, Jon Snow," before slipping back inside. Dark red silk curtains swayed in the aftermath of her departure.

Exhaling sharply, Jon closed his eyes, mortified. Daenerys fought the urge to yell something up to the woman as Jon took her by the arm, ducking into a nearby alleyway. Before Dany could even speak, Jon began explaining himself, "Yes. I paid Ros for her time. Once. But just as she said, she still owes me because nothing happened."

"And what, you plan to take her up on that? Finally get your money's worth?" Dany spat the words like fire, with a rage he hadn't seen in her since the night she caught him hiding in her room.
"Dany, please. That was before I had any idea about you. That there had been any chance whatsoever for me an' you. She can keep the money, I don't care about that. I only wasted her time."

"How did you waste her time?"

Jon sighed, looking both ways before lowering his voice, "I know you're aware of the Night's Watch vows—*I shall take no wife, father no children.* Uncle Benjen kept telling me about everything I would've been giving up. I figured I should at least try it once before swearing it off for the rest of my life."

"You could've asked me to do it," she muttered, forehead still rumpled with spite.

Jon began to shake with laughter, "No. No I couldn't have."

"I would've said yes."

As she voiced the words, Jon likewise felt a ripple through his body that sent his irises retreating beneath closed eyelids. He remembered the way his nerves made his limbs shake with anticipation and lust every time he'd been anywhere near Daenerys prior to their first touch. The nerves may have yielded to his confidence as his days with her accrued, but the inescapable lust for her remained. He briefly slipped into a daydream, imagining how it might've gone down had he been the first to exhibit the bravery she had. Had he actually had the nerve to approach her with such a salacious offer. Smiling down at her, he took several deep breaths as he stroked her soft stained hair, "We got there eventually."

Dany's eyes drifted back up to Jon's, her anger had visibly waned, "Why didn't you do it with her?"

He sighed, "I couldn't go through with it. All I could think of was that I could be responsible for bringing more bastards into the world. That it's no life for a child. Whatever pleasure I might have felt for those brief moments were not worth a lifetime of mistreatment to some child who had never asked to be born in the first place." As Jon spoke, his eyes were wet with unshed tears. She knew he had been talking about himself in that moment, the pain and loneliness of his childhood clear behind his words.

"I'm sorry I overreacted," Dany apologized, adjusting her tone to a more soothing one, after seeing how upset the memory had made him. In that moment, she had also realized that while he may not have been able to bed Ros, he had bedded her over and over. *And over.* Dany began slipping far into
her own imagination, as well. Caught alone with her lover in an alleyway, inevitably, she spun webs of fantasies throughout her mind. Tangled amongst them, unable to break from the adhesive pull of the lust he stirred within her whenever she had been close enough to smell him and to feel the heat of his skin as they touched.

"I knew there was a chance we might run into her, and I could've avoided all of this by just telling you first. I guess I'd been afraid to make you jealous," he explained.

Dany exhaled, attempting to shake herself from the inappropriate state of arousal, "Apparently, it's not a good look for me."

Jon only smiled, deciding to keep it to himself that he found her jealousy endearing. He'd almost convinced himself she had been incapable of the emotion. Now he'd felt a little less silly worrying about Loras Tyrell so much.

They continued heading toward the local alehouse, the Smoking Log. True to its namesake, the tavern smelled like a campfire, with the scent of roasting meat wafting from the kitchen. It felt warm and cozy inside, a welcome change from the chilly air outdoors, with an icy drizzle to match. There hadn't been many patrons at the tavern this afternoon, save for a couple of tired looking men nursing mugs of ale alone. Robb and Margaery had found a larger table near to the roaring fireplace, the sound of the logs crackled as they burned.

"What kept you?" Robb inquired as the pair approached. Dany eyed Jon as she gently set the wrapped lemon cakes down on the table. Taking a seat next to Margaery, she'd been utterly curious as to how he'd respond.

"Ros," he said flatly. "I'll grab us some drinks," he continued, before making his way back toward the barkeep.

"Uh oh," Robb's gaze drifted slowly across the table until it landed on Daenerys. She didn't exactly look pleased.

"Ros," Dany said her name, making no effort to hide the snark in her tone, "Propositioned him from the second storey of the brothel as we passed."

"Jon Snow... full of surprises, isn't he?" Margaery laughed, nudging Daenerys, causing the girl to flush red.
"Surprises? What do you mean?" Robb asked, sensing a story there he'd been unaware of.

"Oh, nothing," Margaery's voice trailed off, though she managed to wink discreetly to Robb, in a way that had been lost on Daenerys, as well as Jon, who had already been making his way back. Robb would drag it out of her, later. Carrying the stems of three flagons of honey mead in one hand, and a cup of chilled milk for Dany in the other, he set the drinks down on the table and passed them around. Robb raised an eyebrow at the glaring difference of the drink he set in front of Dany, wondering whether or not Margaery would notice.

She sipped at her milk, giving it a small taste first. There had been a hint of sweetness there, "What's in this?"

"Honey," Jon replied.

"It's delicious. Thank you," she smiled, taking another large swig of it.

"So, what do you think?" Margaery asked.

"Of what?"

"Life outside the gates!"

"Oh," she said. "It's so warm and it smells incredible in here. I like the markets the most. I could do without all the mud, though," she bemoaned, feeling the annoying tugging sensation of her wet skirts as they clung to her leather boots below the table.

When Dany looked back up, she'd noticed Margaery had only been half-engaged in her answer. And then she noticed the strange exasperated look on Robb's face, a mixture of concern and agitation he'd been trying to conceal. Dany raised an eyebrow to Jon as she nodded toward Robb, wordlessly asking him if he'd noticed it, too. Giving his brother a discreet sideways glance, he noticed a small foot inching its way along Robb's thigh, slipping under the hanging fabric of his tunic. Jon's gaze shot back to Dany's. Staring back with an expectant curiosity, she awaited an answer to her soundless question.
Dropping his eyes to the table, in the direction of her legs, he dragged his boots along Dany's shin. Swinging his irises briefly in Margaery's direction, Dany nodded in understanding. She pursed her lips to hide a smile. Feeling devious herself, she dipped her finger into her milk before bringing it to her mouth, coating her lips with the white liquid as she held Jon's gaze. The familiar look of agitation worked itself into Jon's expression as his gaze dropped from her eyes to her lips, wet with the creamy liquid. She brought the cup to her mouth, taking another swig, letting it dribble down her chin a bit, before catching what she could with her tongue and wiping the rest away with her sleeve. Seven hells, Jon thought, as he likewise wiped the sweat from his brow, shifting uncomfortably in his suddenly too-tight trousers.

Robb broke from his trance, "What's that sound?"

"What sound?" Margaery inquired, her seductive smirk transitioned into a look of distress.

"I hear horns," Robb said, breaking into a sprint, making his way outside. Margaery slipped her boot back on underneath the table as Jon downed the rest of his mead.

After a moment, Robb burst back through the door, gasping for air, "We need to leave. Now."

The three made no effort to argue, sensing the urgency in his voice. Abandoning their table with haste, they made their way to the door to join Robb.

Immediately upon exiting the building, Jon spat, "Shit," and turned back. He dipped inside, retrieving the package of lemon cakes for Daenerys, before making his way back out into the road. He managed to hit the ground with such force that he'd caught up with the rest of them just as they rounded the corner inside the castle walls. The four of them slumped against the stone wall just inside, each struggling to catch their breath.

As Jon's lungs had recovered the quickest, he was the first to inquire, "What was that about?"

"The horns," Robb managed between ragged breaths, "Stag banners."

"What?" Jon barked in disbelief.

Just then, a few Kingsguards stomped through the gates atop gallant white destriers which perfectly matched their white cloaks. Behind them, a young man galloped inside the gates on a light brown
A small horse-dragon wagon made its way through the gates last, carrying a pair of wooden chests. Renly held his arms out as if to usher it inside, "I come bearing gifts."

"Gifts?" Ned asked, his tone shifting a bit sour.

"Compliments of the *Hand*, but also the Lannisters' coin purse," he chuckled.

"*Gods,*" Ned said, shaking his head, "This isn't necessary."

"To Robert it is. He's been terrified that retracting his offer, as well as the broken betrothal, might have deeply offended you."

"So my oldest friend would bribe me with *gifts*?"

"Not exactly. If anything, it was Cersei's idea to buy back your loyalty. But my brothers signed off on it, at any rate, and I chose to personally deliver them, myself," Renly spoke to Ned with the ease and honesty of a lifelong familiarity. Ned huffed in the direction of the wagon. Jon raised an eyebrow, unsure what to make of it.

"Hmm," Ned said, considering. "Well, we needn't discuss it here in front of the gates. Please, come
inside. We'll find room for you and your guards, though it might be a tight fit, I'm afraid. We'll be feasting soon with our guests, the Tyrells and the Tarlys. Come, we'll stable your horses."

Renly took his horse by the reins, waving his men to follow him toward the stables. Ned looked around in search of someone. Once he spotted Robb, he waved his son over. Jon, Daenerys, and Margaery tried to figure out what Ned had been saying to him, though they kept their voices too low to eavesdrop. Robb sprinted off alone toward the great keep.

"He may have come bearing gifts, but that's not the real reason he's here," Margaery said, twisting her smirk into something of a wicked smile. Jon and Dany gave each other a worried look. Noticing their concern, Margaery clarified, "I don't think you'll need to worry about Renly. He's got other things on his mind this visit."

Margaery didn't expound any further, instead, she grabbed Dany's hand, "Come, let's get you washed before the feast." Dany shot Jon an apologetic glance as she left him alone with her lemon cakes.
After parting ways with the others, Jon wandered around Winterfell aimlessly, unsure what to do with himself. Out of habit, his legs carried him to the courtyard. Perhaps he’d get lucky and glean a few more details about Renly's visit. Once making his way there, he’d immediately regretted his decision. He'd caught the attention of Loras Tyrell, who had begun wandering over to him, smiling ear to ear. Instinctively, Jon looked around, expecting that someone else had been the target of his approach.

"You must be _Jon Snow_," the golden-haired knight held his hand out to shake Jon's, eyeing him up and down in a way not much different from how his sister, Margaery, might have done. He'd had the same seductive quality in his eyes, his voice. The knight's gaze lingered a bit too long over Jon's body, which made him feel as though he were being appraised like livestock.

"Ser Loras," Jon responded a bit too eagerly, in a deeper voice than he'd usually manage, trying to sound gruffer, more intimidating. Squaring his shoulders, he grabbed Loras' hand with a tight grip, holding onto it a bit too long as if driving some sort of point home. None of his efforts had fazed the knight.

"Strong handshake," Loras smiled, almost flirtatiously. Though his tone didn't sound mocking, Jon couldn't help but take it that way. "I've been told by your Master-at-Arms that you're the one to go to if I'm looking for a good fight."

_And so it begins_, Jon thought to himself. Loras spoke with the same cadence as his movements; moving as if he were dancing, speaking as if he were singing. Every word more perfectly pronounced than the last. A sick feeling began to churn in the pit of Jon's stomach, compliments of his jealousy.

"I don't know about that," he grumbled, grimacing.

"Don't be so modest. Mind showing me your moves?"

Jon glanced around the courtyard, watching a crowd forming around them. His heart began to race as he noticed too many important faces peering at them. Lady Olenna stood nearby with Randyll Tarly. Dickon and Sam stood not far from them, moving in closer for a better look. Margaery and Daenerys had even appeared above them, perched not far from Ned and Catelyn. Everyone seemingly waiting to see what he'd do. Jon may be able to best the other boys around Winterfell, but a proper knight? _This is madness_, he thought.
Taking a moment to mull it over in his mind, he'd noticed Loras had been looking right through him, in the direction of Robb and Renly, who'd come from out of nowhere to watch the match. Jon redirected his gaze up to Dany. Once the knight followed suit, flashing his flawless smile as he waved to his sister and Daenerys, that had been enough.

"Alright," Jon finally agreed as he handed the lemon cakes off to Theon, who'd been standing with Jeyne not far from the display of training swords.

Loras stroked his chin as he browsed the selection. Jon chose the same modest one-handed sword he'd always used. As the knight selected a larger greatsword, Jon winced. It was the same one that had worn Jon out from simply holding onto it for too long. He couldn't help but feel emasculated as Loras brandished his heavy weapon with ease, displaying all the grace one might expect of the Knight of Flowers. The only tactic he could think to use was to wear Loras out as he dodged each blow to the best of his ability. *Maybe he'll wear out first,* Jon hoped.

He'd held his sword limply at his side, preserving his energy, never once raising it to strike Loras. Perplexed, the knight simply paced around Jon, who'd eagerly matched each of his steps. *If you're waiting on me to make the first move,* Jon thought, *you'll be waiting a while.* He feigned a distraction by briefly turning his head and diverting his eyes, which is when Loras decided to rush him. But Jon had been ready. Bending his knees hard, he wrenched his torso out of the way of the wooden blade. Loras smiled.

By the time he'd returned back to his stance, Jon had also recovered. Adrenaline had begun coursing through him in a way that made it seem as though time had slowed. Using the illusion of extra time to his advantage, Jon studied Loras’ pupils for hints at which direction the next blow would come. So far, he'd seen each one coming, and he'd ducked from them all. Though, the effort he put into dodging the blows began taking its toll on him, as well. Fighting against his lungs, he expelled the air quicker than it could come back to him. The sounds of their footfalls faded as the whirring kicked in. His head began to spin.

Loras thrust his greatsword forward, causing Jon to stumble backward just out of the way. Without hesitation, he brought the sword up before swinging it downward, hoping to catch him in the shoulder. Jon lithely twisted out of the way as beads of sweat began stinging his eyes. Though, he could no longer afford the luxury of blinking, as Loras had quickly repositioned his greatsword. This time, he'd swung it upward hoping to catch Jon off guard. Just in time, he managed to dodge the blade.

Inevitably, the knight bluffled the direction of his next swing, catching Jon off guard. He managed to avoid the blow as he fumbled to the ground. Steadying his legs, he clutched his small sword with both hands, thrusting it upward to parry the next attack so that it didn't crush him right in the back.
With a wolflike howl and all the force he could muster, he thrust Loras’ sword straight up into the air, sliding out of the way just before it came crashing back into the ground with a dull thud that echoed through the courtyard. Loras let out a fevered grunt as he missed his target.

Jon tumbled across the ground before landing on his feet, raising himself back up to meet Loras on wobbling legs, sweat still stinging his eyes. The knight looked aggravated with all of his dodging, and never once trying to strike him back, save for the well-timed parry. They encircled each other again, unflinching. A low growl began rattling his diaphragm, as the memory of Daenerys chuckling along with Loras flashed in his mind. Scanning his head for options, Jon found only an utterly absurd tactic, but he’d had nothing else to try in his exhausted state. He had to show Loras he wasn’t afraid. Give him a taste of what might be in store for him if he’d tried advancing on his soon-to-be wife...

Giving the knight a show of preamble, Jon finally flourished his sword as if to ready it. Loras didn’t even blink as he stared on, amused. Raising the sword high with both hands, the tired boy willed his lungs into taking deeper breaths, stalling as he convinced himself to make the risky move.

Drawing his sword backward for the extra force, Jon then heaved his right hand forward, letting go of the hilt. The wooden weapon went hurtling toward Loras. The knight had managed to duck, confusion clear on his face as the sword clanged against the ground behind him, unsure whether or not Jon had actually meant to let go. Jon’s wager had proved to be just the right amount of distraction. Charging him with his full weight, Jon threw his forearm forward, hoping to catch the knight’s chest to finally knock him down. Unfortunately, an exhausted Loras staggered a bit as he tried to dodge, catching Jon’s arm right in the neck.

Loras fell to the ground, his hands abandoning his greatsword. He clutched his neck, coughing. "Shit," Jon spat, crashing back down to reality, realizing whatever show it was he just put on had been a far cry from a typical sparring match. A look of horror had overcome Loras as he struggled to draw enough breath to recover.

Jon fell to the ground with Loras, attempting to hold him up as he coughed. The only thing that had been on his mind was bringing the knight down and defeating him, though once he finally had, it felt like some gross form of posturing. His jealousy had gotten the better of him. The onlookers started to move toward them. Suddenly, all the consequences of his poor decision started flooding into his mind. His hands began to shake. This time, not from exhaustion. Jon fumbled over his words, "Are you alright? I'm sorry, I don't know what I was thinking..."

Loras finally stopped coughing long enough to manage to speak, "Is that what you lot consider sparring in the North?" Jon felt singed by the words as if Loras had just spit venom. Deciding it might be in his best interest, he let go of the knight, looking up to see Margaery and Daenerys rushing toward them. Margaery took over cradling her brother after shaking her head at Jon with a mixture of disbelief and disappointment.
"Please tell me he didn't see? " Loras asked Margaery, with a distinct rasp to his dulcet voice.

"I can't say for certain," his sister said, stroking his hair to soothe him. She helped him to his feet, and they walked off toward the guest house together.

Daenerys stood before Jon, arms folded. Hair still wet from washing the stain from it, she'd weaved it into an intricate braid behind her head. Jon admired her a moment, waiting to see if she'd offer him her hand to help him up. When he realized it wasn't coming, he awkwardly raised himself to his feet on shaking legs, meeting a few icy gazes from around the courtyard, as well as some snickering.

"What was that, Jon?"

"I'm sorry," he whispered his apology, "It felt personal. Like it was about you." Dany looked at him expectantly, likely hoping for a better explanation that he didn't have to offer. He kept his voice low, "I had to defeat him," he said meekly, each word sounding more senseless than the last. Her anger with him hadn't waned at all.

"I'm going to go and attempt to explain your behavior to him and Margaery. You'd better hope your tricks here haven't deeply offended one of the most powerful houses in all the kingdoms. Though it's clear we need to talk through this fixation you have with Loras," she spat before turning toward the guest house. Jon's stomach dropped as he watched her leave him behind.

Before he could dwell any further on it, Sansa's familiar sobbing sounded in the distance. The red-haired girl had broken into a run toward the great keep, away from a guilty looking Theon. Jon sprinted over to the ward, grabbing the package of lemon cakes, angrily asking, "What did you say to her?"

"I didn't," Theon threw his hand up as if to protect his neck, mocking Jon as he laughed.

"Don't test me, Greyjoy," Jon grumbled. "What happened?"

"Apparently whenever Renly departs, he's taking the Tarlys with him."

"Why?"
"Somethin' to do with Stannis, or the Lannisters, it's unclear. We don't have all the details," he said, motioning between himself and Jeyne, who'd been close at his side.

Realizing no one else had bothered chasing after the poor girl, he sighed. Jon decided to go check on her, himself. First, he'd make a stop by the kennels for a little bit of help.

Though he'd regularly frequent the rooms of all of his other siblings, he couldn't recall the last time he'd been to Sansa's. Her cries could be heard from the hallway as he approached. The door had been left ajar. Jon knocked on the wood before Lady wandered in, nudging the door open further with her snout. She jumped onto Sansa's bed and snuggled in beside her. Though Sansa's head had been buried in her pillows, she lazily raised an arm to wrap around her direwolf as she wept.

"Sansa?" Jon asked nervously, unsure what to expect. He hadn't really dealt with her hormonal outbursts, that had been Dany's job thus far.

Sansa lifted her head, realizing it had been Jon at her door, "What are you doing here?"

"Daenerys and Jeyne were busy," he explained. "I brought Lady, though. I know she's the best at cheering you up."

Sansa didn't respond, she only settled back into her bed, stroking Lady's soft grey and white fur as she sniffled.

"Did... you want to talk about it?" Jon stammered.

"No," she pouted.

Jon looked down at the package of lemon cakes in his hands, sighing. He'd gotten them for Dany, but felt as though Sansa might need them more in this moment.

"What if I bribed you with lemon cakes?"
"Lemon cakes?" Sansa perked up. They were her favorite.

Taking one last look at the neatly wrapped package of sweets, he walked it over to Sansa as she sat up. Dany would understand, he thought. Ripping into them without delay, Sansa stuffed a small round cake into her mouth.

"What happened, Sansa?"

"My life is over," she bemoaned in dramatic fashion, her mouth still full of unchewed bits of cake.

"Is this because Dickon is leaving with Renly soon?"

"Yes, it's because Dickon is leaving with Renly," she spat, "First Stannis Baratheon takes Joffrey away from me. I finally feel as though I have another chance at a future, and then he takes Dickon away from me, too," she turned to stare into her brother's eyes, "Jon, if he leaves me, I'll die."

"You won't die," he tried to soothe her, unsure exactly what to say other than the truth. "Sansa, you're hardly out of girlhood, and you're worried your future is already over?"

With a tear-stained face, Sansa looked at Jon expectantly. He moved closer to her, wrapping his arm around her shoulder. "He's not your only shot at happiness, you know."

"What do you know about happiness?" the girl asked in a tone that affected Jon on levels he didn't care to revisit. He knew what she'd meant. They weren't close. As far as she had been concerned, Jon was just a sullen and depressed oaf, always pouting about his bastardy.

"A lot, actually."

"Is this about Daenerys?"

"In a way."

"Well, that doesn't help me. You two have each other. What do I have?"
He sighed, "I know what it feels like to have nothing."

"But -"

"Let me finish," he reminded her. "Maybe all you needed was to know that the world has more to
offer you than arrogant little weasel princes like Joffrey. My future felt pretty bleak, too, not long
ago. I had almost pledged my future to the Night's Watch, and then-"

"And then Daenerys," she finished the thought for him.

"Yes, Daenerys," he said. "But more than that, I had no clue that option had even been available to
me. Fate has a way of surprising you when you'd least expect it. My life is different in every way
today than it had been only a month ago. You're too young to think it's all over for you. I can't have
you thinkin' that, or being so sad all the time."

Sansa took another lemon cake into her mouth, considering her brother's words. After having
swallowed it down, she changed the subject, "Mother's been a lot nicer to you."

"Yes," Jon agreed, hoping not to have to explain it any further.

"I'm glad you've been allowed at the feasts," she said, taking a third lemon cake into her mouth. Jon
fought the urge to take them away from her before she'd finished them off. They seemed to be
helping, after all.

"Me, too," he smiled. "You can sit with us, you know."

"I'd like that," the girl said, still chewing her food, already grabbing for a fourth lemon cake.

Jon decided it had been time to hold his hand out to stop her, "Maybe we should wait on the rest
until after supper, so you don't spoil your appetite."

Begrudgingly, Sansa took her hands away from the package, as Jon carefully wrapped them back up
and set them on small table in the center of her room. Lady rose, spinning in several circles before settling back into Sansa's bed.

"I think this is the most we've ever said to each other," Sansa pointed out.

"You may be right. But, if anyone 'round here knows a thing or two about being upset, it'd be the bastard, wouldn't it?"

Sansa winced a bit as her brother said the word, sensing she'd been a contributing factor in his self-loathing. Though once she noticed the smirk on his face, she felt free to share a chuckle with him, "You're right."

"We should get back, we'll be feasting soon."

Sighing, the girl raised herself off of her bed. Rubbing her hands against her cheeks, she attempted to wipe away the streaks her tears had left. Jon held out his arm to escort her, "My lady."

At that, Lady's ears perked up, tilting her head at the recognition of her name. She leapt from the bed, pads thumping against the tiled floor as she made her way past the door. The direwolf trotted gracefully ahead of the pair, escorting them out of the great keep and back to the kennels.

As Jon and Sansa made their way toward the dining hall, he cheered her up with stories of their daytime adventure into town, trusting that Sansa wouldn't dare snitch on her dear friend. She had been particularly amused with Dany's disguise of hair the color of tea grounds.

Loras had been waiting just outside the hall as guests wandered in, arms folded as he leaned against the stone wall. Jon let go of Sansa's arm, gesturing for her to go in before him.

The men stood there for a moment, neither making the effort to speak up first.

Jon had been the first to relent, still unsure what to say for himself, "Ser Loras, please forgive me-"

Much to his surprise, the knight began to laugh, "Daenerys explained that you thought she and I..." he paused, cringing a bit at the mere notion, "She ... isn't my type. Honestly, I had been trying to
impress someone else. I assumed you'd be an easy target, but good enough to make me look better. Turns out, I'd made the wrong person jealous."

"It wasn't an honorable move on my part," Jon awkwardly interjected.

"Eh," Loras shrugged, "Honor's not always all its cracked up to be. Sounds great in theory, but sometimes in practice, you've got to get creative," he offered, thinking back to the Hand's tournament for Stannis Baratheon. He'd chosen to use a mare who'd been in heat in order to best Gregor Clegane. Loras was no stranger to using dirty tricks to take advantage of King Robert's generous tourney rewards, and he'd had his own wealth of golden dragons to prove it.

"There's nothing quite like it, is there?" Loras asked, his gaze shifting to the pair of men fastly approaching, "Having something you'd risk all honor to defend."

As Loras' voice trailed off, Jon followed his gaze to see what had distracted him. Renly Baratheon had been personally escorted by Ned this evening. The Stag's pace slowed as he passed the knight. Jon couldn't see Renly's expression, only the back of his head. What he could see, however, was the longing in Loras' blue eyes as they followed him. Once Renly rounded the corner into the hall, Loras let go of a deep sigh, looking a bit dejected in his wake.

"Ser Loras, if you'd be up for another match, I'd love if you could show me a thing or two, there's a lot I could stand to learn from you."

"Sure," he smiled, "Just... keep a firm grip on the hilt next time."

Jon flushed with embarrassment, "Sure thing," he said.

Loras slipped inside. Jon turned around slowly, hoping to confront the sudden feeling that he'd been being watched. There stood Lady Olenna, hands clasped before her. Jon wondered how long she'd been there, or how much she'd heard. Hanging his head, he slipped into an awkward, shaky bow on a pair of sore legs. Olenna wore an inquisitive smirk, eerily similar to Margaery's.

"That was quite the show you put on with my grandson."

"My lady," he began as he rose from his bow, "I... don't know what came over me."
"That's not a very good lie, is it?"

Jon cringed as she called him out. Olenna moved closer to him, appraising him similarly to the way Loras had done. Sensing his anxiety stirring, she continued, "Oh, it's alright, boy. In fact, it's a bit of a relief to me, you should be so worried that Loras would tempt your girl. Though, perhaps you shouldn't underestimate her."

"What do you mean?"

"What was it she said? We have an understanding that goes beyond titles or banners or politics, I believe it was," she said, moving out of the way to reveal Daenerys as she made her way toward them. Olenna took one last knowing look at Jon before wandering inside for the feast.

As he watched her approach, Jon found himself wondering when his luck would run out. He'd managed to skirt around offending the Tyrells, in fact, they seemed almost amused by his behavior in the courtyard. Daenerys. She didn't look upset anymore as she stood before him, hands at her sides, a cool breeze gently caressing the folds of her skirts. Beyond titles or banners or politics, the words echoed in his mind. As they stood there silently, Jon's eyes began to transform as they skimmed her body slowly, alight with a sudden feral vigor.

Pushing his luck further, he took Dany by the hand, whisking her around the side of the building, just out of eyesight from anyone who might approach the hall. The fever overtook him as he coiled his fingers through her hair, loosening her dampened braid as a result. Pressing her into the hard stone wall as they kissed, he pulled her face closer to his with both hands. He'd half-expected her to fight him off. Instead, she tugged at his doublet, willing him closer yet, increasing the heat of their kiss by several degrees.

Jon broke away first, "I love you," he managed, between breaths.

Dany pulled him back into her kiss for a moment before breaking away, herself, "And I love you."

"We should get back before this gets out of control," he breathed. "I think Sansa's waiting for us."

Suddenly, the damned lemon cakes flashed into his mind. Oh, no, he thought. Dany immediately noticed the sheepish look on his face.
"What is it?"

"I gave her your lemon cakes," he admitted, his expression not far off from that of a guilty direwolf looking to get out of trouble.

In truth, she'd wanted the treats for her red-haired friend in the first place, knowing nothing would make the girl happier—but Jon didn't need to know. Dany feigned a look of shock. A strange blend of lust and sarcasm weaved its way through her words, "However will you make it up to me?"

The unmistakable heat of her hand found him as it grazed his trembling thigh. He jumped backward before she'd gotten too far, "Oh, I'll make it up to you. Later," he promised, before taking her by the hand and leading her back to the front of the great hall.
As Jon unlocked his door, he'd been surprised to see his room aglow with warm light, the fireplace he'd hardly made use of had been crackling and snapping as a single log burned.

"Uh," Jon looked around, feeling confused as if he'd entered the wrong room, "What?"

Sat upon his bed were Robb and Margaery. She'd been draped in a green and gold silk gown, reminiscent of her house colors, but softer in hue. It left very little to the imagination. Robb's tunic had been askew, loosely hanging from his neck, likely in the midst of some state of undress. The pair both donned fevered expressions and flushed cheeks. Robb's lips were splotchy and uneven in color, almost certainly stained from Margaery's lipstick.

Heavily sighing at the intrusion, Robb quickly explained, "We're a bit full up on space at the moment. There hadn't been enough rooms left in the guest house large enough for someone of Renly's stature. Father had me prepare my room for him, and so we're bunked together however long he chooses to stay, I'm afraid. I don't think I'm trusted in the guest house."

"I wonder why," Jon said sarcastically while glancing around. Robb's essentials and various personal items had been taking up what little free space there had been. "And Margaery, too? Who did she give her room up to?"

"Really, Jon? You're going to lecture me about sneaking around?" Robb had been well aware of Jon's many trysts with Daenerys, based on nothing more than the drunken way they'd interact after the nights they'd taken each other.

After taking a moment to drive the point home, he continued, "My room is much too close to my parents', there's no way I could get away with this using it. Or Margaery's, for that matter, hers is right next door to her grandmother's. We thought we'd have the room to ourselves, that you'd be off with Dany. Isn't that where you usually sleep most nights?"

"I wouldn't say most nights," Jon refuted as he considered, "I guess I just didn't know you two had been sneakin' around, is all." His gaze dropped to the stone tiles, feeling as though he were an intruder in his own space.
"We hadn't been," Robb nearly growled, hoping Jon would catch on and leave them alone.

Just then, a knock sounded at his door. "Jon," Dany's soft voice called from the hallway, "Let me in."

Jon opened his door quickly and pulled Dany inside.

"Oh," she blushed, surprised to see Jon had company.

"Apparently Renly took Robb's room, so we're sharing. I just found out," he explained.

Daenerys shifted her gaze to Robb and Margaery, realizing they were in the midst of something she'd very much like to be doing with Jon, herself. Robb asked coyly, "Dany, do you mind taking him back to your room with you tonight?"

Margaery gave Dany a pleading sort of look as Robb spoke. Dany, nearly crying with excitement, responded, "With pleasure," before taking Jon by the hand and leading him back out into the hallway.

"Lock the door!" Robb called from inside. Jon did as instructed before slipping his key back into his pocket. The pair sprinted quietly back to her room.

Once inside, Jon locked the door behind them before drifting to Daenerys. She knew what would happen the moment the door closed behind them, and she'd hoped for it ever since their last night together in the keep. Though, no matter how accustomed she became to seeing Jon's untamed transformation, her nerves had always gotten the best of her. The moonlight poured in from her window this night, flickering like a flame as fast-moving clouds whipped by, each obscuring the dim light. Jon's eyes nearly glowed against the darkness, like a nocturnal predator. Dany's heart began to race. Between the wild look in his eyes and the chill of her darkened room, her skin broke out in gooseflesh.

Jon didn't stop advancing, even as his body bumped hers. He willed her to take backward steps as he continued forward. Clasping his hands around her waist to steady her as her knees hit the edge of the bed's frame, he dug his claws into the linen that hugged her curves. For a moment, she thought he might simply shred the fabric right off of her. His fingertips lingered there a moment before forcefully pushing her onto the bed with both palms.
Baring his fangs as she fell backward, Dany gasped in surprise as she bounced a bit on impact. She bit her lip as he ran his hand over his aching groin as if to assure it, soon. Jon peeled off his leathers without even loosening them, the poor decision leaving red marks from resistance all over his face, chest, and arms. Though, he didn't seem to notice at all. Unlacing and removing his trousers with impressive speed, he let them fall to the floor as he climbed onto the bed before her.

Instinctively, Dany opened her legs as far apart as she could manage. In that moment, she had almost wished she could dislocate them in some sick, exaggerated fashion, just so that her body language matched just how ready she'd been to invite him back inside of her. She began panting, her breaths nearly matched the pace of her heartbeat.

As he moved toward her, he carried the fabric of her skirts up with only his rigid erection. He chuckled a bit at how well it had worked. Though to Dany's ears, his laugh sounded almost maniacal, which both frightened and delighted her. Jon may not know much, but he did know a few things—that Dany had absolutely nothing underneath, save for stockings, and that her slickness had already coated even her thighs. After all, they'd spent the better part of the day in a tug-of-war with their lust, pushing it down each time it had come calling. The higher Jon had raised her skirts, the more her scent had imbued the air around them, causing his pulse to quicken.

It didn't take long to find her opening, even without the aid of his hands. Dany had already been a whimpering mess, anticipation getting the best of her. Once he thrust inside her, he planted his lips onto hers. Dany's cry of pained delight echoed inside his mouth as they kissed. Her legs had already been flailing to either side as she tried to find footing, all the while clawing at Jon's back, adding yet more red marks to his skin as she dragged her nails.

This hadn't been a lovemaking endeavor for them, no. This was an act of desperation, a fulfilling of just another basic need, as essential to them as food, water or sleep. As each of Jon's thrusts became nearly brutal in force and speed, the pair finally felt as though their starved hunger pangs had been satiated. Dany managed to slip a hand between her legs, grinding her fingers hard into her swollen flesh. Clenching her face tightly as she already began to peak, Jon raised himself off of her a bit as her hand struck his abdomen. His pace began to falter as her soft skin bumped him over and over. Not yet, not yet, he coached himself, all of his muscles still trembling from exhaustion.

Once her hand came to a rest between them, Dany bit back her groaning as best she could as her body gave way to a series of convulsions. Jon had begun shaking, as well, unsure how much more of a beating his muscles could take. She twitched and tugged at him from the inside, willing him to join her. Dany whimpered from the heat as he came. Jon went to pull away, but she wrapped her legs around him, "Stay a while," she pleaded with a whisper, always relishing the way he'd involuntarily jerk as he softened inside of her. It was as close as they could possibly get, and she never wanted to be apart from him.

Steeped in one another, the pair felt glutted in that moment. Though, each had known the satisfaction
would only last so long before the hunger pangs set in again. Finally, Dany released him.

Jon lifted himself off of her almost immediately, nearly stumbling onto the floor beside her bed with shaking legs. He pulled Dany onto her side. Leaning over her, he untied the laces of her dress and began to peel it off of her. Now they'd matched, the only fabric either had worn had been on their feet. After drawing her shutters closed, Jon grabbed a handkerchief from Dany's desk drawer and tossed it to her so she could wipe herself down. Jon lit several candles on her desk for better light.

He grabbed the black leather book before making his way back to her bed, Dany gaped at his body all the while. She caught the book with both hands as he tossed it to her, meanwhile, Jon leapt onto the bed behind her. He tugged at a sheet from the bed before wrapping it around their bottom halves, then he wrapped his arms around her. Nestling into her neck, he kept his head elevated enough to view the pages as she flipped through them.

The chronicle began with something of a preface to Aegon's Conquest. The tale of Daenys the Dreamer, who'd foreseen the Doom of Valyria, and whose descendants would ultimately give rise to the famed Conqueror. Luckily for Dany and Jon, the Targaryens had been the only Valyrian family to survive the Doom, having set sail for Westeros. Specifically, to Dragonstone, a remote island located on the western edge of Valyrian territory.

Daenerys had been right. The Targaryens seemed to preserve their bloodlines by wedding brother to sister, at the very least, from Daenys onward. A young Aegon had wed both of his sisters, all three of which would mount dragons of their own. The book clarified that Aegon was indeed Westerosi, likely having been born on Dragonstone, the same as Daenerys. Prior to his Conquest, he'd commissioned a table, carved to accurately reflect the lands of Westeros long before he set out to conquer it.

As Jon caught up to the end of the page she'd already finished, Dany closed her eyes, trying to envision the dreary, distant castle, and the peculiar painted table inside. In her mind, she could see three enormous winged beasts, each a different color, but it was too dark to tell their exact hues apart. They encircled the air above the towers that rose high behind protective stone walls. Jon had been there with her, though he was older, his body more muscular. Even his hair had been longer and tied back from his face, which had been marked with a couple of scars. Dressed mostly in black leather with a few crimson embellishments, he looked at home under the storm-threatened sky. The sound of the waves crashed in the distance. Dany could almost smell the salt from the ocean, feel the crackle in the air as the storm approached. The vision was more vivid than a typical daydream, so real it sent a shiver down her spine. Somewhere inside of her, she felt homesick, even though she'd already been at home. If not at Winterfell, then wrapped safely in her lover's arms.

Noticing Dany's irises dancing beneath closed lids as she daydreamed, Jon had almost thought she'd fallen asleep. "Sorry it takes me so long to catch up," he said, "You can turn the page, now."
Dany slowly opened her eyes. She hadn't been ready to leave Dragonstone just yet, but as she felt Jon's eyes on her, and she couldn't resist an opportunity to swim in the flawless dark pools of his gaze. *So beautiful,* she thought, feeling herself slipping away as she peered back at him.

"Don't be sorry about that. I think the only other person who reads as fast as I do might be Sam."

"I think you're right," Jon smiled, clearly impressed with her.

"We have our words, you have your swords," she said, reassuring Jon with a sweet smile. Dark curls had fallen over his eyes as he examined her face. The book snapped shut as she moved her hand to tuck his hair behind his ears, one after the other, a welcome distraction. Jon shuddered the moment her skin touched his, and Dany delighted in the heat of his breath against her skin as he exhaled. She slid her hand down to his scruff, gently scratching her fingernails through it. As he opened his eyes again, she'd noticed the strange predatory glow had returned.

Before his transformation could take hold, Dany set the book aside, sighing, "We never talked about Loras."

Jon groaned, "Must we?"

"Why are you so jealous of him? Sure, he's good looking. But between the two of you? There's no competition. There's something else there that bothers you about him. I'd like to know what it is."

"He just has so much more to offer you than I do," Jon receded right back into his self-consciousness. In Dany's opinion, he'd felt far too comfortable there. She'd wished to banish him from that terrible place for good. In her mind, he had no business being there, not now, not ever.

"How so?"

"A castle. Titles. His knighthood. His wealth..."

"Jon, please. Have you forgotten who you are?"
Rather than giving a proper response to her question, he lazily rolled his eyes, ruffling his hair in the way he'd always done when he either wanted to avoid something or disappear completely.

"Technically, you're the rightful heir to the throne, you know. No knight, lord's heir or Usurper has got anything on that."

"Shut up," he snapped at her, closing his eyes as if to will the truth away.

"You are, though. Your true last name is the same as mine, remember? Jon Targaryen," she cooed, delighting in their already-shared surname. Jon had heard the same poetry there he'd always heard whenever it had been paired with Daenerys.

"Actually," he clarified, "Lyanna had named me Aegon."

"Aegon Targaryen?" Dany asked, her wide eyes filled with wonder, as an even wider smile drew itself across her face.

Jon shook his head cautiously, "Yes... but I don't like it. Jon suits me."

"While that may be true, there's no part of you that feels like all of this is fated, somehow?"

"Fated?"

"That the last two Targaryen heirs should fall in love, unbeknownst to them, only to embrace what others would find taboo? We share the blood of dragonlords. You're named for the very man who united the kingdoms with his sisters, his wives. In any other setting, we might have been enemies. Instead, here we are in my bed together, our child safe in my womb. A future for our name, our house."

A look of terror flashed across Jon's face. She'd spent some measure of time considering their lineage, what it had meant and what it could mean, whereas, it was clear he simply had not.

"Dragonstone, our ancestral home, now lies abandoned. We could reclaim it, restore our house," she cooed, pressing her body into him as she kissed his mouth. He didn't kiss back. He froze up.
"Jon," she said, tugging at his hair to bring him back to her.

"You've thought a lot about this," his voice cracked nervously as he spoke.

"I do a lot of thinking," she said flatly, lifting herself enough to place kisses along the rough hair on his jawline.

"That's a lot to take in all at once. I think I need more time to do my own thinking," he pleaded.

Dany sighed, "Only if you kiss me back."

Without hesitation, Jon pressed his lips to hers before planting quick kisses all along her cheeks up to her forehead. The unmistakable heat had returned as Jon's lips seared Dany's skin, somehow burning hotter each time his mouth met her. A fresh sheen of sweat formed on her forehead, coating his lips in her familiar salty taste. As Dany's heart fluttered in her chest, she devised a plan.

"About those lemon cakes ..."

Jon chuckled, "I take it you're still angry with me?"

"Immeasurably," she breathed, "You said you'd make it up to me later. Now it's later."

He carefully considered, "Immeasurably, eh? Sounds like I might be chippin' away at that for a while."

"Best not to waste any more precious time blathering on about it, then," Dany barked as she folded her arms across her chest, though her smile gave her away.

Jon immediately pursed his lips obediently as he raised himself up beside her. Using his free hand, he untucked her folded arms and ran his fingertips over her breasts. She shuddered. Leaning into her, he continued fondling her as his lips found her ear, followed closely by his tongue and teeth as he dragged them gently down her lobe. Dany's eyes crossed as she began shifting uncomfortably
beneath him, his breath hot against her skin.

In his retreat from her neck, Dany struggled to bring her irises back down. As she lay there blinded and defenseless, she felt two warm hands slowly wandering down her torso. Jon had shifted himself into a sitting position next to her, massaging his hands into every bit of her skin that he could manage, nearly overwhelming her with each new sensation.

Taking extra care as his hands found her hips, he ran his fingertips over her lower abdomen. He pressed his palm gently into her stomach as if to greet their child. She managed to pry open her eyes to glean his expression. He looked happy. That is, until he noticed he'd caught her attention. His smile shifted into a smirk, a devious look flashed in his eyes as he held her gaze. Traveling at an agonizingly slow pace, Jon pushed his hand further down, over her curls, and into the crease of her thigh. He pulled it toward him, opening her legs up, holding eye contact all the while.

Dany's heart began to race as she lay there on full display before him. Leaning back to get a better look, Jon had finally broken his stare in favor of her open legs. Pushing her other thigh further out of the way, he waited a moment before bothering to touch her. The anticipation drove Dany mad, she began feeling bashful under his scrutiny. Heart pounding away, she wished she could know what he'd been thinking of, or what he'd planned to do with her. Jon remained still, watching her squirm, watching as her face flushed pink. He hadn't even touched her, and her breathing had already become erratic.

Finally, he lifted his right hand, inching toward her opening as gently as he could manage, swirling his finger in her wetness before sliding it upward over her clit, eliciting a series of panicked moaning as she clawed at the furs beneath them.

"Shh," he reminded her to try to keep quiet, having barely begun. He lubricated the rest of his fingers, running them along her flesh in a similar manner, lining them up tightly along her clit. He pressed each finger down at different intervals, some softly, others with more pressure as he wriggled them around. Dany took a wrist into her mouth to stifle her whimpers. She'd been so overstimulated that she had no idea what his fingers had even been doing, only that it had been nearly too much to handle already.

Giving her a moment to recover, Jon took his hand away, considering his next move. He took the hood of her clit between his thumb and middle finger, rubbing the sensitive skin slowly. As he picked up speed, his fingers began to slip from her slickness. His hands shook, too, muscles still exhausted from his long day. Even though she had been writhing from the sensation, he'd needed a new tactic.

Lifting himself up, he repositioned between her legs. Using her thigh as a cushion, he clutched her ass with both of his hands, tilting her into him so she'd greet his mouth. Dany brought a pillow to her
face to muffle her cries as his tongue slithered along, dipping in and out of her. As he began to gently suck on her, she couldn't help grinding her hips right into his face, keeping rhythm with him. By this point, she'd forgotten all about those pesky lemon cakes ...

Much too suddenly, Jon broke away, letting Dany slip back onto the bed. Face glistening, he looked up at her expectantly, "Dany?"

"Mmm?" had been all she could manage as she slowly and unwillingly drifted back into reality.

"Wouldn't you be the rightful heir, rather than me?"

She briefly considered, "I suppose it is debatable, isn't it? But it doesn't matter."

"Why not?"

"Because we're together," she cooed, taking a moment to appreciate his smile before pushing him back into her and wrapping her legs around his head.

Chapter End Notes

Unfortunate but necessary note: Got some pushback here about Robb & Margaery's appearance in this chapter. Just to clarify - They're both fully clothed, and the only insinuation here is that they'd been heavily making out. For those thinking it's so disgusting, remember that a couple chapters ago, Robb was stunned by Jon's negligence with Daenerys. Being heirs, they're probably on much better behavior than say, Daenerys and Jon. For them, there's more at risk. Either way, this isn't about them! Don't focus so much on that if it makes you unhappy! :P
The Long Night is Comin'

Jon awoke alone in Dany's bed. As he lifted himself up, his muscles felt nearly shredded from exhaustion. Opening the shutters, he let the daylight pour in. Based on the way the shadows fell along the ground outside, he could tell the morning had since departed and the afternoon had already set in. Groaning, he pulled his clothes on and wandered off toward the great hall.

Upon entering, Jon noticed virtually all of the faces peering back at him were female. *Odd,* he thought to himself. He quickly filled a plate with food, heading toward one of the far tables where Dany had been sat beside Margaery and across from Sam.

"*Why didn't you wake me?*" he whispered, taking the seat across from her.

"You needed the extra sleep," she explained.

"Where is everyone? It's as if all the men abandoned the castle and left me behind," Jon grumbled as he sat before his plate of food.

Sam cleared his throat, "I'm a man, too, you know."

Jon smirked, "Sorry Sam, I didn't mean-"

"I know," the boy said, shaking his head.

"They probably tried to find you, but hadn't thought to look in my bed," Dany added, much too casually, before taking a bite of food into her mouth.

Samwell diverted his eyes, flushing hard from her suggestive comment.

"*Dany,*" Jon hissed, nudging her shin beneath the table.

"Really? *Must* we pretend in front of these two? They already know," she waved her hand between the pair as she spoke.
"We know," Sam assured Jon.

"See? We're terrible at hiding it. Just like Robb said, what, the day after we'd begun?"

Margaery nodded in agreement, "Terrible, indeed."

"Well, I'm better at it than she is," Jon said to Margaery, nodding in Dany's direction.

"They went hunting, by the way," she said, changing the subject.

"Hunting?" Jon asked, clearly disappointed to have missed out.

"Don't look so glum. It would've been too dangerous for you to go off hunting in your exhausted state," Dany assured him. She'd made a good point.

Just then, the thunderous clattering of hooves sounded throughout the courtyard, echoing even inside the great hall. Guests began pouring outside to see what all the commotion had been about. The men had returned from the hunt, but there was an air of chaos to their arrival back at the castle.

Jon's eyes immediately singled out Robb, who'd dismounted his horse, covered in blood and visibly shaking. His brother wandered over to him with slick, red hands. Unable to tell whether the blood had been Robb's or someone else's, though he'd hoped for the latter, "Gods, what happened to you? Please tell me that's not your blood."

An account of the events spilled right out of Robb, "Bran rode off alone. He'd been caught by a group of wildlings who were taking anything he had of value and trying to steal his pony as we happened upon them."

Using Jon's arm as a crutch to steady himself, Robb managed to transfer the viscous fluid all over his brother's sleeve. He winced as Robb continued, "I killed one of the men before the woman attacked me. And then another came to her defense, and I killed him, too. Before I could decide what to do with the woman, the last one grabbed Bran and held a knife to his throat. Theon. That's when he shot him with an arrow. If it hadn't been for Theon, I don't know what might have happened to Bran," Robb shook, unable to let go of Jon's sleeve or the fear that gripped him.
"It's okay, Robb. Theon was there, and the three of you came away intact."

"Not entirely. Bran's got a pretty bad gash on his leg from when they were threatening to take his horse. He needs to see Luwin, immediately."

Jon looked around to find Bran, hoping to carry him to the Maester's turret so that Luwin could treat his wound. However, Renly Baratheon had taken the boy upon his horse and had already begun riding past the courtyard and toward the turret with haste.

"The wildling, what's she doing here?" Jon noticed Theon helping the woman down from his horse, holding her in such a way as to prevent her escape.

"She stopped fighting back and started begging for her life. I couldn't bring myself to kill someone else. I don't know what we'll do with her, now. My guess is she's our prisoner."

Jon lowered his voice as he inquired, "What was it like?"

"What was what like?"

"Killing someone?" he whispered, taking another glance at the congealed substance that had been soaking into his sleeve. The question felt inappropriate, but his curiosity had gotten the better of him.

Robb didn't respond, he'd only had a conflicted look in his eyes.

"Jaime Lannister said you realize we're nothing but sacks of blood and meat, some bone to keep it all upright."

"He's not wrong," Robb said, his bloodied hands still shaking.

"I'm sorry I wasn't there to help. Maybe Bran could've come away unscathed had you had the extra help."
"What's done is done. I'm going to go get cleaned up," Robb said before wandering off, looking like he might be sick.

Jon spotted Daenerys likewise making her way toward the great keep, following closely behind the wildling who'd been escorted inside by Ned and Theon. Daenerys kept her footfalls quiet as she stealthily crept behind the men, curious about where they had been taking the captive. They traveled into an area of the keep where many of the servants resided, it was warm and tightly packed in. They directed the girl into a small washroom with a crudely shaped bathtub. Dany spied into the room, carefully, so as to go unnoticed. Theon had chains ready, wrapping them around the woman's neck and hands before locking them in place.

"Daenerys," Jon called to her, causing Dany to nearly jump out of her skin as he'd caught her off-guard.

Theon looked up from his task of restraining the woman, "Good. You two can go find one of the servants to draw her a bath and fetch her a clean change of clothes."

"Lord Stark?" Dany spoke up as she invited herself into the washroom. Her voice quivered a bit from intimidation as Ned stood there silently, rubbing his chin, seeming lost in thought.

"What is it, Daenerys?"

"Would it be alright if I helped her bathe, rather than a steward or servant?"

"Dany," Jon hissed at her. "This woman just tried to kill Bran."

"Once upon a time, I was the foreign invader at Winterfell. If anyone knows how she's feeling, it's me," she clarified before turning back to Ned, "Please."

"I'll fetch someone to draw her bath, you may stay to help her bathe if you wish," Ned agreed.

"What will happen to her?"

"For now, we'll find a place for her as a servant."
Dany nodded as Ned left to find help.

"Are you mad? I'm not leaving you alone in this room with her," Jon seethed.

"She just lost all of her companions. We could stand to show her a little kindness, especially if she's meant to live here, at least in the short term. She won't hurt me. And you're not going to stand in here as she disrobes, either. She deserves privacy, same as anyone else."

Though her arguments had made perfect sense to him, Jon had still felt uneasy about it. He didn't trust the wildling, not for a moment. He searched his mind for a justifiable argument or counterpoint.

"I've got it," she said, having found one, herself.

"What?"

"Go fetch Ghost. He'll stay in here and protect me if need be. You know he will."

Without so much as another word, Jon sprinted off toward the kennels, as obedient to Daenerys as Ghost had been to him.

Turning to Theon, she asked, "Why would you bother chaining her up if she's about to bathe?"

"So she doesn't think to run away."

"I'm not runnin' away," the woman spoke up.

"I'm not runnin' away, my lord," Theon corrected her, "This isn't the wilderness. It's Winterfell, where you refer to your superiors by their proper titles."

"And what're those?"
"My lord and my lady," he explained.

"Why's that?"

"What do you mean why?" he challenged the woman's ignorance.

"Theon, that's enough," Daenerys interjected, "Quit having a go at our guest."

"Guest?" he scoffed, "She's our prisoner."

"Must they be mutually exclusive?" She asked, with a knowing glare. Theon and Daenerys were an unlikely pair with an unlikely bond. Both raised at Winterfell away from their true houses, the Starks had been their surrogate family. They'd welcomed the both of them and treated each with kindness for a decade, and in Dany's case, even longer.

Theon simply glared at Daenerys as he made his way out of the room, leaving her alone with the wildling woman.

"Theon," she hissed, feeling a bit of fear overcome her as she watched him walk away. Slowly, she turned around to face the woman once more, alone.

"You was right, my lady," she said, placing a crude emphasis on the proper title, "I have no interest in hurtin' you."

Before Dany's mind could jump to all the wrong conclusions, a pair of servants came in with two large buckets of hot water each and dumped them into the tub. As they made their way back out, Jon had returned with Ghost, he'd had a look of disdain clear on his face.

"Where's Greyjoy?" Jon barked, obviously upset the ward had left her all alone.

"Who knows? And right now, I don't care. He was being an ass."
"That doesn't surprise me," Jon agreed, gesturing for Ghost to enter the room. The direwolf stood guard near the door expectantly, as Dany wandered over to scratch his ears. The servants had returned with another four buckets of water, which had been more than enough for the modestly sized tub.

"Alright, we'll get started. Feel free to stand watch just outside. I'll leave the door unlocked but don't come in. I'll be fine," Dany assured him, noticing he'd also belted a scabbard around his waist when he'd left to fetch Ghost. "When they bring the change of clothes, just keep it outside with you. I'll fetch it later."

Just then, Theon reappeared in the hallway with the key to the chains. Wordlessly, he'd handed it off to Jon before making his way back to wherever he'd come from. In turn, Jon slipped Dany the key.

"Thank you, my lord," the woman said sarcastically to Jon before Daenerys closed the door behind them.

"He's not a lord," she timidly corrected the woman as she moved to unlock her chains before setting them on a nearby table.

"Why not?"

"He's a bastard."

"What's a bastard?"

Dany sighed, sure that Jon was somewhere on the other side of the door listening in, "The tall man who brought you down here, that's his father. But that man's wife, the Lady of the castle, isn't his mother. He's not a legitimate son, and they call that a bastard."

"You southerners make no sense to me," she said, shaking her head as she slowly peeled her dirty, matted coverings over her head.

"Southerners? We're in the north," Dany corrected her.
"Eh, anything livin' south of the wall's a southerner to me."

Dany guided the woman into the hot water, steadying her trembling body as she adjusted to the heat. The woman grimaced in pain as she eased her way into the hot water. Dany wondered if she’d ever taken a hot bath before.

"What's your name?"

"Osha."

"Did you really try to kill Brandon? The boy?"

"No," she said, "Not me. Once the boy said his name was Stark, I knew he was worth more alive than dead. I even tried convincin' the others."

As Osha settled into the tub, Dany dipped a sponge into the water before lathering it with soap. Dany went to scrub her skin as Osha batted her hand away, "I can clean myself, my lady," she spat as she forcefully grabbed the sponge from Dany's grip.

"At least let me help with your hair," Dany pleaded, noticing how dirty and unkempt her hair had been.

"Fine," the woman relented.

"You're from north of the Wall?"

She nodded, as Dany poured water over her hair with cupped hands.

"Are you a wildling, then?"

"We're called free folk, my lady," she corrected Daenerys, who had no idea wildling had been derogatory.
Rather than responding or offering an apology, Dany kept quiet as she worked a lather into Osha's hair, using her fingers to gently untangle the matted mess. Meanwhile, Osha scrubbed the dirt from her skin, then began digging it out of her fingernails. Leaning back, she closed her eyes as Dany massaged her scalp.

"Where were you headed?"

"South, south," she answered, twice for emphasis. "As far south as south goes."

"Why?"

Osha sighed, "There's things north of the Wall. They sleep when the sun's out. But at night's when they hunt."

"Do you mean direwolves?," Dany asked, nodding toward Ghost, who'd remained still as a statue by the door's frame, "or shadowcats?"

"No, I don't mean shadowcats or direwolves, girl. The Long Night is comin'."

Something in the way she spoke the words reminded Dany of the house words of Stark, *Winter is Coming*. The same words that had always felt like an ominous threat, and not in the same vein as the Lannister's *Hear Me Roar* or the Baratheon's *Ours is the Fury*. Even as the steam rose up from the tub, Daenerys felt a chill along her spine.

She then thought of Will. The poor Night's Watch boy who lost his head for abandoning his post, his vows. Selfishly, Will's beheading had meant little else to her other than adding more fuel to her argument against Jon joining them. Death being the ultimate price to pay for abandonment. But she thought of him again, and how he'd lost his life to warn the Warden of the North that something terrible had lurked beyond the Wall, something that might be coming for them all. Not only had no one believed him, he'd been openly mocked around Winterfell following his death. Yet here was Osha, likewise abandoning the only life she'd ever known to run as far away from the threat as her legs could carry her.

"I'm sorry," Dany weakly apologized, having finally freed the tangles from Osha's hair.
"For what?"

"Everything," she responded, and she'd meant it. She saw the way everyone looked at Osha as she arrived, and she knew all too well what that had felt like. Dirty looks and laughing just because Osha had been born somewhere they didn't approve of or understand. After all, Dany had made it into her teen-aged years before the tertiary residents of Winterfell treated her with any respect. Perhaps Osha's friends weren't upstanding citizens, but that's who she'd had in her life, and they were all gone, now. Dany's father and brother, the villains of Westeros—so far as the stories went—they were gone now, too.

Osha didn't say anything back. There was nothing to say.

"It's not much of a consolation, but if ever you need to talk, don't hesitate to find me."

"Thank you," Osha said, interrupting Dany before sliding down the length of the tub and into the water, rinsing the suds from her hair. Dany rose and walked to the door. As she opened it, Jon shielded his eyes and simply shoved a small stack of clothing toward her, blindly. She smirked at his sudden respect for the wild woman's modesty. Jon nudged a pair of leather boots into the room with his feet before the door closed again. Dany set the clothes on the table near the chains, sighing at the sight of them. Chains made her uneasy. Turning back to Osha, she held out a large towel in front of her, helping to wrap it around the woman as she rose.

"Your new clothes are just there," she pointed to them as Osha nodded, wandering over to inspect her new wardrobe.

Looking away as the woman dressed, Dany went back to scratching Ghost's ears, "Good boy," she reassured him.

"How long do you reckon they'll keep me 'ere?"

"I'm afraid I have no idea. But you won't be mistreated. The Starks, they're good people. Technically, I'm a prisoner here, too," she said quietly, dropping her gaze to the tile, where Osha's wet footprints seeped into the stone.

Upon opening the door, Dany saw that Ned had returned with Theon to fetch Osha.
"You two had better get Ghost back to the kennels and then get back to our guests. They could use a distraction, I'm sure."

Daenerys and Jon gave each other an uncomfortable look before making their way out with Ghost. Waiting until they were out of earshot from the men, Dany whispered to Jon, "What do you know about the White Walkers?"

"Not much, why?"

"Osha said some troubling things to me just now."

"Osha?"

"That's her name," she clarified. "She said that there are things beyond the wall that come out at night to hunt. That she'd been trying to go as far south as south goes to escape them."

"Well, that could mean anything, like direwo-"

"No," Dany interrupted him, "She said the Long Night is coming. I think she's seen them. Like Will had."

Jon frowned as the image of the boy's head bouncing along the ground involuntarily replayed in his mind, "I wouldn't be so sure about that."

Dany held her arm out to stop Jon's in his tracks, "Some part of you believes Will's story, I know it. You wouldn't get so upset by his death, had he just been some deserter."

She waited a moment for a response from him that wasn't coming.

"I'm going to find Sam, he might know more about the Long Night," she said, determined.

"And I'm going to go check on Bran."
"I'll see you at supper, then?"

Before answering her, Jon checked the hallway they stood in, both ways. He checked again, just to be sure. Quickly, he wrapped his hand around the back of her neck, tugging her into him for a passionate kiss goodbye.

"Until then," he replied, before rushing off in the direction of Bran's room.
What His Loyalty is Worth

Ever since Winterfell had become inundated with guests, it seemed as though everyone's daily lives had been put on hold. It made Daenerys feel even more stir crazy without her everyday rituals to fall back on to distract her. All she'd had to look forward to were chance encounters with her new friends, and most of all, those with Jon. Every moment without him felt like enduring a drought, as if she were wilting away while awaiting the wet relief of his kisses to douse her again. She tried pushing the thoughts from her mind, as it was still much too early in the day to do anything about them.

Finally, she'd made it to the library tower. As expected, Daenerys had found Sam inside. Being in the library reminded her how much she'd missed stopping by several times through the week, alongside Sansa and Jeyne. She'd even missed her sewing lessons with Septa Mordane, though they were her least favorite, by far.

As she approached the table where Sam had been sat, she'd noticed he'd been particularly engaged in the book propped open before him. Dany had known, first hand, just how annoying it was when people interrupted readers without a second thought.

Assuming the boy's manners wouldn't allow him to turn down her request, she thought it best to inquire first, anyhow, "Sam, do you mind if I interrupt?"

"Not at all," he said, placing a tattered ribbon in the crease of his book as he closed it, giving her his full attention with an expectant smile. *Such a kind face,* she thought as she returned the smile, wondering how in *seven hells* the boy shared any blood with the likes of Randyll Tarly.

"What do you know about the Long Night?"

"I know a little, but since it happened thousands of years ago, I tend to question how much of it is factually accurate," he warned her.

"Accuracy aside, what is it you've heard?"

"They say the Long Night lasted for an entire generation before the sun rose again. Darkness, cold, famine."
"How could anything have survived to tell the tale?"

"That is exactly why I question it."

"Well, assuming there were any truth to it," she paused as she considered, "What could cause something like that?"

"It's a bit vague. There are tales of the Others, who reside in the Lands of Always Winter. When they came down, the night followed them as they moved, as well as the cold. They had the power to resurrect the dead."

"Are the Others the same as White Walkers?"

Sam nodded.

"And you don't believe in them, either?"

"That was thousands of years ago, my lady," he assured her, shaking his head. 

Daenerys sighed, "A boy from the Night's Watch claimed his ranging party had been killed by these creatures. Lord Stark took his head for lying about it and abandoning his brothers."

Sam didn't say anything, he only grimaced at the thought of a beheading.

"The prisoner, the wilding, she's running from something, too. They're the only people I know who've been north of the Wall, other than Jon's uncle Benjen. Why would they lie about it?"

"Maybe the ranger thought his life might be spared if he fabricated such a tale."

"The wildling, then? So far as I know, I'm the only person she's told."
"I'm afraid I can't say," Sam considered, scratching at his chin a moment. "You know who you should talk to? Bran. It's his favorite story."

"You talk to Bran?"

"Of course. He's an interesting little lad," Sam said with a smile, though his eyes looked a touch sad, "I hope he's alright."

Daenerys smiled, nodding in agreement. She hadn't heard any updates on Bran or his condition. She'd wait to approach him with questions until she knew for sure he'd been feeling better. Sam rose from his seat and began to inspect some of the shelves, seemingly looking for something in particular. Once the conversation had come to halt and the library fell silent, Dany could hear grunting from outside, somewhere in the distance. She moved to the window and spotted Jon and Loras in the courtyard again.

"Oh, no," she groaned.

"What is it?"

"It's Jon. He's back at it with Loras. I should go and make sure he doesn't get himself into any more trouble," she said.

"Sure thing," Sam nodded. "If I find anything on the Long Night while I'm here, I'll set it aside for you."

"Thank you, Sam. I'd appreciate that."

With that, Dany's feet swiftly carried her off to the courtyard. From what she could gather, Jon had been behaving himself. He'd had his elbow supported with one hand, his chin grasped in the other, studying intently as Loras showcased a series of swings with the wooden greatsword. Dany climbed the steps nearby to keep an eye on them from above.

Jon took the greatsword from Loras, who had moved behind him to help Jon get his grip right, partially guiding his swings. Slowly at first, before stepping aside as Jon practiced swinging on his own. Dany smiled down at the pair, bending over to rest her elbows on the wood as she watched. Something in the way Jon handled swords had always seemed strangely erotic to her, suggestive in
nature. She shifted uncomfortably in her dress, the fabric tightening around her chest as each of her
breaths came quicker than the last.

"You must be Daenerys Targaryen," a voice called to her from the steps, snapping her out of her
daydream. *Renly Baratheon*, she thought to herself as he made his way toward her, bending over the
wooden railing the same as she had done. Instinctively, Dany slid further away from him. Her blood
ran cold, even with Jon just below her brandishing his greatsword.

"I won't bite," he teased her.

*I might*, she thought to herself, trying her best not to roll her eyes.

"Don't worry. I'll be out of your hair tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? Not a very long visit," she simply said, without any regard for addressing Renly with
his proper titles. He didn't seem to mind. Something in his demeanor hinted that he knew his mere
presence made her uneasy.

"I came to retrieve my squire."

"Your squire...?"

He nodded to Loras, who'd finally spotted them. The knight waved to them, Jon followed suit,
offering an awkward wave, himself. He'd clearly been uncomfortable to see Dany standing above
him with Renly. After all, there hadn't been a single time she'd mentioned a Baratheon without
distaste clear in her voice.

"*Ser Loras* is your squire? And you let him come here? Why?"

"Well I don't own him, and his grandmother insisted he escort them. She likes to show him off, I
think. Can't blame the woman," the longer his sentences went on, the more tender his voice had
become.

Dany frowned. She wished she'd kept her mouth shut rather than engage with the Stag. She hated
how much everyone seemed to love Renly, particularly Ned and the Tyrells. As she examined the way his face softened as he watched Loras and Jon below, she realized what Margaery had meant. Personally delivering the gifts had been an excuse. He'd come to fetch Loras Tyrell. *His lover.* Renly looked at the knight the same way she had looked at Jon—with so much yearning that it felt like *voyeurism,* even though the men below were simply training together, for all to see.

Daenerys didn't offer much in response. Renly attempted conversation once more.

"You know, when Robert returned from Winterfell, I half expected a Targaryen-related tantrum. But it never came."

"I should hope not. I hid from him. Like a coward," she offered bluntly.

"Sometimes I wish I could do just that," he solemnly said, still peering down at Loras. "King's Landing is a strange place since Stannis arrived. Between Robert's indulgences and Stannis' impassivity..." He trailed off, not bothering to finish his thought. Perhaps he'd already said too much.

Closing herself off again, Dany's body language became as rigid as she'd felt.

Renly sighed, changing the subject once more, "Is it true you're marrying Ned's bastard son?"

Dany's eyes narrowed as *bastard* rolled off his tongue. She never cared for the casual way in which *everyone* had let the word slip from their lips without a second thought. Or the way Jon had been labeled as little more than a bastard, as if it were his only noteworthy feature. People were more than mere labels or titles. Jon especially. *So much more,* she thought.

"Right. It's none of my business, is it?" he asked after noticing her irritation.

"No, my lord," she finally said, between gritted teeth. "Nor is it King Robert's."

"Whether I'm the one to tell him, he has ways of finding out," he sighed, without expounding any further.

Unsure whether or not to take it as a threat, Dany simply chose to stay silent. Renly didn't seem
threatening to her, though. She could even see why the Tyrells liked him so much, or Ned. He had a kindness in his eyes and his voice that was undeniable, though she could never bring herself to trust a Baratheon, no matter how candid he'd attempted being with her.

Jon and Loras seemed to be finishing up. They exchanged a firm handshake before parting ways. Jon placed the greatsword back on the rack before sprinting up the steps to greet Dany. Loras lingered a while below, trying to look busy as he stole glances of Renly.

"Did you check on Bran?" she asked Jon as he approached.

Jon nodded. "He's asleep. It's a pretty deep wound, he'll need a lot of rest to recover," he explained quietly, as he was a bit short of breath. His tone had been sadder than the words, themselves, should imply.

"Reckon he'll be alright?" Renly inquired, genuinely concerned for the boy.

"For now. But he'll be on bedrest for a while. He won't be happy about it."

The three of them noticed everyone abandoning the courtyard and wandering toward the great hall. "Where are they headed? It's too early for supper," Dany commented.

Renly clapped his hands together. "Right! Time for gifts," he said, making his way down the steps. His gait slowed as he approached Loras. Even as the Stag passed the knight, he looked as if invisible strings bound their gazes to one another. Dany sighed. That's when she felt her own strings tugging as Jon's eyes fell on her. Instinctively, she turned to face him.

Waiting until Renly had been well out of earshot before questioning her, Jon asked, "Renly Baratheon?"

"Believe me, I tried my best to ignore him. But he managed to work a few words out of me."

Jon grimaced, "Well, did he have anything useful to say?"

"Not particularly. Except that he's leaving tomorrow," she said before dropping her voice to a
whisper, "Also, Loras is his lover."

"His what? He told you that?" Though Jon was shocked in the moment, Dany could see him scanning his mind, matching up the hints he'd seen on his own with the reality she'd just offered. His shock quickly gave way to a more pensive look, followed by a brief flash of embarrassment over his recent resentment toward Loras Tyrell.

She smirked, "Of course he didn't tell me. But he looked right at him the same way I look at you. There's nothing else that look could mean—trust me."

"Then he's in trouble," Jon said flirtatiously, his gaze slowly drifting down the length of her body, before making the return trip back up to her violet eyes. She shuddered.

Dany resisted the urge to jump on him, tucking it away and saving it for the next time she'd caught him alone. Knowing exactly what her expression had meant, Jon cleared his throat in a way that helped dislodge whatever plan she'd had rattling around inside her head, "I'm kind of upset to hear he's leaving."

"Why's that?"

"I won't have an excuse to sleep in your room after tonight."

Daenerys laughed, "You've never needed an excuse."

Jon groaned, trying to discreetly adjust his trousers which had suddenly and involuntarily shrunk in size, "We should go see what he's brought. I've been dyin' to know."

She sighed, "Me, too."

Jon and Daenerys walked together, a safe distance apart. Upon entering the great hall, they'd noticed everyone had gathered around, passing goblets down the tables. Dany's eyes followed the goblets up to their origin point, noticing one of the chests had contained two kegs. *Seems redundant*, she thought.
Dany had caught Sansa's attention, who'd been stationed right near the chests as the wine was getting poured and passed around. She exclaimed, "Dornish wine!"

Wandering toward the young girl, Dany had hoped to get a taste, herself. Jon tugged at her cloak before she could make it too far, "You promised," he reminded her with a soft whisper.

"You'd really expect me to miss an opportunity to at least try Dornish wine?" she shook his grip loose, he didn't challenge it any further. To ease his mind, she added, "Just a sip."

Jon followed closely behind her. Grasping the neck of a freshly filled goblet, she took a small sip and swished it around her mouth. Dany's entire face puckered at the tartness of the flavor, as well as the strength of the alcohol.

"A sip is all I'll be needing," she determined as she handed the goblet off to Jon, still trying to decide whether she'd loved or hated it. Quickly, he'd chugged the rest. Similarly to Dany, his face scrunched up. Neither had expected the potency or sourness of it to surprise them in any way. The strange crimson sunset the night the Tyrells arrived had flashed in Dany's mind. She thought it the perfect match for the vibrancy of the wine. *The south must be an entirely different world,* she thought. If she were being honest with herself, she longed to see it.

Noticing Jon's aversion after such a large gulp, Renly laughed heartily. "The Dornish dismiss other wines as red water," he jested, making sure his voice carried through the hall, "This is Robert's personal favorite, straight from his own wine cellar."

Ned raised an eyebrow, "Curious. Though my guests seem to enjoy it," he said, gesturing toward Olenna and Mace Tyrell who'd both had a small collection of empty goblets in front of them, clearly pleased with the Lannister's offerings.

"How about the other chest? More wine?"

Renly groaned, "Must we open it?"

"I'd love to know what my loyalty is worth to the Lannisters," Ned joked, folding his arms.

Renly nodded to Loras, who'd flipped the latch, sneaking a quick peek inside the chest before lifting the lid and placing it to the side. The knight shook his head, as if in confusion. Sticking out of the top
had been a series of carefully folded fabrics. Shrieking with delight, Sansa ran over to the chest, running her hands over the colorful silks. Everyone else had looked more or less perplexed, exchanging glances amongst each other.

"What are those, exactly?"

"The finest silks money can buy," Renly explained, half-embarrassed to present them.

"Silks? We wear fur in the north. And leather. What am I meant to do with these?"

The display of silks reminded Dany of Margaery's vast collection of gowns and dresses. And that had only been what she saw fit to bring north for her trip. She then thought of her few silk robes. All shades of dull greys, a few snags here and there. She had preferred the fabric to furs, which often made her feel too warm.

Margaery floated over to Sansa, inspecting the fabrics along with her. The Rose whispered something in Sansa's ears. The red-haired girl briefly shifted her gaze to Daenerys before Margaery brought her hand up to physically divert her eyes by guiding her chin away. *Curious,* Dany thought to herself. As Margaery finished exchanging secrets with Sansa, she spoke, "Lord Stark, perhaps we could find a use for them, after all. Lady Sansa has fallen in love with our southern style of dress."

"Has she?" Ned asked, his expression skeptical. He'd undoubtedly noticed the revealing nature of Margaery's bodices. They'd been hard to miss.

"Perhaps we could fashion one for her, for the all the ladies of the castle. For when the Starks return our visit to Highgarden," she said, drifting to Ned this time, following it up with something said behind a deliberately placed hand that blocked her mouth.

"If you're able to find a use for them Lady Margaery, you are welcome to it," Ned said, shaking his head a bit. She bowed her head briefly before returning to Sansa's side.

"Thank you, father!" Sansa cried, still delicately massaging the fine fabrics, paying extra attention as she handled a bolt of deep crimson silk. Daenerys worried for a moment, afraid such a color might clash with Sansa's red hair and rosy skin. Clearly, *blue* had been the girl's color...

Turning to Daenerys, Jon whispered, "Well, that was disappointing."
Failing to stifle a laugh, Dany used the opportunity to poke fun at the Lannisters, "They were here for several days. Who could meet Ned Stark and think to gift him silks and wines?"

"What would you gift him?" Jon asked, genuinely curious.

Daenerys pondered for a moment, "I'm not sure. He's a simple man, isn't he? I think the Tyrells had the right idea bringing sacks of grain up with them. Something practical. Thoughtful, too, as they didn't come here to bleed his food stores dry, did they?"

When Dany looked back to Jon, he'd had a come-hither gaze that didn't quite match the current topic of food stores. She cleared her throat this time, hoping to snap him out of it, for a change, "If Renly departs tomorrow, that means Sam is leaving, too. What do you say we keep him company for his last few hours here?"

Jon blinked away his sultry stare and simply nodded. "Sounds perfect. After you," he said, gesturing for her to lead the way. He'd kept a few paces behind her, watching her hips sway underneath her cloak as they approached the library tower together in search of their friend.
Jon awoke to the sound of Daenerys shuffling around her dark room. He lay there, still, listening to the click of the door as she locked it, and the sound of her boots against the stone tile as she removed them. He'd been waiting up for her, but must've fallen asleep. The room flickered with a dull orange light as she lit several candles on her desk. Jon lifted himself up on an elbow to greet her.

"What kept you?" he asked, blinking away the blurriness from his eyes.

"I was catching up with Margaery," she explained as she removed her cloak, "Apparently, Robb's been acting strange since they got back from the hunt."

Jon sighed, "In his defense, it's been strange since they got back."

She draped her cloak over her chair, "Would you mind talking to him tomorrow? She seems worried about him."

"Sure," he could barely form the simple syllable as Dany had already climbed on top of him, pressing her mouth to his without hesitation. Loosening his leathers, she pulled his doublet over his head before letting it fall to the floor. She lifted his tunic, rushing to place kisses on his chest and along his abdomen.

"Dany?"

"Yes?" she asked between tastes of his skin as her mouth happily explored him.

"What was Viserys like?"

Groaning with displeasure, she rolled off of him. The sound of her brother's name had taken her right out of the moment.

"Viserys? You want to ask about my brother? Right now?"
"You've never really talked about him before."

With a heavy, indignant sigh, she answered him, "He was a bit of a pain, to be honest. He felt entitled to things he didn't deserve, things that would never come. When he didn't get his way, he'd throw little tantrums. I miss him, of course. But I wonder what kind of man he would've turned into carrying on with so little discipline. I shudder to think."

"What happened to him?"

"I can't say for certain, I was much too young. I believe a fever is what took him, the same fever that slowly came for our guardian, Ser Willem Darry. Even he died not long after I came to Winterfell," her voice carried off as she tried to retrieve the memories from the far recesses of her mind, "Viserys, though. He wasn't a strong boy. Thin, undernourished."

Dany studied his face. Jon looked solemn, contemplative.

"Is this about Bran?"

Jon diverted his gaze, shifting away from her a bit. It was about Bran.

"Bran's not going to die, Jon. He's much stronger than Viserys had been, the polar opposite in almost every way. Besides, he's got too many people praying to all the Gods, the old and the new. They'll have no choice but to listen," she tried to comfort him, first stroking his arm before lifting her hand to pet his dark, tangled curls.

"I hope you're right."

A few moments of silence passed between them before Dany attempted soothing him further.

"I'm not going to have you mourning the boy while he rests safely in his bed. We'll pay him a visit first thing in the morning," she assured him. "And every day, if we must. Until he heals."

To emphasize her point, she clutched Jon's face in one hand, turning it to face her as she squeezed his cheeks together, "And he will heal."
Jon gave her a weak smile, realizing she had most likely been right, but the pain had still been clear on his face. She nuzzled into him, listening to his heart beating in his chest. For a moment, the slow, melodic rhythm had almost worried her, until she realized it had been the first time she'd heard it beating regularly, without his having been worked into their usual state of lustful delirium. She decided to change the subject to get his mind off of it.

"Have you done any more thinking about Dragonstone?"

"It's hardly been a full day..."

"I know. You want to stay here with Robb."

"In a way, that's true. I wasn't lying when I told you I'd run away with you if that's what you wanted. But it's not just you and I, anymore. My mother died in childbirth. Your mother died in childbirth. Lady Catelyn, meanwhile, has five healthy children and Maester Luwin delivered them all. If you think we're leavin' Winterfell before you give birth in the safety of his hands, you're mad."

Dany considered his words, "Perhaps you're right."

"I can't just wash ashore at Dragonstone and declare myself Aegon Targaryen. King Robert might be okay with you bein' here at Winterfell, but he wouldn't be okay knowin' I'm the child of the woman he loved and the man who took her away from him. The moment he finds that out, I'm as good as dead. And the rest would surely follow. That's the thinkin' I've been doin' about Dragonstone," the words spilled from Jon's lips, his thick accent tightly woven around each word. Dany couldn't help but smile.

Waiting a moment for some sort of retort from her, he seemed stunned that she'd remained quiet, simply listening to him.

"I'm not ruling any of it out," he continued, "but we have to be careful. In the meantime, I will remain Jon Snow. I'm not opposed to taking on my true name, in some form, someday, but I won't be doin' so at the risk of puttin' everyone I love in danger. Between the two of us, we have the time to figure out the best way to go about it. If anyone can find the solution, it's you. Until then, what's the rush?"

Dany sighed, "It's just that ever since we went to Winter Town, I'm feeling especially trapped here.
"Maybe Dragonstone is a bit ambitious so soon," she confessed, remembering her vision and how much older Jon had looked, "But what do you think about going north to Castle Black? To meet Master Aemon?"

"And just when do you propose we should go?"

"After we're married. As a wedding gift."

"You're pregnant," he reminded her.

"So? It's been what, two months? We have plenty of time for a trip there and back."

"What, then? You and me traveling the kingsroad, at the mercy of any thief or rapist looking to take my head from me and steal my wife and child away to do gods know what to the both of you? I don’t think so," as he spat the words, Daenerys could almost swear his eyes had flashed red like Ghost's in the dim light, "I may know my way around a sword well enough for one or two, maybe three, but I can't take a whole group of men. Not yet. It's too risky."

"Some of the guards could escort us. Most of them sit around all day bored to tears, at any rate."

"You're not supposed to leave Winterfell," Jon sternly reminded her.

"We'd be going north, not south. What should it matter to the Usurper? Renly said his brother didn't even mention me after returning from Winterfell. For all we know, he may have forgotten all about me."

"Renly told you this?"

She nodded.

"Well, I wouldn't be so sure. He might change his mind about that when he gets word we've headed north," Jon reminded her, "North. The wildling woman they found in the wolfswood—she told you she saw White Walkers. She made her way south fleeing from them. You believe her, and you want to head north?"
"Her name is Osha," Dany corrected him, "And what should it matter to you? You don't even believe in White Walkers."

The image of Ice separating Will's head from his body flashed in Jon's mind, yet again, as he feared it might do every time they broached the topic. He quickly changed his tune, "Maybe I do."

"You do when it's convenient for your argument? I'm not headed there for White Walkers, Jon. I have no interest in setting foot beyond the Wall. It'd be just for a few days, just to meet Maester Aemon. And to say hello to Benjen. I know you miss him. I do, too. Aren't you at all curious about the life you gave up?"

"Could we talk about this later, Dany?" he pleaded with her, as his well of excuses and counterpoints had run dry.

"Why?"

"Because you know I can't say no to you, and I'm not ready to say yes."

Dany relented before offering Jon something of a threat, "Fine. I'll give you something you can say yes to."

Jon sighed. It'd been clear what she'd meant. But between his worry for Bran and Dany planting yet another escape plan in his head to consider, being intimate with her had been the last thing on his mind. Particularly after having argued with her, something they hadn't done often.

Sensing his reluctance, Dany let him be and simply lifted herself off of the bed. First, she drifted to her door, lifting her skirts suggestively as she peeled away her stockings, placing them over her boots.

Despite his irritability, Jon propped himself up on his elbows so he could watch her. Next, she moved to her desk, removing a few clips from her hair before dropping them on the wooden surface. Bending over, she shook her hair out to relieve the tension they'd caused her scalp. Craning his neck, Jon tried to sneak a peek down her bodice as she bent over. Dany whipped her hair back as she straightened up, sighing as she ran her hands along her neck. You think I don't know what you're doing? he thought, shaking his head. He'd been onto her.
Without paying Jon any attention, she slowly moved to her wardrobe, opening both doors as wide as they would allow. Back facing Jon, she moved her hair around to the front her neck, so it flowed over her collarbone. She began to unlace her dress, tugging at the strings slowly as she loosened them behind her back.

Slower yet, Dany began tugging at her skirts, inching them up, slowly revealing the backs of her bare legs to Jon, who'd been attentively watching her undress. Each minor movement she made sheared just a bit more of his hesitation away. Every inch she revealed of her bare skin made his heart feel like a little traitor as it fluttered away. Even his eyes betrayed him, refusing to look away from her.

Holding her skirts just above her thighs, Dany hesitated a moment. Jon gulped, shifting uncomfortably on her bed as he waited for the reveal. Much too suddenly, the skirts fell back to the tile, swishing around her feet. Jon collapsed onto her bed with an aggravated thud. So close, he thought.

Since her back had still been turned to him, he couldn't see she'd been smirking all the while. Grasping her skirts again and pulling them over her head with haste, she let the dress fall to the floor in a heap. Jon struggled to raise himself up again to glance her standing there stark naked before him. He'd made no effort to disguise his ragged breaths. Having wandered right into her trap, he likewise made no effort to unknot the lasso she'd tossed over his full attention. She could have it. All of it.

Dany examined the clothing in her wardrobe, carefully considering what she should sleep in. Raising herself up on tiptoes, she glimpsed her top shelf, the one she'd been too short to see on flat feet. Pressing himself into her bed, Jon lay as flat as possible, trying to sneak peeks between her legs each time she lifted herself a few inches off of the ground.

Finally, she dragged a light grey silk robe from the top shelf, exaggerating how far she'd had to reach for it. Leaning toward, she lifted her right leg off of the ground as she stretched as far as she could with the left. Jon whimpered from the sight of her, feeling dizzy as her lasso tightened around his neck, his blood drained from his head. The silk slipped from her fingers, falling to the ground, forming a puddle at her feet.

For the first time since leaving the bed, she turned to Jon, likely gauging what effect she'd had on him. A look of guilt authored his expression as she'd caught him flattened against the furs. Biting her lip before turning back around, she inched her legs apart just a bit before bending over. She retrieved her robe from the stone tile, arching her back all the while. Jon couldn't help but whimper once more. He could see everything. Including her violet eyes peering back at him.
"Come here," he growled, though the ringing in his ears had obscured the tone in which he'd said it. He didn't care what he'd sounded like, so long as she joined him.

After retrieving her robe, Dany slipped her arms through the sleeves and moved toward him, leaving the fabric hanging open so he could see her body. He repositioned himself on his back, careful not to look away as she quickly pulled off his socks. She skimmed her hands along his legs, his thighs, and up to the loose fabric that hung from his tunic. After peeling it off of him, she scanned his body, resting her eyes on his bulging trousers. She licked her lips, reaching for his laces, but stopped short before she could tug them loose.

As she withdrew her hands, Jon wore an expression so pained, one might assume he'd been physically assaulted. "Oh, you'll be alright," she cooed, taking a moment to appreciate the way his muscles looked as though they'd been chiseled from stone.

"I'm not so sure about that," he nearly whined with a distinct rasp to his voice, sounding every bit as desperate as he'd looked. His pouty lips trembled with anticipation. She'd almost felt bad for him. Almost.

Jon furrowed his brow even harder under her scrutiny as she stood before him, deciding his fate. Before he'd had time to appeal his case, she climbed on top of him, pressing her wet cunt right into his cock, permeating the linen nearly instantly. Jon groaned in pain as the wet fabric chafed his skin. Another wave of pain rippled through him as her heat simmered his blood.

"Please," he pleaded with her, pitifully, he assumed. Though, he still couldn't hear anything more than a symphony of bells sounding in his ears as his blood pulsed through him. Relenting more for her own sake than his, she moved backward in order to loosen his sticky laces. After pulling his trousers down to his knees, she nearly leapt back onto him, draping her open robe over his leg and down her bedside. He winced as she stroked his length before guiding him inside of her. He collapsed back onto the bed as she beared down on him with all the force she could muster.

Groaning from the overwhelming collision of sensations, Jon dragged his nails through his scalp, trying to get a grip on himself. Just as he'd felt his mind slip away, Dany captured both of his wrists, pinning them above his head as she rocked her hips.

"Dany," he softly cried as she fastened his wrists together with one hand, moving the other to his mouth, pressing her palm into his lips. He'd already felt lightheaded, and now she'd blocked off not only his mouth, but part of his nose. To compensate, he sucked in as much air as he could manage with each breath. His inflated lungs, just another element of the dissonance she'd shaped for him. While he may have lost the use of his hands, his hips instinctively moved to meet each of her thrusts with his own. He'd needed something to concentrate on.
Much too suddenly, she stopped moving. Jon slowly ceased his thrusting, too, after noticing she'd been looking down at him expectantly. Dany raised herself up carefully, leaving only the very tip of his cock inside of her. It was equally torturous and sublime as she hovered above him, examining his reactions. He'd relished in the feeling of her sweltry wetness dripping down his shaft, slow like honey. That is, until it had been chased by cool air, the extreme contrast in temperature had felt like an icy wind lashing at him. Her palm vibrated as Jon groaned into it. He'd wanted nothing more than to clutch her hips and force her back down on him, enveloping him in the sweet heat between her legs—but he didn't dare challenge her grasp on his hands.

She began revolving her hips as she moved down him, slowly, catching him at just about every imaginable angle inside of her. The cool relief of her silk gown brushing against his leg, paired with the scalding heat of her cunt, a welcome juxtaposition. Her voice had dropped a few octaves as she grunted, providing vocals to the chiming that resounded within his ears. As if this collection of sensations hadn't been enough to drown him, he spotted beads of sweat rolling down her face and body as she rode him. Jon had wished he could lick each one from her skin.

Finally, she let go of his hands, his mouth. She clutched his shoulders hard as she heaved her weight into him over and over. Rolling her hips back and forth, her silvered tresses struck his face as she swayed. *He didn't mind.* She'd had a wide grin on her face as she slithered on top of him, her movements hypnotic. Jon quickly grasped her hips, closing his eyes to concentrate as he helped to lift her off of him each time before she slammed her weight back into him.

Jon unclenched his eyes as his head struck the headboard, he'd realized how far up they'd managed to make it by sheer force. The furs had even been scrunched up around them, but Dany hadn't relented at all. As he watched the vigorous way in which she'd been grinding her hips into him, he didn't even mind that he'd struck his head *again.* This time, Dany took notice, coming to a halt as she slipped her fingers into his curls to massage his head, "I'm sorry," she whispered.

"Don't stop," he begged her with an awkwardly bent neck, willing her continued movements as he guided her hips with his hands. Once her body followed his hands' suggestion, he moved them to the headboard, pressing both palms into the wood, relocating them a safe distance further down the bed.

Dany leaned back, using Jon's thighs for support as she continued writhing on top of him. *An incredible view,* he thought, his jaw involuntarily jutted as he gaped at her curls, and the way her velvety flesh repeatedly squished into his lower abdomen. He shuddered as he watched her lips cling to the base of his cock with each thrust. He felt his eyes start to roll backward, managing to fight it long enough to slip his hand between her legs. He began massaging her clit, chasing it as best he could between thrusts. Dany's mouth had broken open, a series of desperate whimpers spilling from her lips as she shifted her gaze between his hand and the whites of his eyes.
With his free hand, Jon helped keep her rhythm steady as she came, the more waves that passed through her, the less control she had of her muscles. Helping her climax had been his favorite activity, but there was nothing quite like feeling it from the inside. Her cunt had clamped around him, muscles tightening so hard it felt like she'd crush him, only to release him momentarily before the clamp twisted again, like waves crashing inside of her. The sweet torment had always been enough to send him straight over the edge, feeling as though he were falling right through the earth as he filled her. Dany whimpered a final time from the result of her favorite activity, the warm sensation as he came inside of her. Exhausted, she collapsed onto his chest, delighting in the way his lungs lifted her into the air before bringing her back down with each breath. Her silk robe insulated their body heat like an oven. Their sweat pooled together between their chests.

"Let's get you out of this," he said, voice even more raspy, as he tugged at her robe. Dany lazily shrugged her arms out of it, pressing herself back into him. Running his hands along her back, he peeled her hair from her dampened skin. He collected her extensive mane in his hand, so the cool air could find her back. His hearing had more or less returned to normal as he relished in the sound of her uneven breaths, scorching away at his skin with her every exhale.

"I want to be your wife," she whispered, sounding perhaps more vulnerable than she ever had before.

"You will be my wife," he assured her as sweetly as he could manage, cradling her head with his hand.

"Why must we wait?" she lifted herself up to examine his eyes as he answered.

Jon suddenly remembered Ned had guests coming for the pair of them. Realizing he'd never mentioned it to her, he clarified, "We're waiting on... a surprise."

"A surprise?"

He felt a sudden reluctance to say any more, knowing her aptitude for picking apart secrets when she put her mind to it. He didn't want her to ruin whatever it was Ned had planned for them.

"Tell me," she insisted, further lifting herself so she was sitting upright on top of him.

Jon winced in pain, as he lay there still safely tucked away inside of her. He'd felt too tender with her walls still wrapped so tightly around him, every minor movement she made its own exquisite form of torture. She sighed, lifting herself further off of him, releasing him completely. Realizing she'd never
fully undressed him, Dany pulled his trousers off and let them fall to the floor before sitting beside him. She remained upright, enjoying the chill of her room against her hot skin.

"That's better," he said as the cool air had likewise found its way to his legs. When he looked back to her, she had been wrapping her hair into a loose bun. As she held it on top of her head with the backs of her arms, he couldn't help smiling at how silly she looked. Beads of sweat traveled down from her neck, closely following her curve of her breast. Jon chased away his smile, sending his teeth straight into his bottom lip as he gawked at her naked torso.

Dany took a quick peek between his legs, noticing he'd already grown thicker again. She kept her left arm aloft, supporting her impromptu bun, but repurposed her right arm to cover her breasts.

"Jon," she scolded him. "You know, most men have to wait for this sort of thing until their wedding night." Dany clutched her breasts harder behind her arm, which served little purpose other than hoisting them up. Which, in turn, had done absolutely nothing to dissuade his arousal. Quite the opposite, in fact.

He winced again, "You can be so cruel."

"I can also be very kind," she reminded him, letting her arms fall to her side as her hair tumbled down her back. "So tell me," she purred, grabbing one of his hands and placing it on her breast. He closed his eyes, sighing as she massaged his fingers into her soft skin.

"He's invited a guest for each of us," he quickly admitted. "Try not to spoil the surprise by picking it apart."

"Too late," she said. "It's Maester Aemon. It must be."

Jon groaned. She'd probably been right.

"Don't look so upset," she said, "at least you won't have to take me to Castle Black."

"You're right!" he nearly laughed, relief clear on his face as the weight of her request ascended back to wherever it had come. He exhaled.
"Don't look so thrilled, either. I'd like to go somewhere before the baby comes."

"That's reasonable," he said, running his thumb over her nipple, delighting in the sensation of her skin hardening from his touch.

"Excuse me?" Dany barked, "Reasonable?"

Jon simply nodded, bringing his free hand to her other breast, squeezing at the soft flesh before tugging at her nipple so both had matched in firmness. Dany couldn't help but smirk as she watched him play. His gentle touch had cooled her skin even further as she shivered. He went on exploring with a wide grin on his face, completely ignoring her retort.

"Am I to understand that whenever you think I'm being unreasonable, I simply need to let you touch my breasts?"

"Well, it wouldn't hurt," he teased, cupping her breast with one hand, while running the other down her stomach, brushing past her belly button, "But it doesn't have to be your breasts."

"Jon," she whimpered as his fingers gently scratched at her curls, twirling the short hairs with the tips of his fingers.

Sighing, he took his hands away from her, clasping them behind his head in a smug manner, "You know, most women have to wait for that sort of thing until their wedding night."

Jon pursed his lips to stifle a smirk, a bit too proud of himself for turning her own words around on her. From the look on Dany's face, it'd been clear she'd had half a mind to smack him.

"Perhaps we should wait then," she hissed. "For our wedding night. You should go back to your room."

"I can't go back to my room, Robb's still got it for the night," he nearly whined, furrowing his brow in fear for having crossed some sort of line with her.

"We'll see who comes running to the other's door, first," she spat, narrowing her eyes as she
challenged him.

"Dany," he pleaded with her. "I was only teasing..."

She pursed her lips, though her chin began to tremble. As she broke into a fit of laughter, Jon's look of terror had turned to one of confusion, "That's not fair. You really had me going."

"I know," she giggled. "If it helps, we both know I'd be the one busting through your door and begging you to make love to me again. I couldn't wait until we're married. Even if we married in two days time. I can hardly last through the day without you."

Jon flushed, her confessions still managed to catch him off guard. He wondered whether he'd ever get used to hearing Daenerys Targaryen express her sexual desire for him with that melodic voice of hers. It had all seemed like some intricate fever dream. Rather than respond with words, he simply squeezed her, partially to make sure she'd been real.

She softly hummed as she snuggled into him, her flesh searing his in the delicious way it always had. He welcomed the burn as the fever took him away. The candles flickered as they burnt out, leaving the pair in total darkness. He'd lost all feeling in the arm that had been safely wrapped around her, but he didn't dare move it and risk disturbing her. Using whatever energy he'd had left, he placed a kiss to her forehead. Though, she'd already been fast asleep.

That night, Jon dreamt of Daenerys under a colorful southern sunset, draped in scant crimson silks that covered only what she deemed necessary. Which hadn't been much. Sunkissed skin peeked out from strategically placed openings all along her dress—a plunging neckline, exposed hips and belly... Even her ber back had been on full display as she turned. Her snow-colored hair cascaded down the white canvas of her skin, braided through with red ribbons. To Jon, she had looked lethal, dressed all in red and bathed in crimson light, as if she'd ignite him with just one touch. Worth the risk, he thought, his blurry hand reached out to touch her from within his vivid reverie.

His eyes snapped open before he could feel the red silks or her warm skin against his fingertips. Greeted once more by the blackness of her room, he lay there listening to the sound of her soft snoring. His arm had grown so numb by this point, he wasn't even sure it'd still been there. He made no effort to adjust.

Every moment he spent with Daenerys, even the ones where she'd been asleep, he fell even more in love with her. In that moment, he vowed to find a way to take her anywhere she'd wanted to go. Be it Castle Black, Highgarden, even Dragonstone. As her husband, he felt it would be his job to help deliver her dreams to her. She deserved nothing less than anything her heart desired, for she'd already
filled his to the brim.
Half a Dozen Shadows

A bright flash of light had managed to wake the pair, illuminating the room for a brief instant before a crack of thunder followed. There was no telling what time it'd been, since the storm rendered the sky too dark to discern. Though, Jon had felt well rested enough, so he assumed it must be morning. Without saying much, he and Daenerys quickly dressed, holding true to their resolve to check on Bran first thing.

As they sluggishly made their way through the hallways, Jon stopped to approach a nearby window, much larger than the one in Dany's room. He'd hoped to find some sort of hint about what time it might be, having second thoughts about pestering his little brother too early.

"What is it?" Dany asked, retracing a few of her steps to join him once she noticed he'd stopped.

Jon had spotted something strange. He squinted hard. There was a large shadow moving around in the darkness outside. He watched it slip into a corridor not far from the keep. Suddenly, he'd felt naked without any sort of weapon on his person, but he didn't want whatever it was to get any further. Damn, he thought, unsure of the best course of action.

"There's something out there," he said.

Dany approached the glass, unable to see anything at all. Still nothing, even after pressing her hands to the window to shield the light of the single torch that lit the hallway.

"How can you see anything?" she asked, a bit too loudly as her voice echoed throughout the narrow space.

"Shh," Jon whispered. "Stay right here. And don't follow me."

Jon sprinted to the nearest exit, which had been a floor beneath where they'd been standing. After descending the steps, he carefully opened the door, sticking to the shadows as best he could so as to go unnoticed. Unfortunately, he managed to kick a rock, or something small, sending it skidding across the mud.

"Wh-Who's there?" a high-pitched voice called from further down the corridor.
"Sam ...?" Jon asked, stepping from the shadows after recognizing his friend's voice. "I thought you'd left first thing this morning?"

"I woke up and he was gone. I can't believe it," Sam sounded on the verge of crying. "Even the horses are gone. He's left without me. He didn't even bother to wake me."

"Your father, you mean?" Jon growled against another crack of thunder somewhere beyond the castle walls. The storm was moving closer.

Sam only nodded as he blinked away the raindrops. Or perhaps he'd been crying. In truth, Jon couldn't quite tell in the darkness. Maybe he didn't understand all the finer points of titles and succession and whatever else... But he knew one does not treat their son that way. He knew that Ned would never do that to him. Hells, Ned would never do that to Sam, and he hardly knew the boy.

"Let's get inside and out of this rain," he said to Sam.

Colliding with a white cloaked figure the moment he turned, Jon felt his anger brewing further, as he instinctively reached out to steady her waist.

"I told you to stay inside!"

"I couldn't let you go alone," Daenerys cried out, coming to her own defense.

"You're too conspicuous out here, all in white," he barked. "No matter. Inside," he reminded the pair of them, placing a hand on each of their backs as he pushed them forward.

Once the three made it back inside the keep, she realized what had happened.

"Sam?" Dany asked, bringing her hood back down now that she was out of the rain.

"His father abandoned him," Jon furiously explained on Sam's behalf. "Good riddance, if you ask me. A storm is just what they deserve to travel in."
Dany simply shook her head in disgust at what had happened to Sam. In that moment, she felt sick to her stomach knowing someone could do that to their own child. Jon took a moment to compose himself.

After softening his tone, he continued, "Sam, why don't you stay a while. Attend our wedding? We don't have many guests who don't already live here. After that, we'll find a way to get you to White Harbor. From there, we'll get you passage to Old Town. I don't know how yet, but we won't leave you stranded. You have my word."

Sam dabbed at the tears in the corners of his eyes, "Thank you, Jon."

Dany had been at a loss for words. She thought of all the times she'd comforted Sansa, always knowing just what to say to get her to smile. But for this, there had been no words. Instead, all she could think to do was to reach out to rub Sam's shoulder.

"Come, we're headed to Bran's room to check on him."

"Sure thing," Sam said, forcing a smile.

After a silent trip up the steps and through the long stretches of hallways, they'd finally made it to Bran's room. The door was open, and Jon could see the glow of candlelight from outside. He cautiously wandered through the doorway.

Bran's bed was much too large for him. The extra room, however, did not go to waste. Arya and Rickon were snuggled on either side of him, Catelyn on the other side of Rickon, toward the far wall. Summer had been curled up with his brother, Shaggydog, at the foot of Bran's bed, in the empty space past the children's legs.

There were chairs on either side of Bran's bed. Lady Olenna was sat bedside to Bran near Catelyn. The chair next to Arya had been Old Nan's usual seat. There she sat, nimbly knitting away in front of the fireplace.

Even Margaery and Sansa were present, sitting on top of a tattered fur rug on Bran's floor. They leaned against each other's shoulders for support, hands clasped together. Once the girls noticed Daenerys had appeared in Bran's doorway, they beamed.
Sansa shouted, "Dany! Come sit with us!"

Dany flashed a silly looking grin as she lifted her skirts to sprint over to them. They'd broken apart, inviting her between them, clasping each of her hands in a similar fashion. Jon remained in the arched doorway, smirking at Dany's excitement to join her friends, though he felt a small pang of jealousy at how excited they had been to see her. Not that he could blame them.

"Jon, Sam. *Come,*" Margaery added, waving them over with her free hand.

They did as commanded, shuffling over to the fur rug, finding just enough room to fit on top of it along with the girls. Jon sat beside Margaery, and Sam behind all three girls, staring as they whispered and giggled. His face flushed a soft pink.

"How are you feeling, Bran?" Jon asked.

"He's got a fever," Catelyn answered for her son, reaching past Rickon to check his forehead once more.

"I feel fine," Bran insisted, even though his voice had sounded drained.

"We didn't expect to find Bran with so much company," Jon added, looking around the room as if taking a headcount, though he already had. Eleven.

The sound of the rain whipped against the window, which had only been slightly muted by the wooden shutters. Jon couldn't help but shiver even though the room felt warm, the fireplace crackling away behind Old Nan. Though, something still felt off. Perhaps it was just the storm.

The Starks' rooms had been lined up through the same stretch of hallway—the largest, grandest rooms in the keep. Even little Rickon's room had been quite spacious, though not as large as Bran's. Both of which had been closest to their parents' room, so it had been no surprise when Ned popped inside the doorway to investigate the noise coming from the boy's room.

"Throwing a party, are we?" Ned laughed, his eyes narrowed in delight to see his children huddled together so early in the morning, comforting their brother. Jon thought of Benjen in the moment, the
night he'd discovered Robb and Daenerys in his room. Ned had the same smile and kind eyes as his younger brother. Dany had been right. Jon did miss his uncle.

"Father, please don't make them leave," Bran pleaded weakly.

"They can stay. However, Cat, I'd like you to come to bed and get some proper rest. You've been up with Bran ever since he returned. The boy will be fine," he tried to persuade her.

Everyone stayed quiet, bracing themselves for an argument.

"Bran needs me," she stated, though her words could not hide the exhaustion in her tone.

"And you need sleep," he reminded her. "Should anything happen to Bran, I'm certain at least one of the dozen heads in here will go running to fetch help."

"Dozen?" Catelyn asked, taking her own headcount, likely coming up two short.

Ned smiled, nodding to the two loyal direwolves fast asleep below the children's feet. "I will be working on some important matters at our desk you while you rest. If I hear anything out of the ordinary, I will run to check on him."

He moved over to his wife's side, extending a hand to help her to her feet. Cat wobbled a bit as she rose, "No. You will wake me. And I expect to be woken when Luwin comes to change his bandages again."

"Of course," Ned sighed, though he'd been careful not to disagree with her. As he led her out into the hallway, Jon could see Ned stopping a servant who'd wandered past. He whispered something to them, nodding toward the room full of guests. Ned moved back below the arch, pulling Bran's door closed behind him, leaving it open just a crack.

"Old Nan, tell us a story!" Arya whined, reaching a bare foot from the beneath the furs to stroke Summer's back. The direwolf didn't stir.

"Don't do that," Bran hissed, pushing Arya's leg away. She folded her arms.
"Now, now, sweet child. Your wolf is fine," Old Nan assured him. "What tale would you like to hear, little lady? Ser Duncan the Tall?"

Arya scrunched her face up, "Something better. More exciting."

"The Rat Cook?" the old woman inquired, still knitting away.

Arya shook her head again, "We've heard that one a hundred times."

Thunder rolled somewhere in the distance, the room remained silent until it had passed, leaving only the sound of the rain against the glass windows. Dany shivered. Jon struggled out of his fur cloak at once, reaching past Margaery to place it around Dany's shoulders as best he could. He shook his head at her reluctance to wear something thicker than her favorite white cloak, even on the colder days.

She offered him a smile before nuzzling into the fabric, burying her face into the dampened fur as best she could without the use of her hands. Her fingers had still been tightly woven around Margaery and Sansa's. Dany took several deep breaths. Jon knew exactly what she'd been doing, as he'd done the same thing when he'd lie against her pillows, taking in the indirect scent of her hair. The realization made his stomach flutter. He wished he'd been the one holding her hands.

Before he could stare at her too long, he lifted his head. Lady Olenna had been quietly observing the pair of them from her chair, looking thoroughly amused by their show. *Nothing gets past that woman*, Jon thought, diverting his gaze away.

Unexpectedly, Sam had been the first to speak up, his voice shaking a bit with his request, "Pardon me, but, what about the tale of the Long Night?"

Dany whipped her head around to face the boy. Jon took notice of Sam's sly wink at his would-be wife, who, in turn, had given him a thankful smile before turning back around, anxiously awaiting Old Nan's answer.

"Yes! " Arya exclaimed, clenching her fists together triumphantly, "That's the one I want to hear!"
"It's too scary for you," Bran teased her, nudging his sister's arm.

"Is not," she teased back, shoving him just a bit harder, "I'm braver than you."

"Arya!" Jon hissed. He knew the pair loved to bicker, but the boy had just taken a knife to the thigh after facing a terrifying confrontation between three men who had threatened to kill him. Now was simply not the time. "You're both brave," he reminded her.

Jon had been pretty certain he was Arya's favorite, and therefore she listened to him best out of all of her siblings. She folded her arms again, playing up the pout on her face.

"What about Rickon?" Bran asked as a bolt of lightning lit up the room, despite the closed shutters, "He's only six."

"I'm brave, too!" The youngest Stark spoke up. A crack of thunder chased the flash of lightning, causing all three of the children to jump, startled by the sudden noise. Jon couldn't help but chuckle.

"Very well," Old Nan said, "If it's the Long Night you wish to hear of, it is the Long Night you shall get," her words rattled from deep within in her chest. To Jon, it sounded almost like a threat. Old Nan finally looked up from her knitting, examining the children. They'd all clasped hands in anticipation, the same as the older girls had done.

"What is the Long Night?" she continued, "It is when the sun buries itself away for years, leaving only darkness behind. And in that darkness comes the cold, and with the cold? Snow. A hundred feet or more, burying even the tallest towers of every castle. The snow spares no part of the realm, not even the south," Jon shivered instinctively, though it sounded rather far-fetched.

"A whole generation it lasted, a thousand years ago. Peasants froze, and shepherds, no doubt. Even kings, their bodies frozen solid upon their thrones. A crown means nothin' to the cold," the old woman spat the words in the direction of the three children. Rickon pulled the coverings over his head to hide from her contorted, wrinkled face.

Old Nan had captured the full attention of everyone in the room. She raised her voice above the distant thunder, "The cold forced mothers to smother their babies, else they starve. So cold were their tears, they froze upon their cheeks as they wept."
Jon’s heart slumped right in his chest, it had been one of the most horrible things he could imagine. Leaning forward a bit, his gaze had found Dany, concerned the story might have upset her, too. Even from his bad vantage point, he could see a swell of tears hanging on her waterline, threatening to spill onto her cheeks. She began to blink them away. Everyone in the room looked simply horrified, aside from Lady Olenna, who’d hardly seemed impressed with the tall tale. Not much had impressed the woman.

After a brief moment of silence to let the horror sink in, Old Nan lowered her voice, "It is in that darkness the White Walkers came to hunt. They moved first through the woods upon their dead horses, sweeping through cities and kingdoms, sparing no living soul who crossed their path."

Jon snuck another glance at his love, watching her neck as she'd gulped. He could see how quickly her heart had been beating by the way her pulse made her skin jump. Had she believed any of this? he wondered. Poor Rickon still hid beneath the furs. Arya and Bran had huddled together, her arms wrapped tightly around her little brother. Even Sansa and Margaery seemed affected by the tale. They'd both gripped Dany's hands so tightly, the two separate webs of fingers had flushed red.

"And should you cross paths with a White Walker, not even a swift death could save you. Just as you slip away into death's cold embrace, just when you've accepted your fate, you'll awake. Your mind no longer your own! You rise, march forth, forever pledged to the army of the dead!"

The door swung open, the wood crashing into the stone. Shaggydog rose, barking at the sudden intrusion, while Summer began snarling and baring his fangs. Shrieking in terror, Arya and Bran clenched their eyes shut and grasped each other harder. Even Jon braced himself as the shadowy figure slowly approached. Much too slow, much too bulky—it didn’t look human.

A collective sigh of relief escaped the mouths of all of the kids, even Jon, as the candlelight finally revealed the intruder. A servant had been carrying a large covered tray, setting it down on Bran’s desk. The wolves hesitantly retracted their warnings, settling back into the furs. They'd kept their ears drawn back, keeping an eye on the servant.

"You're supposed to knock!" Sansa spat the words, pressing her free hand to her heart as if to ease it.

"Sorry, m'lady," the woman apologized. She didn't sound sorry.

After she clumsily removed the bulbous lid of the tray, Jon saw that it had been Osha, the wildling. There had been a basket of honey-buttered rolls and a pitcher with several small stacked cups. Thunder sounded again, much more distant. The storm was passing. Even the rain had let up.
"Compliments of Lord Stark," she growled, turning to leave.

"Osha," Dany called, forcing a smile through her perturbed expression, "Why don't you stay a moment?"

"I don' know that I should..." she said meekly, tucking her hands against her sides, her gaze shifting to the floor to avoid all eye contact. Jon certainly didn't want her to stay. But, mostly because he accused her of murder before having heard the full story, himself.

Another shadow appeared in the doorway, reluctantly stepping forward. The light had extended to the most elevated points of his features, yet had cast shadows over his eyes. Robb. He'd been carrying a few things under his arm, but the shadow had obscured whatever it was he held. Robb examined the faces amongst the room, hanging a moment on Margaery's face, and an even longer moment on Osha's, after realizing she stood mere feet from him. Even though his face had only been partially lit, Jon could see Robb cringe.

"I-I'm sorry," he finally spoke. "I didn't mean to interrupt. I had no idea Bran would have so many visitors. I'll... come back later."

Robb took one last look at Bran, still tucked away in Arya's arms. He turned to leave.

"Robb," Margaery's voice called. It had been the least confident her voice had ever sounded. "Please, join us."

Robb stood motionless for a moment, enveloped in the darkness of the arched doorway. He simply turned his head, though he'd refused to look at her, or her outstretched hand that had hung in the air as if to invite him in.

"Maybe later," he muttered, dejectedly, before departing in the direction of his room.

Margaery looked as though she'd been struck. Her granddaughter's expression had not been lost on the Queen of Thorns, either. Even though Jon had nothing to do with Robb's poor decision or the way he'd just snubbed Margaery, he couldn't help feeling sick to his stomach.
Dany leaned back, "Jon," she whispered forcefully, widening her eyes and nodding toward the doorway. Right. He promised to talk to Robb about his strange mood. Without hesitation, he lifted himself up to his feet and chased after his brother.

Margaery had risen, gesturing for Osha to sit. She did so cautiously, as the pair of canines followed her with their gazes, unblinking. The Rose began to pass out buttered rolls one by one, even one to Osha. Dany's heart sank when she realized Osha's roll had actually been meant for Jon, whom she just chased off.

Likewise, Margaery poured small glasses of chilled milk and passed them around the room. Arya took a big gulp. With milk still running down her chin, she said to Osha, "Shame you missed Old Nan's story just now. About the White Walkers."

Osha's eyes turned cold, "It's no story, m'lady."

Arya's expression had been wiped clean from her face, "What do you mean?"

Osha didn't answer the girl's inquiry. Instead, she transitioned into something of a crouching position on the floor, looking like an animal ready to pounce as her gaze shifted to the doorway. The wolves suddenly rose, their ears twisting as they listened. Sansa let go of Dany's hand and scooted against the nearest wall. Dany heard nothing but braced herself all the same.

Shaggydog began to bark. The noise was shrill and bounced from wall to wall. Summer snarled, baring fangs, his fur stood on end, making him appear larger than he'd actually been. Finally, Dany could see what all the fuss had been about. The figure of a child had stepped from the shadows of the hallway, right into Bran's room. She'd never seen the boy before, and judging from the mixture of expressions on the faces of those around her, neither had anyone else.

The boy approached. Expressionless, he held a limp hand in front of Bran's direwolf, who had looked ready to snap. Dany brought her hands to her face, in case she needed to shield her eyes. She had not been ready to see this boy's hand get bitten off. Not today. Not any day.

"You must be Summer," he said, his voice confident amidst the low growls emanating from the pair of wolves. Calmly, a gentle smile formed on his lips, as if he'd been greeting an old friend.

Summer almost immediately eased up, even his ears perked as he sniffed the outstretched hand. He might've even licked the boy, but Dany couldn't be certain. Shaggydog had curled into a ball on the
bed, suddenly unfazed by the strange boy's presence. She'd never seen anything like it before. None of the Stark children could calm their direwolves so quickly, so thoroughly.

Glancing around at the others, they'd also looked even more terrified than they had been of Old Nan's tale. Even Lady Olenna had a look of bewilderment at the boy's... what had it been? Bravery? Stupidity? Luck? Old Nan, too, a nearly identical expression. Surely these two older women had seen just about everything by now, Dany thought. And yet, they both appeared to be just as shaken.

After he'd had enough of a sniff, Summer curled into a ball against his brother, Shaggydog. The wolves, so calm, they might have even fallen back asleep already. As they lay subdued on Bran's bed, the boy approached the three Stark children.

He was a bit taller than Arya, thin, pale. Much more sickly looking than even Bran, who'd been stuck in bed, wounded and feverish. And yet, he'd clearly struck fear into the hearts of everyone inside Bran's chambers. Arya had been closest to him as he approached, and she instinctively held her body over Bran as if to shield him. Meanwhile, Bran had been stunned to silence at Summer's behavior, but he didn't look afraid. They are brave, Dany thought.

"Hello, Brandon," the boy's voice was sweet and soothing. Not scary at all. "I'm Jojen Reed. And this is my sister, Meera," he motioned toward another small shadow in the doorway.
"What are you doing?" Jon demanded, pushing past Robb's doorway without invitation.

"Moving my things back into my room," his brother replied, refusing to meet his eyes as he fumbled with his belongings.

"I see that. I meant what are you doing brushing off Margaery like that? Right in front of her grandmother, no less."

"The wildling was there," he grumbled.

"So? She lives here now. You're going to be seein' her a lot. You can't run out of every room she's in. Especially not when a Tyrell personally requests your presence."

"Well, I'm busy," he said.

"You're hardly busy. You can move your things back anytime. You know I don't care. Besides, you chose to stop by Bran's room. You want to be in there."

This time, Robb didn't have a retort, and nothing left to distract his attention. He faced Jon, folding his arms.

The brothers then heard some commotion from down the hall, the direwolves sounded as though they'd gone into a frenzy. They stumbled into the hallway, spotting a pair of small shadowy figures, one of which had just passed through Bran's doorway.

"Who are they?" Robb whispered.

Extending as far as Jon's eyes could see, were wet, muddy footprints all along the stone tile of the hallway. A pair of guards remained stationed further down the hall by Ned and Catelyn's room, unflinching, completely ignoring the rowdy wolves in the young boy's room. *Odd,* Jon thought to himself.
The brothers cautiously approached the room again just as the sound of barking and growling had ceased. They exchanged worried looks, even though the pair they'd seen had been only children. What children might be in this area of the keep, if not the Starks?

Once they got to the door, they stopped to listen. A boy's voice provided an introduction, "I'm Jojen Reed," he said. "And this is my sister, Meera."

Reed. Jon thought of the crypts. Of his mother. Of Howland Reed.

"Reed," Robb carefully whispered. "Father's bannermen. From the Neck."

They both exhaled in relief. Most bannermen to House Stark were fiercely loyal, apparently, even the direwolves had known that, judging by their sudden silence. Further down the hall, Jon heard his father's robust laughter booming, the sound of two male voices carried. It must be him.

"What are they doing in the keep at this hour?" Robb wondered aloud.

"Well, in their defense, it's probably later than it looks, due to the weather."

Jon's curiosity about the Reeds was almost unbearable, though he still hadn't gotten through to his brother. He guided Robb back further down the hallway, lowering his voice as he continued, "Daenerys has been talking to Margaery."

"Has she?"

"Well someone's got to, considering you haven't been."

"I don't know what to say to her."

"How? You two were inseparable before."
"Just how much do you know about Margaery, Jon?"

"I know she's a nice girl, seems to be crazy about you. She makes you as crazy as Daenerys makes me. Which means she must be perfect for you."

Robb sighed. "I agree. She is more or less perfect. But not for me."

"Why? What's changed?"

"Margaery's a good person. She spends a lot of time working with the small folk, with orphans and the poor around the Reach, amongst many other things. She has endless stories about her charitable works. She's better than me."

"Margaery wasn't telling you those things about her life to make you feel bad about yourself, she was probably trying to impress you."

Robb's only response had been a scowl.

"I know something else about Margaery—that she is dedicated to her family. Knowing the lengths you'd go to, to protect your kin? You don't think she'd do the same thing for Loras? You know she's in there right now, right? She and her grandmother came to see Bran, in the middle of a storm. They care about him. Everyone knows you did the right thing."

Robb still hadn't responded, but his silence hinted that Jon might finally be getting through to him, "You're the only one beating yourself up about this. No one in this castle blames you."

"The wildling might," Robb added.

"Her name is Osha," Jon corrected him, shaking his head at himself as Dany's words came out of his mouth without a second thought. The brothers exchanged a strange look.

"Either way, I don't think even a wildling would hold it against a man for protecting his ten-year-old brother. Bran's just a boy, and he needed the help," he sighed. "It was him or them. You made the right choice."
Jon watched as his brother froze up the same way he'd done with Daenerys. Robb finally nodded. Somewhere inside, Robb must've known he'd been right to do what he did. Taking someone's life mustn't be easy. Jon began dreading the day he'd have to make the same sort of decision.

"You know, one of the worst decisions I've ever made was to ignore Daenerys for a whole week. All because I didn't know how to talk to her about something that had been bothering me. Do you know what happened the moment we finally talked?"

"What happened?"

"Well, once she finished shouting at me for ignoring her, she took all my worries away. We laughed. I took her head in my hands and begged her to be my wife."

"What was it?"

"What was what?"

"The reason you avoided her for a week?"

Jon realized his mistake in voicing that particular story, remaining silent, wondering whether or not he would ever tell his brother that he... hadn't actually been his brother.

"Jon," Ned called as he approached his sons, giving Jon a moment to breathe a sigh of relief at the welcome interruption.

"We'll talk later," Robb assured him, nodding toward Ned before wandering back to his room. Jon let it be for now. After all, he couldn't ignore Ned.

After slowly approaching his father, he was almost unsettled by how happy Ned looked. His smile had been wider than Jon had ever seen it before. Ned wrapped his arm around Jon's shoulder and started to lead him toward his room, whispering, "I told the guards as soon as they arrived, to bring them straight to me, no matter the hour. How perfect it is that you were already here to see Bran."
Jon gulped. Suddenly, he felt his stomach drop with nervousness at the prospect of meeting Howland Reed. He'd only had a few seconds left to ask before they'd reached Ned's room.

"Is he my... guest?" he whispered.

Ned stopped just short of reaching the doorway, looking deeply into Jon's eyes, offering him a warm smile. "Indeed," he replied.

Catelyn appeared in the doorway, "So much for sleep," she jokingly bemoaned, giving Jon a quick smile as she headed back to Bran's room. Jon felt a pang of anxiety, now that Catelyn had left them. Ned let go of Jon's shoulders and whispered something to the guards. They departed back to their regular duties, their boots sloshing and leaving a fresh set of wet boot prints behind in their wake.

Jon's hands began to shake. He felt faint. Meeting new people, important people, had never been something he excelled at. Once he stepped into Ned's room, his guest turned to face him. He was a bit short, with shaggy blondish hair and a scraggly beard. The pair of men simply stared at each other, neither one greeting the other.

Howland began intently studying Jon's eyes. He didn't know whether to bow, speak, or extend his hand for a handshake. Rather than make a decision, he just stood there awkwardly, staring back at the man.

Ned moved into the room, closing the door behind him, "Howland, this is Jon Snow."

Howland blinked a few times, squinting as he further inspected Jon's face. This is terribly awkward, Jon thought, shifting uncomfortably in his own skin. He looked from Howland to Ned, hoping to get some sort of a hint about what to do, but Ned hadn't looked back at him.

"It-it's an honor to meet you, my lord," Jon stammered, finally managing to give some sort of introduction. And it was an honor. Ned wouldn't be standing there without Howland Reed. Jon might not be, either. Who knows where he'd have ended up. Sansa, Arya, Bran, and Rickon would never have been born without Howland saving Ned's life that day. Daenerys... Jon would never have met his love had Ned not been there to save her from an unknown fate in Essos. None of these factors had been lost on Jon. As he stood there under the man's scrutiny, he began to realize how much power just one person truly had over the lives of so many others.

"Jon Snow," the man finally said, very slowly, as if he were learning to say the words for the first
A deep sadness washed over the man's face. The same sadness that washed over Ned's whenever someone had said Lyanna's name in his presence. Clearly, the men had cared deeply for the woman, as well as one another. And yet Howland had never visited Ned, to the best of Jon's knowledge, and he'd never heard of Ned leaving Winterfell to visit the Reeds. Suddenly, Jon felt a small stabbing sensation in his chest. Guilt. Had the men purposely avoided each other since rescuing him all those years ago?

"The pair of you have much to discuss. Though, this neither the time nor place," Ned turned to Howland, "We're working on preparing rooms for you and your children, in the meantime, we'll be gathering in the great hall shortly." Ned then turned to Jon, "Now that your guest has arrived, we'll proceed with the necessary preparations. I'll find time today to discuss them with you. I'd also like you to make time to escort Howland to the crypts to pay his respects."

"Absolutely," Jon agreed breathlessly. And it was all he'd said, even though he wished to turn back to Howland and express his deepest gratitude. Ned had been right, however. This wasn't the time or place.

"Would you mind breaking up the party next door? The rain has let up enough, it should be a relatively dry walk to the hall."

Jon nodded, feeling sheepish. He gave Howland a wordless, awkward bow before opening the door and heading back to Bran's room.

Once inside, he instinctively wandered over to Daenerys.

She'd kept her eyes peeled on the young girl, on Meera. In a way that had almost unsettled Jon as he took a seat near her. The room was eerily quiet. He took the time to examine the children, himself. The boy looked a bit like Rickon, but older. Disheveled dirty-blonde hair, a bit like his father's. Both had been covered in what looked like a combination of damp rags and furs. Aside from their dark eyes, the pair didn't look alike. The girl had a tangled mass of dark curls, not unlike Jon's hair.

Jon looked at Dany, again. Eyes still peeled, staring at the girl. Dany safely cradled something in her hands. Jon decided it had been time to distract her before she scared the poor girl with her gawking, "What is that you've got in your hands?"
Dany shook her head, snapping out of her trance. "I'm sorry," she weakly said as she held a buttered roll out to Jon.

"For what?" he asked, raising his eyebrows in confusion as she thrust the hunk of bread toward his chest.

"Osha got your bun. Please, have mine," she pleaded with him. It was the most guilty he'd ever seen her look.

Jon couldn't fight the urge to chuckle, "Don't be silly."

"Please take it. I feel bad," her voice was so small and sweet he'd wanted nothing more than to pick her up and squeeze her for being so thoughtful and worried about whether or not he'd gotten his share. Little did Dany know, they were about to head off to properly break their fasts this morning, anyhow.

Unable to bear her pitiful expression any longer, Jon took the roll from her and tore it in half, handing the bigger portion back to her. Her gaze wandered up to his, and they stared into each other's eyes a moment. For once, Jon hadn't felt like a volcano about to erupt under the scrutiny of her violet irises. He simply felt warmth as he looked at her. Realizing they'd been staring at each other too long, he tore off a smaller piece of bread and shoved it in his mouth, looking back to Bran and the others. Jojen had been speaking to his younger siblings, but he couldn't quite make out the words. Jon finished his half of the roll before standing once more and helping Dany to her feet.

With the Reed siblings in the room, Jon felt almost nervous to speak up, "Alright, I'm afraid I've been asked to usher the lot of you to the great hall this morning. Bran and Lady Stark need their rest."

Osha had sprinted for the door like a wildcat, a look of relief on her face. Daenerys helped Sansa to her feet, and Jon held both hands out to help Sam to his, before moving to Lady Olenna to see if she needed assistance. Everyone had reluctantly meandered into the hallway, save for Catelyn, Bran, and Rickon. The boys had already fallen asleep next to their mother. Old Nan stayed in her chair, quietly knitting away.

Before leaving, Jon stopped to whisper, "My lady, did you want me to kennel the wolves?"

"No, no. I'd like them to stay. Just close the door on your way out please, Jon," Catelyn whispered, nearly nodding off as Jon wandered out of the room, returning the door to its frame as quietly as he
could manage, so as not to wake his brothers.

The group had been the first to enter the great hall, though candles had been lit for them prior to their arrival. Everyone filled in at the same table, including Lady Olenna and the Reed children. Arya looked delighted to be sat between her new friends. Ned and Howland hadn't made it, yet. Though, Theon and Jeyne had wandered in, taking their seats and joining the small gathering.

"Lady Olenna, I've been meaning to ask... What are your house words? I'm ashamed to say I can't recall them." Sansa asked, seemingly out of the blue.

Olenna groaned, "Oh, child. It's no wonder your memory shook loose our words. Of the houses, ours are quite possibly the dullest words of all. Does anyone else know?"

Jon glanced around, curious, himself. The boys had been forced to memorize house words and sigils, but Tyrell had always been so far away, so abstract, that it seemed somehow less important to memorize. After all, Jon didn't need to know southern houses at the Wall, the furthest point from them all. In retrospect, the assumption made him feel especially silly now that the Tyrells might well become part of the family through marriage.

After no one spoke up, Margaery chimed in. "Growing Strong," she sang in a dulcet tone, not unlike her brother's.

"That's right," Sansa said before mouthing the words Growing Strong to herself as if trying to remember them.

"Winter is Coming!" Olenna shouted, shaking her finger right at Arya, causing the poor girl to jump. "Words that chill you to the bone are not easily forgotten!"

Arya's face flushed as she grinned away, feeling prideful of her house words. Jon couldn't help but smile whenever his little sister had, her smile was infectious.

Olenna turned to Theon, shouting, "We Do Not Sow!"

Theon smirked, a similar look of pride overcame him as Jeyne nudged his arm.
"Fire and Blood!" Olenna cried, shaking her fist in Dany's direction, giving the girl a wink. Likewise, Dany's cheeks had turned rosy as she smiled. Under the table, she squeezed Jon's hand. He couldn't help but join in and grin along with Daenerys, delighting in their shared secret. Jon looked back to Olenna, who'd been eyeing him carefully.

"Direwolves, Krakens, and Dragons. Strong houses with fighting words and fierce beasts as sigils! A golden rose strikes no fear in the heart of any man. Growing Strong," she uttered her house words as she rolled her eyes, "Pah!"

"Roses are beautiful, grandmother," Margaery reminded the older woman, placing a soft hand gently on top of Olenna's.

"Indeed," she said sarcastically. "Roses are also boring. Dreadfully boring, are they not?"

Absolutely everyone at the table remained silent, not daring to answer that question, as it seemed like some sort of trap. Even Arya, as brave as she was, wasn't about to agree that the sigil of House Tyrell had been boring, though Jon had felt pretty certain Arya would agree flowers were dull.

"Sansa, my dear," Olenna continued after realizing no one dared side with her, "I have a task for you."

Sansa only gulped, awaiting the woman's instructions nervously.

"Why don't you come up with all new words for House Tyrell?"

"Oh, my lady, I'm not so sure I could-"

"Of course you could. You're a bright girl, hardened from the harsh cold of the north. I dare say the north is a bit more well-versed in strength. We could use the help!" She laughed.

Sansa flushed, "Thank you, my lady. For your kind words."

"You are most welcome, child. I shall hope to thank you for your strong words, once you deliver them to me."
The pair of women carried on talking with Margaery. Jon stole another glance at Daenerys, noticing she'd been staring at Meera Reed again. He nudged her knee under the table, which luckily shook her out of it.

"Shame your family had to travel in the storm this morning. As luck would have it, we'd all been awake and gathered just in time to greet you," Jon rambled nervously. "My lord," he added, fumbling to get his manners right.

A sly smile slowly drew itself across the boy's face. He looked much wiser than his age would suggest. Jon began to feel as uncomfortable with Jojen's gaze as he had with his father, Howland's. After another moment passed, Jojen simply said, "It was timely, but it wasn't luck."

"What do you mean?" Arya asked.

"My father wanted to see Jon," the boy gestured toward him, "I wanted to see Summer, and Meera and I both wanted to see Brandon. So that's when we chose to arrive."

It was then Jon realized he hadn't introduced himself to either of the Reed children. He hadn't actually said his name aloud to Jojen.

"How could you have chosen it?" he inquired, feeling a sudden unease.

The boy smiled again. It was a sweet smile, but something about him had been so unsettling.

"Jojen knows things," Arya whispered, her body rocked as she swayed her feet to and fro beneath the table.

"What things?" He asked Arya, though he didn't break Jojen's gaze. Not even when he felt the familiar pricking sensation of Dany's eyes on him.

"Jojen says there are two dragons at Winterfell."
Blood started coursing through Jon uncomfortably fast as his heart began to race, even his mouth fell open against his will. Dany squeezed his fingers tightly below the table, their hands instantly turning clammy in each other's grasp. Jojen's smile widened just a bit at Jon's clear discomfort with the statement.

"Dragons?" he managed to ask.

Arya shook her head, half-distracted with her usual burst of morning energy. "He says there's one asleep beneath the castle. That's why the springs in the godswood are so warm, because of the dragon fire."

Giving Dany a worried look, Jon hoped she hadn't been hatching secret plans to go find these supposed dragons. He sighed in relief for a brief moment, glad that Jojen hadn't just outed him. Did he know? Would Howland have told him? Jon tried to shake the thoughts from his mind, knowing how much Ned and Howland cared for each other, and that it hadn't been likely he'd put Ned at any risk. The man saved his life, after all.

"And the second dragon?" he'd been almost scared to ask.

"In the godswood. Beside the heart tree," Arya said, tugging at her braids in a way that made her head fall to whichever side she pulled on.

"You've been to the heart tree hundreds of times, Arya. You know there's no dragon there."

The girl shrugged, still playing with her hair.

Turning his head to inspect how the strange tale had landed on Dany, he happened to notice Olenna had been eyeing them, too. Just great, he thought to himself, hoping the woman hadn't caught his initial fear over the peculiar tale. Deflecting his attention away from her, Jon realized the boy had gone from the bench, wandering over to the food that had just been served. Meera followed closely behind him, with Arya scrambling to catch up to them.

"That was strange," Jon whispered to Dany, quiet enough that Olenna shouldn't be able to eavesdrop. "That boy kind of frightens me."

She didn't say anything, she just watched the children making their way toward the front of the hall.
"Dany," Jon scolded her. "Why are you staring at the Reed girl like that? This is the third time I've caught you doing it."

"Oh," she said sheepishly. "I didn't realize."

"Yes. You're probably unsettling her the way her brother's doing to me," he grumbled.

"She has your hair," Dany's voice carried off as she stole yet more glances of Meera. "She kind of looks like you. She's beautiful. I want a daughter with those same dark eyes and curls someday."

Sighing, Jon felt some measure of relief about her answer. After all, he'd had no good guesses about her behavior prior to the explanation. Going over events again, he realized the intensity with which she'd been peering at the poor girl each time he'd caught her.

"I will give you anything you want," he whispered, squeezing her hand roughly in an effort to match the sincerity of his pledge.

What Jon had failed to consider was how his promise had landed on his silver-haired bride to be. Anything she wants.

He felt her shiver beside him. A sudden urge to sweep her into the nearest corridor and ravage her washed over him, even though she'd already had a child growing inside of her. What more could he do? Though, part of him still selfishly hoped their child would be silver-haired and violet-eyed. No matter. They could make another if need be. And another, and another...

Before his mind could wander too far, Ned and Howland entered the hall. The man had joined his children in stocking their plates full of food. Ned, meanwhile, had motioned for Jon to join him. After squeezing Dany's hand one last time, Jon rose to greet his father.

"I have time to speak with you, now," Ned said. "Join me in my study, and we'll discuss your arrangements."
As Jon took a seat in Ned's study, his hands began to shake from a sudden rush of anxiety. Bastard had been the lens through which he'd viewed the world. Very early on, he'd sworn off the idea of a wife or children of his own for that very reason. It had been the foundation on which he'd built his principles. Every bit of planning he'd done about his future had been in pursuit of avoiding ever having a family of his own. Never would he have imagined that the instant Daenerys Targaryen showed any interest in him, he'd be willing to compromise himself entirely. *Or had he...?*

Almost immediately, he'd been willing to give everything up to run away with her had she asked him to. It wasn't the prospect of marrying Daenerys that made Jon nervous. Every fiber within him longed to be her husband, to be the father of her silver-haired, violet-eyed children. What made him feel nervous was that he couldn't pinpoint the moment he had changed his mind about any of it. He began to consider what else might be inside of him, stunted and dormant.

"Daenerys' guest will be arriving soon," Ned casually said, shaking Jon from his daze as he took a seat behind his desk. "So, the sooner you decide which type of wedding you'd like, the sooner you can marry."

Jon's heart skipped a beat.

Ned continued, "Would you like to be wed in the godswood or the sept?"

"The godswood," Jon said without hesitation.

"And you've discussed this with Daenerys?"

"Well, *no. But-*"

"A wedding before the old gods would be a much simpler affair. *However,* the Targaryens were from the south, and followed the Faith of the Seven."

"I'll ask her," Jon relented, inwardly kicking himself for not having considered any other option.
They hadn't talked about religion much, if at all. He'd followed the old gods, himself, but if it were important to her, he'd gladly marry her in the sept Ned had built for Lady Catelyn.

"Good. Report back to me as soon as you have an answer."

Jon nodded, before gulping. "Father, if I might ask a favor? About the wedding."

"What is it, Jon?" Ned asked, refusing to meet his son's anxious gaze, too preoccupied with whatever work he'd had on his desk.

"I've heard about the bedding ceremony..." he began, envisioning the perverted guards rushing at the chance to rip Dany's dress from her, groping her body as they carried her to her bed following the feast. Putting his hand to his stomach, Jon tried to rub the sick feeling away, he could hardly bear to think of it.

Raising his eyebrows, Ned looked up from his papers to examine Jon. All color had been stripped from the boy's face as he spoke, he'd looked every bit as ill as he felt. Ned smirked.

"You're asking me if it would be worth risking the heads of all the men who might touch Daenerys during the bedding ceremony? I think not," Ned laughed, having seen the effects of Jon's jealousy regarding Loras, and the lengths he'd go to defend Dany's honor. "You're not a lord, at any rate. It's hardly necessary."

Jon closed his eyes slowly, relief visibly washing over him as he exhaled his dread away.

"Of course, that's not the only reason a bedding ceremony should be unnecessary," Ned offhandedly added, as he moved his hand up to rest his chin against bent fingers.

Jon slinked further into the seat, studying Ned's stern expression, unsure whether or not he and Daenerys had been found out.

"I have five children, myself, Jon. By now, I can sense when there's one on the horizon," he said, going back to sorting through his papers.
"Are you angry with me?"

"Perhaps to begin with, after realizing why you were in such a rush to wed. As soon as possible, I believe you said. You made a mistake."

"I did," Jon interrupted only to solemnly agree.

"However, you sought to rectify it quickly. Besides, I worry much less for your future with Daenerys at your side than the alternatives," Ned took a moment to let his words sink in. Jon couldn't help but think of Castle Black, and the never-ending war with the wildlings.

"You're already improving yourself in new ways at the mere prospect of becoming her husband. As I said before, it's a good match. Perhaps a bit early for a baby, but-

A soft knock sounded against the open door before Ned could finish his thought. Lady Catelyn came into the room and took a seat next to Jon. She looked terribly exhausted. Jon knew it must be important if she'd torn herself away from Bran.

"Right," Ned said. "Jon. There's another matter my wife wishes to discuss with you."

_Uh oh_, Jon couldn't help but think to himself.

Catelyn turned to Jon, her eyes already swimming with unshed tears. Clasping her hands in her lap, her gaze drifted to the stone tiles beneath her feet, "Had it been up to my husband, perhaps this would've already been settled many years ago."

Jon and Ned both exchanged a puzzled look. Scratching at his beard in confusion, Ned examined Catelyn as she worked up the nerve to continue.

"I can't keep pretending this never happened, Jon. Every time I look at you I feel ashamed of myself," she explained, lowering her voice just above a whisper.

Catelyn gave herself a moment to pull the dreaded words from her mind and to her lips, "When you were just a boy, you came down with the pox. Luwin was sure you'd live so long as you made
through the night. And so, I stayed up with you, listening as you struggled to breathe."

As she confessed, Jon couldn't help but think of her current state of sleep deprivation on account of Bran's condition.

"I had only my thoughts to keep me company," Catelyn continued. "Terrible thoughts. I had prayed the Seven would take you away from me that night. For no reason other than my own jealousy of your mother." The woman's words had clearly left a sour taste in her mouth.

Ned closed his eyes. Everyone had been aware of Catelyn's unhappiness about Jon's mere presence, but perhaps not to the degree to which she'd truly hated the boy. Surprisingly, Jon's mind was blank as he took her in story, unsure how to process it just yet.

"How could I ask the gods to take the life of a child?" she breathed, her own disgust with herself was undeniable. "I begged them to let you live. In turn, I promised to love you. That I'd make Ned give you a proper name. Our name," Lady Stark's voice quivered as she began openly weeping in the presence of her husband and nephew.

"But I couldn't keep my promise," she struggled to keep still as she cried, "Every breath I've watched you take since that night has done nothing but remind me the ways in which I've failed."

The sound of Catelyn's sobs had caused Jon's blood to freeze. It was grating, uncomfortable, and rife with a raw honesty he'd ever seen from her before. Part of him wanted to apologize to her for the agony he'd caused her. He'd never meant to. As his own wedding loomed on the horizon, he finally understood Catelyn's inability to accept him. Had Daenerys come to him with another man's child, with little to no explanation, he wasn't sure he'd have fared much better than Catelyn. Ned rose from his chair to join his wife's side, wrapping his arm around her shoulder without a word.

The three of them sat in silence for a moment as Catelyn gathered herself, wiping her tears away before lifting her head to face Ned, "I wasn't ready to keep my promise then. There's no reason for me to stand in the way of Jon's legitimization any longer."

"Thank you, Lady Stark," Jon mumbled. It had been all he'd ever wanted. To be one of the Starks, to shed his bastard identity and become a part of the house he'd already been an integral part of. As if in direct response, his mind flashed images of Daenerys. Of the embossed three-headed dragon. Of the way she blushed when Olenna had shouted 'Fire and Blood!' and the subsequent smile they shared as they squeezed one another's hand beneath the table.
If he took the Stark name, it would become her name, too. She wouldn't want that. More than that, it could put her into further jeopardy marrying someone suddenly in a line of succession. Marrying a bastard was the perfect safety net for the last Targaryen. Marrying a Stark might look like an act of ambition or aggression to King Robert. He should just turn down the offer, here and now, and be done with it.

Catelyn placed her hand on Ned's as she rose from her seat, "I'll leave you to it."

With that, she pulled Ned in for a quick kiss and saw herself out of his study. Jon admired her courage in that moment. As she left, he found himself wishing he had said more to her. She'd bared one of her darkest secrets to him, and all he'd managed to do was mumble a quick thank you. He couldn't help but cringe at his behavior, or lack thereof.

"That is an offer worth much consideration," Ned warned him, moving back to his seat. Nothing in his tone, however, had given Jon any indication of his feelings on the matter. Feeling feverish, Jon wiped the sweat from his brow. Hoping to change the subject, Jon realized there'd been another issue he needed to discuss with his father, at any rate.

"There's something else I need to ask you, but it's not about the wedding."

"What is it, son?"

"What are we going to do about Sam?"

"Sam?" Ned asked, confused by the question. After a moment, he groaned, "Right, he was there this morning in Bran's room. That is, indeed, a problem."

Ned's chest heaved before releasing a heavy sigh, "Randyll Tarly. A real ingrate, isn't he?"

"Sansa is not betrothed to Dickon, is she?" Jon blurted, before quickly explaining himself, "I know it's none of my business. It's just that I've gotten close with Sam and his father is just a horrible man."

Ned considered his son's words for a moment before answering, "It'd been nothing more than a consideration for appearance's sake. I felt some measure of relief he'd been summoned to court. I'd prefer a northern match for Sansa. I have time, yet. She's still quite young."
Jon momentarily though of Jojen Reed, he was a northerner. They seemed about the same age, too, even though he'd been a bit shorter than Sansa. At the rate she'd been growing, she was bound to surpass even Jon any day. He shuddered at the thought.

"As for your friend, of course we won't leave Sam stranded. Whether he travels back with the Tyrells, or whether our guards escort him to White Harbor, we'll make sure he gets safely to his destination."

"I don't trust the guards. Not all of them, anyway. Sam's an easy target. If he's escorted to White Harbor, I'd like to go along."

"I'll consider your request if that's the route we take. I've got some work to do, and you've got some answers to fetch from Daenerys. But first, why don't you take Howland down to see Lyanna now that the weather has cleared up?"

Right. Daenerys. He dreaded asking Daenerys about religion, particularly if the conversation had to wait until they were in bed together. That'll be fun, he thought, remembering how well his question about Viserys had gone over. Eventually quite well, he reminded himself before shaking the torrid memory from his mind.

Another sudden pang of worry crept into his stomach after he remembered Catelyn's revelation. Stark. Dany would not be happy with the offer. Suddenly, he dreaded talking to Daenerys at all, and he hated himself for feeling that way.

He suddenly missed the simpler days of sparring with the other boys under the guidance of the Cassels. He'd much rather be knocking other boys down in the courtyard rather than going back down into the crypts with a man he'd hardly known, yet owed his entire life to. Though it would be nice to see Lyanna again, he thought.

"Yes, father," he finally offered monotonously.

"One last thing," Ned said as he scribbled away at a small scroll. He lifted his head to lock eyes with Jon, emphasizing his next point. "No one other than Daenerys is to know that Howland is here for your sake. I trust she will keep it between the two of you. So far as anyone knows, he's simply here to catch up after all these years. Do you understand?"
As the men entered the crypts, Jon was surprised to see wet footprints on the ground, and a few candles already lit by Lyanna's shrine, as well as a few nearby at Brandon and Rickard's shrines. Ned must've sent someone in before them. Jon set his torch in a nearby sconce, borrowing the flame from an already lit candle to light the rest surrounding his mother's likeness.

Howland wasted no time, cutting right to the chase, "Did Ned happen to tell you how I knew your mother?"

"I'm afraid not. The only mention of your name had been in reference to... Ser Arthur Dayne," Jon said the name cautiously, unsure whether or not defeating the Sword of the Morning had been a point of pride or shame for his father's friend.

Howland nodded his head in understanding as his eyes shifted back to Lyanna, "I haven't even told my own children about that day. It was one of the worst days of my life."

"Mine too," Jon had thought, having spent his entire life missing the woman he'd never gotten the chance to meet. The woman who gave her own life so he could live. Great, he thought to himself, already feeling hot tears rushing to his eyes. Every time he thought about the way his mother had died, he'd felt inundated with guilt and sadness.

"How did you know her?" Jon asked, trying his best to shake the feeling.

Howland sighed in a peaceful sort of manner. Suddenly, his eyes looked as though he'd transported to another time and place, entirely. He even smiled as he began to speak, "I met Lyanna at the Tourney at Harrenhal. I didn't go to many events, but this one promised to be the greatest tourney of its time."

Jon was highly intrigued by this, he'd never been to a tourney before. Jon couldn't help but think of Loras, and what it might be like to wear a full suit of armor, thrusting a lance into your opponent on horseback, jousting in front of an endless crowd of onlookers. Must be terrifying, he thought.

"I'd never seen anything quite like it. So many people in one place, and so grand a castle. I decided
to walk around to take it all in. Events like that just don’t happen often, after all. Unluckily for me, I had been wandering alone and soon caught the attention of three squires."

"You know, Greywater Watch," he continued, "Where my family resides, is located on swampland. So naturally, whatever predictable insult the squires could come up with, they did. I was smaller than all three, even though they’d been much younger than me. I stood no chance against even one of them, let alone three. I had no choice but to listen to them insult me. Perhaps because I was used to hearing others call me things like ‘frog eater’, I didn’t seem upset enough for their liking. That’s when they began shouting at me, cursing. And then came the shoving. And once they’d gotten me to the ground? The kicking."

Jon gritted his teeth behind his lips as he imagined what kind of people would do something like that to someone they didn’t know, all alone and defenseless. People like Randyll Tarly, he reminded himself, that’s who.

Strangely, Howland smiled again, "And that’s when I first heard her voice. 'That's my father's man you're kicking!' she howled, every bit the wolf her name, Stark, would imply," he paused, closing his eyes as his irises danced beneath his lids. Jon wished he could somehow borrow the memory Howland had been watching in his mind. "Lyanna held a tourney sword in her hand and rushed in to attack the three of them, coming to my defense. I was a stranger to her. And there she’d been, chasing the boys off before she could even strike them. Cowards, she called them under her breath. She was the bravest woman I’d ever seen. She’d saved me."

Without warning, tears immediately fell from Jon’s eyes. That was his mother. He suddenly felt a swell in his chest, as if his heart had outgrown its cavity.

Howland smiled at Jon, glad his story had been affecting the boy so much, "Lyanna escorted me back to her personal tent. She had a bit of a foul mouth," he laughed, an utter reverence in his words, "Cursing the damned boys for what they did as she treated and wrapped the wounds they’d given me. No one had ever shown me such kindness."

Turning to Lyanna's statue, he tried imagining how her face had actually looked. Her stone face had looked so sweet, he could hardly imagine her shouting and cursing. Then again, Daenerys looked sweet, too, which was a bit misleading. In his head, he imagined Lyanna to be the most beautiful woman in the world. Aside from Daenerys, of course.

"After we talked a bit, her brothers wandered into the tent. That's when I met your three uncles," he casually said. Jon had to force himself to remember Ned had actually been his uncle. "They were every bit as brave and honorable as Lyanna. I couldn’t believe my luck. Here I’d been, completely out of my depth, alone at this grand tourney. And suddenly, four new friends had taken me in. When Lyanna persuaded me to join them at the feast that night, I had a hard time telling her no, but I did
exactly that. I didn't want to see the squires again. Even so, she saw my reluctance, and reminded me I was highborn, too, that I belonged there just as much as anyone else."

With every ounce of his being, Jon had wished he could have known her. He sighed, "Thank you, my lord, for telling me about her. She sounds like the best person."

"She was, my boy. The best." He simply said, "You can call me Howland, by the way."

The shared a silent moment, appreciating Lyanna's likeness before them.

"But that's not the end of the story," he continued.

"It's not?"

Howland shook his head, another smile crept over the width of his face, "Your father was there, too. At the feast."

At first, his mind populated images of Ned, though he realized Howland was careful to refer to Ned as his uncle. Jon's heart raced as he pictured his parents together at a feast. The pair of them in the same setting. He drew a large breath in, holding it in his lungs as he waited for clarification.

"At the feast, Rhaegar had performed a song with his harp, and."

"Harp?" Jon interrupted, utterly shocked at the revelation. He'd thought of Rhaegar as a fighter.

Howland simply nodded, not lingering on the detail, "The song he played had been so beautiful, that it reduced several women to tears that night. Your mother included. Something told me it had been out of character for someone so courageous. My assumption had been proven right when her younger brother, Benjen, had made the terrible mistake of poking fun at her for it."

"Terrible mistake?"

"She simply lifted her glass and dumped her wine right over his head!"
The pair of men immediately burst into laughter at her boldness. Poor Benjen, Jon thought, still chuckling as he envisioned his uncle's dark hair dripping with wine. Next, he found himself thinking of Arya and all the pranks she'd play on Bran, the way they had bickered nonstop. He wondered if his mother and Benjen had been close the same way. He couldn't wait to ask Benjen about her the next time he saw him.

"Benjen returned after cleaning himself up. That's when Lyanna pointed out the squires who had hurt me. The Starks worked together to figure out which knights the squires had served."

"Did my uncles do anything to them?"

"No, no. At least, not as far as I've heard. Benjen swore to me he'd find a set of armor if I wanted to seek revenge for their actions, by attempting to best the knights, myself. Of course, I declined. If I couldn't take on their squires, I certainly couldn't take on knights in a joust. I could hardly ride a horse! They don't do so well in swamps. However, later on during the tourney, all three knights happened to have been bested by the mysterious Knight of the Laughing Tree."

"Who was the knight?" Jon could hardly contain his excitement at the story. His guess had been Benjen.

"I'm afraid I don't know that answer, but what I can tell you... is that the knight was small framed, wearing ill-fitting and mismatched armor. Upon the knight's shield had been a crudely painted laughing weirwood tree."

Jon scratched at the scruff on his chin. It couldn't be, could it?

"After winning, the knight had claimed the horses and armor of all three knights. The mysterious knight had one demand—the punishment of the three squires in return for their property. Without hesitation, the knights humiliated their squires for all to see," Howland's smile stretched from ear to ear.

Narrowing his eyes, Jon nodded his head along in delight. It must've been her, he thought. The motive was there. And the fearlessness. The knight had been short, and Benjen had made it clear he could find armor if needed, for Howland. Why not Lyanna? It made all the sense in the world. Jon nearly blushed at the prospect of having such a rebellious mother.
"Oh, but that's *still* not all."

"There's more?"

"As you know, King Aerys was known as the *Mad King.*"

Jon scowled a bit, knowing he'd been speaking of Dany's father. His *grandfather.*

"The king took the image of the laughing tree as a personal insult. He demanded every knight to defeat the knight of the Laughing Tree and unmask the traitor for all to see. But the knight had disappeared. Aerys sent his son, *Rhaegar*... as well as several of his men to find the knight."

Gasping at the sudden turn of events, Jon's stomach flipped at the thought of Rhaegar finding the knight, only to discover it had been *Lyanna.*

"Did he find the knight?"

"He found only the knight's shield," Howland explained. The fact that the man had been so careful never to refer to the knight as *he or him,* Jon couldn't help but assume the identity had actually been that of a female. He thought the scenario sounded *terribly* romantic. He knew there'd likely be no way to hear any of those specific details, as both of his parents had been long gone. He sighed.

"Prince Rhaegar went on to win the tournament at its close. Rather than crowning Elia Martell his queen of love and beauty, he rode right past her, using his lance to place a garland of winter roses in Lyanna's lap."

"*Elia Martell?*" Jon asked, confused.

"*His wife.*"

Clutching his stomach as it suddenly dropped, Jon fought to understand. His *wife?* Hadn't *Lyanna* been Rhaegar's wife?
"They say it was the moment all smiles died. Your uncle Brandon was furious with Rhaegar's actions. She'd been betrothed to Robert Baratheon, after all. It was the beginning of the end."

Jon hadn't considered just how complicated it'd been. The events that transpired that day had ultimately lead to a war, after all.

"How did Lyanna end up... in Dorne?" Jon may not remember their sigil or house words, but he couldn't help but remember that Dorne was where the seat of House Martell had been located. Elia.

"Well, about a year after the tourney is when Lyanna was said to have been kidnapped by Rhaegar. Everyone assumed she'd been taken against her will. It wasn't until Ned had found her and held you in his arms that he discovered she'd left of her own free will."

Sighing, Jon asked, "But Ned told me my last name is actually Targaryen. How can that be true if Rhaegar was already married?"

"I'm afraid that's where the story ends for me. I did not join your father inside that tower. It felt inappropriate to, not being family. Instead, I stood watch outside. I can't bear to think of what he must've seen, especially not after he returned covered in blood as he held you. Ned might know the answer, but I'm afraid we did not talk much on our trip back. I assume his mind was overwhelmed trying to figure out how to explain you to his wife, which I imagine hadn't been easy after having just lost Lyanna."

Jon nodded, accepting the only answers Howland could provide him. He was thankful he'd gotten to know his mother through this man, nearly drowning in the pride he felt to be the son of such a remarkable woman.

Though, he couldn't help but feel confused and even disappointed learning his true father already had another wife, prior to Lyanna. He wondered who he could ask for more information. Fighting the urge to judge Rhaegar harshly before he'd had more details, he remembered Ned's words, 'He was a good man'. Ned had been the best man Jon had known, so he had no choice but to take his word for it.

"Thank you, Howland," Jon said, watching as he unknotted a small pouch from his belt, dipping his hand inside. As delicately as he could manage, he pulled from it a small blue-hued rose.

"These were her favorite," he explained, handing off the stem to Jon. "The scent reminds me of her."
Hesitantly, Jon twisted the flower in his finger a moment, careful to avoid the thorns. It was a winter rose. His mother's favorite flower grew readily in the glass garden of Winterfell, tucked away by the north gate. Dozens of times he'd seen them in passing, and never once had he suspected they'd held a deeper meaning for him. That they should be his mother's favorite, or that they'd been the same kind that Rhaegar had given to her, thus, partly responsible for Robert's Rebellion. He didn't even know what they smelled like.

Bringing the petals closer to his face, Jon pulled air into his lungs slowly through his nose. It wasn't quite what he'd expected. It was faint in its sweetness, just enough to balance an equal bitterness that reminded him of pine. As he breathed in the scent, it sat in his lungs like the chilled night air of winter. It didn't smell anything like the soft bouquet of a typical floral perfume, rather, it'd been crisp, sharp, subtle. Even Arya might like it.

As he took in the scent, Jon replayed the false memories he'd spun of Lyanna in his mind. Imagining her tourney sword clasped in her hands as she chased after the squires, howling like a wolf. The way she'd wept from the sadness of a song, before washing her brother's hair with wine for daring to taunt her for it. Jon couldn't help but laugh at the vivid imagery, "It does smell like her," he whispered.

The scent lingered a moment after he exhaled it away. Jon tried handing the rose back to Howland.

"It's not mine," he simply said. "It's hers."

Using both hands, Jon carefully slipped the stem between her thumb and index finger, the flower's head safely cradled in her stone palm.

After several moments of silence, Jon retrieved the torch from its sconce and escorted Howland back up the spiral steps. A small shadow drew itself across the floor of the crypts from behind Brandon Stark's tomb, well within earshot of Lyanna's. Arya had come to the crypts that morning in search of a dragon ...and she had found one.

Chapter End Notes

Author's Note: Total kudos to the reader who called it (over @ FF)! I know that in GoT canon, we're all sort of waiting for Howland to show up and confirm Rhaegar and Lyanna's marriage. That's not his role in this version, however.
The nightly feast that followed had been a strange one. Jon would've loved nothing more than to talk to Howland, even had it not been about Lyanna, but he knew it best to avoid him. Besides, Howland had taken Lady Stark's usual seat beside Ned this evening. The men had a lifetime of events to catch up on. Catelyn, Old Nan, and Bran had likely been camped in the boy's bedroom. The dining hall had felt empty without them. Jon decided to give Bran another visit as soon as time allowed.

Robb sat with Theon and Jeyne rather than Margaery. The pair looked rather annoyed to have a chaperone this evening. Jon did his best to avoid the Reed kids, still a bit unnerved by Jojen. Lady Olenna had been sitting with them as well as the other the children, Margaery, and Sam. The Queen of Thorns had everyone in her vicinity laughing along with her stories. All except for Arya, that is. Jon would occasionally catch her staring at him. Whenever he felt her grey eyes on him, he'd look over just as she diverted her gaze away, finding something to distract her.

"Do you think Arya is acting strangely?" Jon asked Daenerys, who had looked lost in her own thoughts.

"Hmm?" she simply asked, poking at her food but not eating any of it.

"Watch her for a moment," he said, turning away from Arya, focusing entirely on Dany. "Is she looking over?"

Nonchalantly, Dany tried to observe Arya while scanning the room, "Yes," she replied through her teeth as she smiled.

"Keep watching her," he instructed her as he slowly turned his head. Startled, Arya looked away again, attacking the food on her plate, slicing up small vegetables into even smaller pieces that could hardly be pierced with a fork. Clearly, a poor acting job on her part.

"That is odd," she agreed.

"I haven't spoken with her since this morning, either. I don't like it, whatever it is."

Before Dany could respond, a grape had flown from across the room, landing right on her plate. She and Jon looked up to see Margaery waving at them, a few seats down from Arya.
"Do you have it?" Dany whispered.

Nodding yes, Jon slipped a key into her hand under the table. Without hesitation, she excused herself and began moving toward the exit. Margaery likewise excused herself and left the hall, following after her silver-haired friend. Sighing, Jon grabbed his plate and wandered over to the table Robb had been seated at.

"Still? " he simply asked Robb as he settled in beside him.

"What?" his brother asked, sliding over to make room for him.

"Have you spoken with Margaery at all since we talked this morning?"

"No," he admitted.

Jon tugged at Robb's arm so he'd look him in the face, "Seriously, have you gone mad?"

Robb scoffed, shaking Jon's hand off of him. He didn't answer.

"Fine. No more talk about Margaery," he agreed. "That's not what I came over for, anyway."

"It's not?" Robb asked, unsure whether to believe Jon's claim.

"You left something in my room, and I'd like you to retrieve it."

"And you couldn't just bring it to me?"

"No, it's too large to carry on my own. And frankly, I'd rather not touch it."
Theon and Jeyne shot each other a quick look before snickering.

Robb's face instantly flushed red, "I have no idea what you're talking about. I made sure to leave your room exactly as I had found it."

"You'd rather I explained it here, in front of Greyjoy?" Jon asked, nudging his brother's arm.

Robb only glared. Despite his words, his expression had looked a bit guilty.

"Oh, come on. Tell us what it is!" Theon interjected.

Before Jon could say anything further, Robb rose from his seat, pushing his plate away from him angrily, "Let's go, then. After you," he growled, gesturing for Jon to lead the way.

The first half of their walk had been silent. However, Jon decided he wasn't done pushing the topic of Margaery. Watching his brother needlessly avoiding the woman he'd been falling for was agonizing to someone like Jon who'd had too much empathy.

"You realize Margaery is one of the most beautiful women in all seven kingdoms."

"Jon, enough."

"If you ruin your chance with her by offending her or her grandmother, you'll never forgive yourself. And father will force you into a match with someone else. You do realize that, right?"

Robb didn't say anything.

"You seem pretty certain she's displeased with you. What's the harm in talking to her, then? You have nothing to lose."

They'd made it to Jon's bedroom door. He pulled a key from his pocket and unlocked it.
"You should talk to her," Jon said before opening his door.

"Fine," Robb agreed. "Let's just get this over with. Where is it?"

Jon opened his door to reveal Margaery pacing alone in his room.

"Robb," she cooed, holding her arms out to him. Robb's Adam's apple ran the length of his neck as he slowly gulped. He'd turned back to Jon, who had since moved to block his exit.

Upon seeing her alone and upset, Robb willingly wandered into Margaery's embrace. She stroked his dark copper curls as he nuzzled into her neck. Margaery mouthed "Thank you" to Jon from over Robb's shoulder. He simply nodded to her before closing the door behind him and locking them inside.

Daenerys wandered out from behind the corner, whispering "Did it work?"

Jon nodded, taking her hand and pulling her further away from his room.

"Thank the gods," she said, squeezing his fingers. "Let's go back to our room."

After a quick sprint through the hallways, Daenerys retrieved her key from her cloak pocket and began to unlock her door. Jon pleaded, "Wait."

"For what?"

"Do you mind if we go for a walk, instead? I need to talk to you."

"A walk? We can talk inside."

"No," Jon pleaded again, knowing their aptitude for distractions once inside a room with a bed in it, alone.
"Judging by the way you're acting, my guess is it's important."

"Yes," he simply said.

"And where do you suppose we could walk with no one around to eavesdrop?"

Sighing, Jon searched his mind for an answer that hadn't been there.

"If I promise to behave, will you come inside?"

Reluctantly, Jon nodded to her, looking a bit sick all of a sudden. It was then that Daenerys knew it must be important, and that she'd have to actually keep her promise. She finished turning the key before pushing her door open.

Once inside, Jon lit a few candles before throwing a couple of logs into the fireplace. Using some small twigs as kindling, he borrowed the flame from a candle to help the wood catch fire.

"You know my blood runs hot," she reminded him. "I might have to slip into something cooler..."

Jon playfully rolled his eyes at her before pulling some of the furs from her bed onto the ground beside the fire. Next, he threw a couple of her pillows onto the floor. The pair removed their boots and cloaks before sitting in front of the fireplace.

They sat in silence for a few moments, listening to the snapping sounds as the flames devoured the wood.

"Well?" she asked, expectantly.

"I have a simple question to ask you. I also have some news that might upset you. Which would you like first?"

"I don't like the sound of that," she said.
The shadows of his low-hanging curls danced across Jon's forehead as the flames flickered. His skin glowed in the orange light. *Gods, he's beautiful*, she thought, already feeling the nagging urge to start undressing him. However, Jon was waiting for a real answer from her.

"Start with the upsetting part," she finally decided, thinking it might help her behave.

Jon looked down, swirling his fingertips in the furs, "Lady Stark told Ned she'd no longer stand in the way of my legitimization if that's what I wanted."

Dany immediately lowered her head so that she'd be in Jon's line of sight even though he'd been looking away, "Is that what you want?"

"I had wanted to be a Stark my whole life, but I know that's not what you want. The moment she'd offered it, all I could think of was you."

She sighed, "Well I'm not upset with you, Jon."

"But you are upset?"

"Mostly with Lady Stark. She could've offered this at any time, but it only comes up days before our wedding?"

"She said a lot more than just that, Dany," Jon explained before recounting to her, in detail, the ways in which Catelyn struggled with his mere existence, and why she'd treated him so poorly his whole life. Daenerys listened intently, still unsure what to make of any of it.

"Besides," Jon continued, "Had I been a Stark all this time, you never would've fallen for me."

"Excuse me?" Dany said, slowly folding her arms across her chest. *Now* she was upset.

"I thought you liked that I was a Snow? Because it's a safe match," he sheepishly explained.
Dany began to shake with laughter. It was not happy laughter, "It astounds me how quickly you can forget your true identity, Jon. Yes, I liked that you were a bastard because it shaped who you are. However, I've known for a while now that you aren't actually a bastard and I'm still here. You are, in fact, the most unsafe match for me, politically speaking. Here I am, ready to marry you in spite of it."

Jon remained silent.

Dany sighed, "Do you want to be a Stark?"

"Do you?"

"No."

"Then I don't either."

"Just because I don't?"

"Well, yeah," he said just above a whisper, swirling his fingertips in the furs again.

Dany batted his hand away, which forced him to meet her gaze, "Jon. Don't give up the opportunity on account of me, please. If you wanted to be a Stark all your life, then be a Stark."

This time Jon didn't look away from her, "I did want it my whole life. I also spent my life certain I never wanted a wife or children, and now that's all I dream about."

Dany's face flushed as she folded her hands in her lap, "It is?"

"Yes," he breathed. "My whole life has been a lie, Dany. It's not easy. And it's not just my name or my parents, but it stems from that."

Jon leaned forward to wrap his hands around hers before continuing, "I realized today when Ned and I were discussing the wedding, how much of my life I'd spent in denial about wantin' all of the things you're about to give me. Yes, I wanted to be a Stark. That's when all I had was myself to
"Jon," Dany sighed, slipping her hands from underneath his so she could crawl toward him.

"You said you'd behave," he warned her, bracing himself as she pressed her lips to his. Lips tingling, her mouth urged her to taste him further. Instead, she reluctantly returned to her spot.

"I'm going to turn down the offer," he assured her. "If my last name ever changes, it'll be the same as yours. Robb, Bran, and Rickon can pass on the Stark name. Our children will be Targaryens."

Dany's eyes began to glaze over with lust.

Jon quickly looked away as he continued, "I hate to admit this to you, but I've hardly done any thinkin' about our future or where we go from here."

"I've got a few ideas," she purred, beginning to inch her way toward him again.

"Wait," he pleaded, "I have somethin' to ask you first."

With patience clearly waning, Dany sighed, "What is it?"

"Which gods do you follow?"

Rather than answer, Dany began to giggle, "I'm sorry, what?"

Jon grimaced as his face flushed with embarrassment.

Dany bit back her laughter, "I didn't mean to laugh, it's just that my mind had been far, far away from religious matters."

"It's for the wedding," he mumbled, "Which religion do you follow? I'm sorry I never bothered to
ask you before."

"It's quite alright, Jon. And, none, I suppose."

"None?" he asked. The look on Jon's face had said that this was an entirely new concept to him. "Ned said your family followed the Faith of the Seven."

"My family follows the old gods," she corrected him, insinuating her family had been the same as Jon's. "I may be related to people that followed the new gods, but I know next to nothing about that."

"So you wouldn't mind being married in the godswood?"

"Where else?" she asked, genuinely curious.

"The sept."

"That tiny thing? Gods, no! Unless... you wanted to?"

"Of course not," Jon explained, "I told Ned I wanted the godswood, but he told me to check with you. That's when I realized we'd never talked about religion before."

"It's not my favorite topic," she said.

"Why's that?"

"How can anyone be so sure what's out there?" she said, swirling a finger in the air above her head as if pointing to the ether, or wherever it had been the gods resided.

"You're always thinkin', aren't you?" Jon smiled, grabbing her pillow and shifting onto his stomach.

"I am," she admitted, desire slowly infiltrating her words as she spoke, "Want to know what I'm
"Thinking right now?" Dany reached for the laces on the back of Jon's doublet, pulling them loose.

"Somethin' tells me I'm about to find out," he gruffly said as she directed his body to work his torso free of his clothes.

Dany guided Jon back onto his stomach before climbing on top of him.

"What're you doin'?" he asked her, unable to get a good look at her from any angle.

Dany began sweeping her hands down his back slowly. He shivered under her touch, even though his skin was hot from the fire.

"That's nice," he sighed, squirming a bit as her hands explored him. She delighted in the way his muscles moved under his skin.

"Am I tickling you?"

"A little bit," he admitted. Dany adjusted the pressure of her hands, massaging his back by pressing her fingers and palms into him. Jon began to groan from the sensation, causing Dany to increase the tension further. Once he started to squirm again, she eased up and began tracing shapes into his skin with her fingernails. Her balance faltered just a bit as his body began to shake with laughter once more.

Hearing his laugh sent a series of flutters from the pit of her stomach, right through to the tips of her fingers and toes. There had been a wealth of traits Dany hadn't known about Jon prior to confessing how badly she'd wanted him. In her many fantasies before she'd had him, Dany hadn't known to include his ticklishness in her imagination. As she watched the way his body instinctively dodged her touch, only to immediately lean back into it, she couldn't help but grin.

She realized he'd hardly ever been touched before her. A brief sadness overtook her, recalling the way Ned and Catelyn held her as a child, just like one of their own, but never Jon. _He just needed more practice_, she decided. As for the light touches, she vowed to train his skin to enjoy even the gentlest of caresses. Taking her hands away, she began kissing her way from the base of his spine just above his waistband. Traveling up to his neck, she'd induced his muffled whimpers as he clutched a pillow tightly to his face.
Dany ran her hands through his tangled hair, twisting it around her fingers until she'd had a decent handful of it. Carefully lifting his head, she readjusted it so his cheek rested against the pillow. She eased herself up to examine his eyes for a moment. The poor boy looked drunk.

She placed a kiss near the edge of his mouth, dangerously close to his lips. Unable to resist, Jon tried craning his neck to greet her mouth, but she'd already moved on, placing kisses along his cheek. After she'd nudged his face back down on the pillow with her nose, Jon began laughing again.

"Dany," he sighed happily, his closed eyes curved like waning crescent moons. She'd circled back around, this time she planted kisses along his jawline starting with his chin. Once she'd reached just below his ear, his body shook from a deep shiver. Quickly, she took his lobe between her lips. Jon's body arched in reaction, and she'd had to straddle him harder with her legs so she wouldn't slide off of him.

More kisses followed, placed over his ear and his hairline, along his temple and across his eyebrows. Eyes still clenched, Jon's face broke out into a toothy grin. As he smiled, his cheeks resembled plump apples. Dany resisted the urge to sink her teeth into them. Instead, she simply kissed her way right over them and back toward his mouth. As Jon managed to wipe the smile from his face to meet her lips, she'd already pulled away. He opened his eyes.

"Permission to misbehave?" she asked, burning her violet gaze right into his black eyes. As pitch-dark as the waters of the pool beside the heart tree, pupils nearly indistinguishable from his irises. Dany's ghostly white reflection disappeared as Jon's lids fell closed. She began gently scratching her nails against his scalp.

"I thought that's what you were already doin'," he sighed, leaning into her fingertips the same way Ghost had done when scratched.

"Oh, no," she assured him. Too soon she'd pulled her hands out of his tangled mop, pressing her body into his back as both of her hands wandered down his sides. Jon began laughing again at the quick, soft touches, until her hands slipped beneath him, headed straight for his groin.

"Dany!" he gasped, as if in protest. Though, instinctively he raised his hips as she untied the laces of his trousers. Suddenly her weight had disappeared from his back as she'd materialized at his feet, tugging at his pant legs until she'd worked them free. Jon lifted himself up on his elbows, trying to shift to a different position.

"No," she simply said, pointing at him to return to where he'd been. Dany hovered over him massaging his ankles and calves, moving her hands up to knead his thighs as she chased her hands'
movements with kisses all along his skin. She took a moment to admire his firm backside, grabbing two handfuls of it before giving him a playful smack.

Jon couldn't help but snicker as he turned to face her, "What was that for?"

Rather than answer him, Dany assaulted his mouth with hers as he shifted onto his back as best he could under the sudden impact of her full body weight. Jon began tugging at her skirts to pull them out of the way, guiding her hips downward as he slipped right inside of her. Dany broke from his mouth to let out a sharp cry. Jon buried his face into her chest as she began rocking her hips back and forth.

Suddenly, a gentle rapping sounded at her door.

"Seven hells," she said, reluctantly letting Jon slip out of her as she lifted herself off of him.

Jon managed to pull his trousers on just in time before Dany opened the door. He reached for his tunic, holding it over his naked chest, bracing himself as best he could for the sudden, unexpected visitor.

Dany hesitantly opened the door. "Osha?" she asked, perplexed. "Is everything alright?"

"Sorry to bother you, m'lady. You said if I needed to talk I could come to you," she spoke quickly. "I was tryin' to sleep. Every time I close my eyes all I see is their eyes turnin' blue."

"Whose eyes?"

"We need to burn them, m'lady, before they turn..." the wild woman carried on, her gaze drifting to the floor where Jon had been, noticing his poor attempt to hide his naked torso. Dany was not happy with how long Osha's eyes lingered on her intended, stepping in between the two to block her view.

"Alright. Slow down, Osha. Do you mean we need to burn the bodies of the men who you were traveling with?"

She nodded her head, still stealing curious glances at Jon from beyond Dany's shoulder. Jon shifted
uncomfortably, stretching the fabric of his tunic across his collarbone.

"And what about blue eyes?"

"When they raise 'em up, they got blue eyes like ice."

Dany turned her head exchange a worried look with Jon before looking back into Osha's eyes. She'd hadn't doubted Osha's sincerity yet, and the fear was clear in her expression. She still needed a bit more clarification, "You mean the White Walkers raising the dead?"

Osha nodded once more.

"Aren't those supposed to be north of the Wall?" Jon interrupted. "You're safe down here."

"None of us are safe," Osha grumbled.

Daenerys decided the pair of them would only squabble, and she'd have to step back in for a real resolution that Jon wouldn't offer, skeptic that he was. Searching her mind, she remembered an important detail from Osha's original explanation, "You said they come out at night, right?"

Osha nodded again, raising an eyebrow.

"It's late, and it's dark out. It will be for many hours, yet. Winterfell is probably the safest place to be for miles around. There are dozens of guards patrolling the castle—each gate, the ramparts, and even throughout the hallways here in the keep. If we were to go into the wolfswood at this hour, it would be the most dangerous if they'd, indeed, risen," she explained.

The wild woman only scowled, likely realizing Daenerys had made a good argument.

"We will find someone to inform tomorrow while the sun is out," she assured her.

"They won't believe it," Osha countered, "No one believes it."
"I do," Dany promised. "I will find help. Even if we just tell them it's a wilder," she'd caught herself before letting the full word slip, "free folk custom, to burn the dead."

The three of them sat in silence for a moment.

"Thank you, m'lady," Osha whispered.

"Jon, would you mind escorting her back to her room?"

He simply groaned, "Mind looking away a moment?"

Guiding Osha's shoulders to physically turn her away from him, Dany likewise shielded her eyes. With impressive speed, Jon was fully dressed and pulling his boots on before she knew it. He gave Dany an irritated glare before stepping out of the room to escort Osha, though she knew he didn't mean it.

While Jon was away, Dany had time to slip out of her dress and into one of her silk robes. She tossed the pillows back onto her bed and dragged the furs on top. She slipped beneath them, leaving enough space for Jon to lay beside her. *I'll just rest my eyes for a moment*, she thought.

When Jon re-entered the room, he'd found Daenerys fast asleep, a tangle of limbs sprawled in the space she'd intended for him. Smiling at the sight of her, he stripped down to just his trousers. He managed to slip into the small sliver of space behind her, wrapping his arms carefully around her body.

"Our children are going to have black hair," she abruptly whispered.

"What?" Jon asked, suddenly jolted awake.

"You said our silver-haired children would be Targaryens," she teased with a clumsy, half-asleep intonation. "You promised me black-haired children."
"You can't hog them all. I want some with your snowy hair, as well."

"I'll see what I can do," she whispered, scooting over to make more room for him. Jon molded his body to Dany's, tightly tucking his legs behind hers. He nuzzled into her soft silver hair, happily inhaling her scent as he gave into the pull of sleep.
Winged Wolf Bound in Chains

Daenerys began to heave, waking Jon from a dead sleep. After rubbing his eyes, he could see that she'd been doubled over on her floor, hands splayed in front of her.

"Dany?" he rose immediately to aid her, "Are you alright?"

"No," she managed to groan before finally vomiting on the stone tile.

He rushed to hold her hair out of the way as she threw up once more. It was nothing more than liquid, but it still made him feel a bit queasy himself.

"Why don't you get back to bed? I'll worry about the mess," Jon said, helping her to her feet. He quickly dressed before wandering out into the hallway.

Dany lay against her pillows, enjoying the cool fabric as she took deep breaths to recover. She rubbed her stomach, feeling as though every minor movement had been as intense as hitting a wave on the open water. A sheen of sweat suddenly coated her face, she braced herself for another surge of nausea.

Jon had returned carrying two buckets and a brush.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

Jon dropped to his knees and began scrubbing the floor, himself.

"Why didn't you fetch one of the servants to do that?"

"I don't need them judging you for my mistake," he explained.

"It's not your mistake. Osha wouldn't judge. She saw you here last night."
"Osha," Jon said, cringing a bit with embarrassment, "Probably wasn't able to get back to sleep last night, you saw how panicked she looked. I really don't mind. Who knows how long we'll have servants, at any rate. I'd better get used to it, now."

With that, Jon threw the brush in the bucket with soapy water before rinsing his hands with the clean water from the second pail, "If you feel sick again, use this, not your floor."

"Funny," Dany said, glaring at him. Jon wiped his hands on his tunic before wandering over to her, placing a kiss on her forehead with zero concern for the dewiness of her skin.

"Do you want me to bring you food?"

Dany instinctively covered her mouth with her hand, "I'd like you to never mention that word ever again."

"Fair enough," Jon laughed.

"I have a strange request."

"Anythin' at all. Just say the words," he cooed, taking her hands in his as he knelt before her. He gazed longingly at her, despite her sick and disheveled state. After all, she'd only felt poorly due to their child stirring.

"Could you fetch Theon for me?"

Jon's face contorted as if he'd smelled something foul, "Theon? Why?"

"He was there during the hunt, he killed the third man. Maybe I can get him to go and burn the bodies. For Osha."

"Get Theon to do somethin' nice for a wildling? Or anyone, for that matter?"

"I think I can spin it into either a favor for me or an act of heroism... Maybe something to impress
Jeyne. I'll see what sort of mood he's in before I choose."

"Alright," Jon said cautiously. "But don't get your hopes up."

"Don't underestimate my powers of persuasion, Jon," she teased.

"I wouldn't dare," he proudly proclaimed as he shook his head to emphasize his sincerity. Had she not been under the weather, he would've ignored her request and jumped right back into bed with her.

Instead, Jon placed several kisses to her forehead before straightening his clothing, "I'll send the ward in when I find him. I'm going to go check on Bran but I'll be back by in a while to check on you."

Dany nodded her head, waiting until Jon was out of sight before closing her eyes.

...  

After Jon directed Theon to Daenerys per her request, he wandered down to Bran's room. He'd been surprised to see his only visitor this morning had been Robb, sitting on the far side of his bed. Bran, looking sickly pale, had been in the midst of explaining something to his older brother, "Jojen says Greywater Watch is on a floating island in the swamps. Only his family can find it. Not even ravens can find it!"

"That can't be true. Father said he sent a raven to summon them," Jon abruptly interrupted as he entered the room. Realizing only after the fact, maybe he shouldn't have let it slip.

Bran shook his head, turning his full attention to Jon as he wandered over to his bedside, "Ravens can't find Greywater Watch. Jojen told his father to come. He saw your wedding, too, he said that it was beautiful. He told me all about it because I won't be there."

Jon flushed, "Of course you'll be there, Bran."

The boy closed his eyes as he shook his head, "They're coming to take my leg."
"Bran, don't say that and don't listen to him," Robb snapped.

"Why not? He's seen the three-eyed raven, too."

"The what?" Jon and Robb simultaneously chimed as Jon took a seat opposite his brother.

"The raven. With three eyes, the one from my dreams."

Jon knew Bran had been given small doses of milk of the poppy to ease the pain of his wound, it must be why he was making little to no sense.

"He says we'll go north to find the raven one day."

"You don't have to go north to find a raven. The rookery is full of them," Robb insisted.

"Not just any raven—the one with three eyes! Aren't you listening?"

"So you and Jojen are going to go north to find a raven, and you're going to walk there with just one leg?" Robb teased him, certain Bran was in the midst of some fever dream.

"Hodor will carry me. Osha will be there, too, and Summer. And... Meera," Bran said, nearly blushing at the mere mention of her name. Dany isn't the only one taken with the curly-haired girl, Jon thought, smiling at what might be his little brother's first infatuation.

"Osha? Jon then considered, shaking his head. He knew full well she'd never set foot north of Winterfell. If ever she left, she'd be headed as far south as south goes.

"Bran, you should really get some rest," Jon suggested.

"I don't want to go to sleep. I don't want the raven to find me."
"But you just said *you* wanted to find him," Robb reminded his little brother.

"No, it's too early. I have to *heal* first."

"Yes, Bran. You do need to heal. That is why you need *rest*," Robb said as he tucked the furs around Bran, rubbing his hands up and down his arms to create warmth with the friction.

Just then, Luwin appeared in the doorway with Catelyn. Her face had been beet-red and swollen from crying. Jon had never seen the woman so upset in all the years he'd known her. Hodor's shadow had engulfed the hallway behind them like some sort of ill omen. The giant man ducked into the room, brushing past Jon to pick Bran up in one fell swoop.

"Bran, I'm afraid we have to take you back to the Maester's turret," Catelyn explained, her efforts to disguise her shaking voice had been of no use. Her fear and anxiety were infectious, setting everyone in the room on edge.

Upon seeing the state of his mother, Bran shrieked in terror, "I don't want to go! *Robb, please!*" he screamed to his oldest brother, "I'll never climb again!"

Catelyn and Luwin exchanged a pained look or helplessness. Tears began pouring from Catelyn's eyes as her body rocked with sobs. Robb ran over to his mother, grabbing her arm as Hodor took the boy away, his screams echoing through the hallway.

"Is it *true*, mother? About his leg," Robb asked, unable to stop the tears that had begun streaming down his face, his voice likewise shaking with anxiety. It was all happening too fast.

Luwin only shifted his gaze to the floor. The Maester had donned his own look of disbelief, even though it had clearly been his decision. He called into the hallway, "Hodor, please carry Bran to my turret."

"Mother, *please*," Bran cried weakly. Hodor held him tightly as he screamed, begged and pleaded, using his good leg to kick as he protested.

Jon and Robb followed the four of them into the hall, utterly helpless as they watched Bran getting
dragged off against his will. Neither Catelyn or Luwin turned to look back.

"I can't believe it," Robb whispered before covering his mouth. He began to dry heave, though his stomach was empty as both boys had skipped breakfast in favor of seeing Bran. Jon simply slumped against the wall, stunned.

"This is all my fault," Robb said, slumping next to Jon.

"No, it isn't. Bran is alive because of you, and because of Theon."

"What if he dies, Jon? He's already lost so much blood. What if the infection spread too far?"

Jon couldn't bear to think of it. His sweet little brother. Poring over the strange comments Bran had been making prior to his departure, he turned to his brother, sighing, "Robb, I know you're not going to like this answer, and I don't like it either. But, I think we need to find Jojen."

After checking the great hall and the courtyard, the brothers had finally found Jojen waiting near the east gate as if expecting something or someone. Perhaps he'd already known Jon and Robb were coming to confront him.

"You're here to ask me about Brandon," he casually said as the brothers approached him. Jon and Robb gave each other a look before turning back to the scruffy boy.

"Your brother Brandon is a warg," he explained. "But he will be so much more."

"A warg?" Jon asked, distracted by the explanation that had seemingly nothing to do with Bran's current condition or predicament.

"He has the ability to travel inside of Summer, his direwolf."

"We all have those dreams about our wolves," Jon replied, clearly unimpressed.

"Not all of you," Jojen confidently explained. "But Brandon doesn't just dream it. He can do it at
"How?"

"Well, I don't know how, but I know he can."

"How do you know all of this? It's like you know everything."

The boy quickly clarified, "I have green dreams. I don't know everything."

"Green dreams?"

"I can see visions of things. I'm working on trying to control it, but I'm not as powerful as Brandon. For now, I see what I'm shown. Most of it does regard your brother."

The brothers gave each other another perplexed look.

"I don't know everything, but I've known about him for a while," Jojen continued.

"I can't listen to any more of this," Robb said, walking out of earshot, all the while tugging at his hair in frustration.

Jon's patience had waned, as well, but he still needed answers and so he persisted, "He said you were going to travel north with him, with Hodor and whoever else."

Jojen simply nodded.

Sighing, Jon still thought all of this sounded absolutely absurd, "So he's not going to die?"

"No."
"But they're taking his leg right now, as we speak?"

"The likelihood is high."

"When will he be better?"

"Soon."

"Will he be bedridden forever?"

"No."

"But he'll never walk again?"

Jojen seemed to be getting irritated with Jon firing off questions, each answer inspiring only more curiosity.

"You could stand here all day and ask me about Brandon's future or your own. It will drive you mad. You don't want to know all of the answers, trust me," Jojen's voice hung eerily on the last two words in a way that made Jon suddenly dread whatever might be in store for him. Still, he searched the boy's dark eyes for some sort of hint or clue.

As if in response, Jojen's eyes fell closed. He sighed before continuing, "Brandon will live, he will heal. It will be slow, but his trauma will do nothing but enhance his powers."

"His powers? How?" Jon scoffed at the mere idea.

"Bind a winged wolf with chains, he'll only fly once he gnaws his leg free of the restraint," he replied cryptically, his face completely void of emotion.

The horrific metaphor sent a shudder right through him, his face twisted with anger. Jon fought the
urge to *choke* the boy for saying such an insensitive thing as his brother was off getting mutilated as they casually spoke. No matter what Jojen said, he was still *Howland's* son, and Jon couldn't forget that. After all, the boy had been right about several things, so there'd been no choice but to believe that Bran *would* survive and that somehow, he'd be destined for great things.

Before Jon had the chance to reply to the creepy boy, a guard atop the ramparts had blown his horn to signal the approach of a rider. Jon sprinted in front of the gate to get a better view. As he turned back, he was surprised to see Sam catching up to him, looking equally sick and drained of color.

"I'm so sorry, Jon. I just heard about Bran," he offered his condolences.

"Thank you, Sam," Jon managed to say before both boys redirected their gaze to the man approaching on horseback.

Robb and Margaery had also wandered over, hands interlocked, likely in an attempt to calm Robb's nerves, "What did he say? Will Bran live?"

"Aye," Jon replied, still looking past the gates, "And there's no choice but to believe him."

Finally, the rider had come close enough to discern. The man was all alone, no guards, no companions. He was an older man with pure white hair, dressed head to toe in dark brown linen with a matching hooded cloak. As the cloak rippled from the wind, Jon could see he'd had both a sword and dagger equipped to either side of his belt.

The only visitor Jon knew they were still expecting at Winterfell had been Dany's surprise wedding guest. He whispered to Sam, "Maester Aemon...?"

"No," Sam confidently answered, keeping his voice low as well. "Maester's a bit older. And *blind*."

Ned hadn't been present to greet the visitor. Understandably, as he'd almost certainly joined his wife by Bran's side. Jeyne Poole's father, the steward Vayon, had greeted the older man instead. None in their small party could hear Vayon address the man by name, but Jon thought he'd seen him mouth the word 'Ser'. Rodrik and Jory Cassel wandered over to greet the man as well, the four of them then headed in the direction of the stables. The mysterious older man pulled his hood tighter around his face to avoid onlookers. *Curious*, Jon thought.
Margaery and Robb took a few steps closer to Jon and Sam. She whispered to the three of them, "That man looks an awful lot like the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard."

Before Jon could consider the implications of Margaery's positive identification of the man, another rider approached from the opposite direction. Theon had returned on horseback, from the gate to the west that opened into the wolfswood. Jon's mouth hung open, Had Daenerys actually convinced him to help?

Theon quickly dismounted, looking shaken. Glancing around at the gathering crowd, disappointment washed over the ward, "I need to talk to Lord Stark. Where is he? Where's Ned?"

"What is it, Theon? Did you burn the bodies?"

"Yes," he spat. "I left a few men behind to make sure the flames don't spread from the makeshift pyre. But I found a fourth body."

"And what does that mean?" Robb asked.

"A great deal, turns out. Which is why I need to talk to your father."

The brothers reluctantly explained the sudden turn of events that had happened as Theon completed Dany's mission in the woods. The ward had adopted the same sickly expression upon hearing the young boy would lose a leg to infection.

Theon sighed after processing the news a moment, "Alright. I'll talk to Lord Stark another time," he relented before turning to Robb, "Mind if we speak alone?"

As the pair of boys wandered off to talk in private, Jon suddenly realized he'd never been back to check on Daenerys. He thought it best to fetch her some water before heading off to break the girl's heart with the terrible news about Bran. At least he'd be able to assure her Theon had overseen the burning of Osha's companions. Not that it actually matters, he thought to himself, but at least it would give Dany some peace of mind, and surely that counted for something.
A Princess and Her Inheritance

After fetching water for Daenerys and breaking the bad news, the pair fell back to sleep in each other's arms. When Dany awoke to another series of raps at her door, she was relieved to discover her morning sickness had finally passed. She slipped out of bed to crack the door open and see who had come calling.

"Osha," she smiled before dropping her voice to a whisper, "I was able to find someone to burn the bodies. Jon informs me they've been taken care of per my request."

A brief flash of surprise crossed the woman's face. "Thank you, m'lady," she softly said before announcing, "I'm afraid Lord Stark is lookin' for the pair of you to join him in his study. I can escort ya."

"Well that is hardly necessary," Dany smiled. "We can find our way there."

Osha nodded, turning to leave.

"Wait, Osha," Dany pleaded, "If Lord Stark is free now, what news is there of Bran? The boy?"

"The boy is back in his room. The Lady and Maester aren't allowin' anyone else in 'til he wakes up."

"Thank you, Osha," Dany weakly replied as she closed her door. She decided to risk waking Jon prior to dressing. Jon came to as she shook his arm gently. Daenerys waited patiently until he sat up before slipping out of her robe.

Clearing his throat, Jon ogled Dany as she stood naked before him, "Am I still dreamin'?"

She laughed, "Unfortunately not. Lord Stark has summoned us, so once I'm dressed that's where we'll be headed."

"Bran?" he asked, knowing no other words were needed.
"He's returned to his room to rest, but they're not allowing visitors yet."

Jon nodded, slowly making his way off of the bed and over to Daenerys, "Allow me," he whispered, guiding her waist as he turned her, offering to tie her laces.

Once laced up, Jon wrapped his arms around her before letting his hands slide over her stomach. Though it still hadn't been a noticeable change to onlookers, the pair of them could feel a difference. The previous flatness of her abdomen had given way to a slight roundness that Jon had trouble keeping his hands off of.

"We should go," she whispered, though nothing about her tone suggested any intent to act.

"Should we?" Jon purred, leaning further into her as his hands slipped further down her abdomen.

Mustering every bit of will she could, she pulled away from him, "Lord Stark is expecting us."

This time her tone had been enough to shake him from his trance. He groaned, adjusting his trousers before they set off through the hallways.

Upon entering Ned's study, Dany immediately took notice of the older man enshrouded in simple brown linen. Once Dany and Jon were inside, Ned moved to shut the door behind them.

"Daenerys, I've invited this man to be your guest for the wedding," Ned began.

Giving Jon a quick, startled look, Dany began visually inspecting the man intended as her guest. He wasn't a Maester, he'd had no chain. Further, he had weapons. She frowned upon realizing she wouldn't get to meet Maester Aemon, the only other living relative she'd been aware of, aside from Jon.

"This is Ser Barristan Selmy, Lord Commander of the Kingsguard," he quietly explained. The man looked nothing like a member of the Kingsguard, who usually donned flashy armor and a pure white cloak. She'd managed to catch a few glimpses of their aesthetic when the Baratheons and Lannisters had come to Winterfell.
Finally, the knight met her gaze. Upon seeing Daenerys for the first time, his entire demeanor had melted. "Your Grace," the man breathed as he knelt before her, bending his knee to her as if she were royalty.

Daenerys flushed, unsure how to respond. She could feel Jon's dark gaze burning into her, but rather than confirm her own suspicions to him, she simply let her gaze drop to the tiles, blushing away like a small child. It had been the first time the girl felt the true weight of her family's legacy.

The man rose as Ned began explaining his expectations, "As you might've guessed, it's a bit controversial for a man of Ser Barristan's position to travel alone to Winterfell to attend the wedding of the last member of the house he was once pledged to... And so we're going to try our best to keep his identity under wraps. When addressing him, please use the name Arstan."

Dany and Jon both nodded in understanding.

As Ned continued, Barristan displayed a tight, closed-lip smile. The kindness in his eyes was clear as they narrowed. "He's spent a great deal of time with your grandparents, your eldest brother, and even your grandfather. There is no better source for learning about your family first hand, Daenerys."

"Forgive me, Ser, but do you not serve Robert of the House Baratheon?" Daenerys asked, pushing back against Ned's advice and choice of guest. Though her gut urged her to trust him, her mind couldn't relent.

The knight sighed, and before he could begin, Ned stepped in to answer. All the while giving Daenerys a stern look, he explained, "Indeed, Barristan serves as the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard for Robert Baratheon. The King spared the life of his enemy on the battlefield, recognizing both his reputation and potential. And so, awarded him the esteemed position amongst his own Kingsguard."

Ned moved closer to Daenerys to drive the point home, "The world is not black and white, child. Everything that exists does so in shades of grey. View it in darkness, and all you will see is black. Yet, the more light we cast upon the color, the whiter it appears."

Dany raised an eyebrow. Ned was a wise man, indeed, but the words didn't sound like his. Jon had seemed to pull the conclusion from her mind and to his own lips, "Lord Stark," he began, addressing his father with his proper title in front of their company, "Forgive my manners, but where'd you learn that?"
"Jon Arryn," he sighed. "He was a wise man. I learned a great deal from him."

"I never got to apologize for his loss. I know he was like a father to you," Jon's voice was deeply pained as he spoke the words. Daenerys knew Jon had been thinking of his own relationship with Ned in that moment. She wanted nothing more than to wrap her arms around him.

"Thank you, Jon. He was like a second father to me. As well as to Robert Baratheon," he said, turning to Daenerys as the King's name slipped from his lips. "Jon Arryn was known for his wisdom and kindness. I'd like to think some measure of it trickled down to us while we were fostered in the Eyrie."

Daenerys took his words to heart, gaining the courage to meet the knight's eyes once more, "Forgive me, Ser. I didn't mean to imply..."

"It is quite alright, Your Grace," Barristan interrupted to relieve the girl of explaining her mistake. He smiled at her as if they'd been old friends. Dany couldn't help averting her gaze away from him, feeling overwhelmed by the emotion behind his eyes.

A knock sounded at the door. Ned cracked it open, Vayon Poole announced that Arstan's room had been fully prepared and offered to escort him there. Ned did his best to conceal Jon and Daenerys from sight as Barristan wandered into the hallway to follow the steward. Once the three of them were alone, Ned closed the door once more.

"Have you two decided on a location?" Ned inquired.

"The godswood," the pair replied in unison, exchanging shy smiles after realizing their synchronism.

"Good. Now that Arstan has arrived and if you are feeling up to it, we can hold the ceremony tomorrow, followed by an early feast."

"Maybe we should postpone it," Jon mumbled.

"Jon," Dany snapped. "I don't want to wait any longer! It's been long enough."
Ned agreed, trying to disguise a solemn tone, "I know you'd like Bran to be there, Jon, but your guests won't be here long. Bran will understand. In fact, he'd be upset to know he ruined your day if you waited."

"We're getting married tomorrow," Dany firmly assured Jon, striking a loose fist to her palm to emphasize her stance.

Jon gulped nervously. Suddenly, he felt ill. He was thankful to have made it so far into the day without eating, or else he might've spilled the contents of his stomach right then and there.

"If you wouldn't mind, Jon, I've got a few matters to discuss with Daenerys, alone. Perhaps you could-

Before Ned could offer a suggestion, "Of course," Jon replied, swinging the door open and bolting from the room. He needed fresh air.

Jon wandered around the castle grounds aimlessly. As he made his way past the courtyard, he felt on edge for many reasons. Bran, Daenerys, Barristan Selmy.

"Jon," a voice called to him from the shadows of the corridor where he usually hid. He recognized the voice immediately, but he couldn't see her at all.

"Arya? Where are you?"

She slowly emerged from the shadows, her arms folded tightly across her chest. Arya's posture was slouched, and she looked burdened by something.

"What's wrong, Arya?" Jon turned to her, giving the girl his full attention and concern, "Is it Bran?"

She looked away as he said the name, shaking her head. Closing her eyes, she asked, "You know you're my favorite brother, right?"

"Don't say that, Arya," he scolded her, as if her words might somehow adversely affect Bran.
"But you do know that, right?"

He sighed, unhappy to have to admit it to her, "I could've guessed."

Arya eyed Jon in a way that made him highly uncomfortable. *What a strange day*, he thought, before thinking back to her peculiar behavior the night before at supper.

"You're my favorite too," he assured her with a whisper.

"I want to go with you," she plainly stated.

"With me? *Where?* Where is it you think I'm headed?" Jon asked her, though part of him already knew the answer. She must've been talking to *Jojen*, too. Before she could confirm it, he added, "I'm not goin' anywhere, Arya."

"You *are*, and I'd like to come."

"Did Jojen say somethin' to you?"

Arya's gaze dropped to her feet. She swirled the tip of her boot in the dirt.

"You're almost as bad a liar as I am," he joked.

"We're both *good* liars, Jon. I just don't like lying to you," she spat.

"Are you upset with me, Arya?"

"*No. But I will be if you leave me behind,*" the girl nearly growled as she walked off. Jon felt a shooting pain in his chest, unsure what he'd done to her.
"Arya, wait," he called after her, her cryptic insinuation that he'd be leaving Winterfell had given him an idea. "This is unrelated, but I have a favor to ask you."

She simply turned, raising an eyebrow. Jon thought of the curly-haired girl who'd captured Dany's attention in the last couple of days, and the way she hardly made an appearance about the castle without a bow and a quiver on her person.

"How well do you know Meera Reed?"

. . .

Dany's nerves were getting the best of her as she and Ned silently wandered through the halls of the keep toward her room. She knew he had matters to discuss with her, but they'd barely spoken a word since Jon left them. Two guards stood outside her door, protecting a small chest. Ned motioned for Dany to unlock her door. Once she did so, the guards placed the chest inside on the floor before leaving. She and Ned entered the room, and he was sure to lock it behind them.

"What is that?"

"It's yours," he explained, folding his arms as he smiled.

Daenerys gave her surrogate father a weak smile, "I don't know what to say, Lord Stark, other than thank you."

"Here," he said, kneeling down to lift the chest onto her bed. "Why don't you open it?"

After studying his expression, Dany noted that he looked as thrilled as a child who had just been given sweets. Ned unlatched the small chest for her, gesturing her to lift the lid before he stepped away to give her more than enough space for the reveal.

Her hands shook as she inched closer. Why am I so nervous? she chided herself internally. Upon lifting the lid, Dany let out a noise that fell somewhere between a gasp and a shriek.

"What in seven hells?" she asked, flabbergasted by the sight of the chest's contents.
Ned began to shake with laughter at Dany’s foul language. She had never excelled at manners or behaving herself, not even in front of Lord Stark.

"I wish we had been able to recover all of it, but this was all that was left when we came for you."

Dany could hardly believe his words, as she'd felt overwhelmed with what she already saw, unable to comprehend that it might not have been the whole of it. Her hand slipped into the chest to pull out a silver circlet adorned with red jewels, perhaps even rubies. As she pulled it closer to her eyes for a more thorough inspection, she felt hypnotized by the way the candlelight bounced off of the gems.

"Beautiful," she breathed, carefully running her fingers along the metal.

"Rhaella's crown," Ned explained in a whisper.

"My mother's-" Dany's voice caught in her throat. She began to weep, having had no idea there were any other physical remnants of Rhaella left to the world, other than a small ring she kept safely hidden away in her belongings. Now she'd had her crown.

"I've been told that Ser Willem's servants had tried running off with the crown when my men retrieved you from Essos," he explained. "I kept what little fortune your mother had left hidden all these years. From everyone, even my family."

Dany pressed the crown to her heart, her chest had heaved with sobs. She wanted more than anything to thank Ned, but her sobbing was unrelenting and would not allow for it.

Lord Stark took the crown from her grasp, carefully placing it on top of the pile of golden dragons and trinkets within the chest. Dany’s eyes followed the circlet as Ned wrapped his arms around her to comfort her as she cried. He stroked her hair the way he'd done when she wept for Viserys, as a mere girl.

"I cannot thank you enough for the happiness you've brought my nephew," he whispered, wiping her tears away, his hands like a giant's against her tiny, pale face. It was only then that Daenerys realized Jon had been of the same relation to the pair of them. Ned Stark was her brother by marriage.
"Lord Stark, you've given me absolutely everything. A home, a family, a husband. And now, my own fortune. I am forever indebted to you for your kindness," she cried, breaking from his embrace to retrieve a handkerchief from her desk to blow her nose.

"It was the least I could do for my kin," he assured her. "I may have given you a home, but you made your own family here, you found your own husband, and the inheritance has always been yours. I had only kept it safe for you."

As Dany felt another round of sobs coming on, she slumped onto her bed as she held her handkerchief to her nose.

"You don't have to tell Jon about any of this, either. He should still provide for his family," Ned said.

Dany simply nodded in agreement. Of course she'd tell Jon. She already couldn't wait to show him her mother's crown, his grandmother's. Dany had no idea how many gold dragons and other coins had been in that chest, but she knew it was more than enough for years to come. Her head began to swirl with the possibilities.

"One other matter," Ned added, "With all the guests as of late, and with Bran's condition, I have yet to find a larger accommodation for the pair of you."

Dany took a look around her modest living quarters. Most of her happiest memories had happened in that very room. Memories of Jon flashed through her mind. The way he'd ravaged her their first night exploring each other, the first time he'd made love to her, that their child was likely conceived on her bed. She smiled remembering the way he snuck into her room out of desperation as they fought, the way he cradled her head as he begged for her hand in marriage. The way in which he'd held her as they read about their family history, and even his body sprawled on the furs by the fireplace the night before.

"I don't want another room," she whispered, feeling a tingling sensation throughout her body as she thought of the man who would finally be her husband in less than a day's time.

"You've spoken to Jon about this?"

"No, but I'm sure he'd agree," she confidently insisted, certain his fondness for the space had been as strong as her own.
"Even with a crying babe on the way?"

She sighed, "I will ask him."

"Ser Barristan may not be here long, Daenerys. He's spent a great deal of time with your family as he served them. It might be worth getting to know him as much as you can while he's here. He knew your parents well, and Jon's father."

"How can you be so sure I can trust him?"

"What did he call you upon seeing you for the first time?"

"Your Grace," she cringed, wiping the tears from her cheeks now that they'd finally let up.

"To Ser Barristan, you are still a princess. He may serve King Robert now, but you've always meant a great deal to him. I have always respected the man, even though we were pledged to opposing sides."

Ned retrieved a small scroll from his pocket before handing it off to her for inspection, "Here is something else I've held onto over the years since I knew the day would come when Barristan would wish to meet you, and that you'd have your reservations."

Daenerys carefully unraveled the scroll.

*Would that I were free to do the same. By the gods, keep her safe.*

She re-read the words several times, etching them into her memory.

"This isn't signed. How do you know it's from him?"

"Because he handed it right to me, just before Theon came to stay here."
Greyjoy's Rebellion, Daenerys remembered, realizing the men likely fought alongside one another. Maybe he did care, after all, she thought. She tried to hand the scroll back to Ned, who simply held his hand up to decline it, "You keep it. Show Jon if you must. I know he is wary, too," he said. "I should get back to Catelyn."

Dany nodded. "Thank you, Ned," the girl sighed, rubbing the small scroll between her fingers as she watched Lord Stark find his way out of her room.
Daenerys the Dreamer

Daenerys spent the remainder of her afternoon willingly slipping into daydreams while at the mercy of others. Undoubtedly, she was happy to have the help with the necessary preparations, yet longed for the hours to pass so she could finally become Jon's wife. Would anything change? she wondered, having trouble even envisioning the ceremony beyond Jon's face. Before this moment, she hadn't even seen her dress.

Like Arya, Dany was not too gifted at needlework. It was one of the things the pair of girls bonded over, secretly rolling their eyes as Sansa stitched away, intently listening to the Septa's instructions. Daenerys preferred giggling away with Arya at their oft misshapen creations, poking fun at each other's poor attempts, rather than actually acquiring the skill.

Sansa, on the other hand, had been thrilled when Dany spilled the news of Jon's proposal. Though she and Jon weren't close, Sansa was nevertheless ecstatic to get to help plan the wedding. After Daenerys had bemoaned the chore of preparing her own dress, her red-haired friend had nearly shrieked at the opportunity to take on such a task. When she informed Daenerys that she and Septa Mordane would complete it as something of a wedding gift to her, she'd felt a deep relief. Who cares what my dress looks like, she thought. I just want to be his.

Daenerys wanted a marriage, rather than a wedding. Whenever she pictured it in her head, she only saw the effects of a gentle breeze sweeping dark curls against his plump, flushed cheeks as he smiled. Perhaps there were crimson weirwood leaves hanging behind his head, perhaps not. All she saw was him. There'd been nothing in the world so beautiful as a blushing Jon Snow. Her dress restricted the full capacity of the sigh she'd heaved as she envisioned him.

"Are you alright, Dany?" Sansa inquired, looking up from the hem of her skirt. "Can you breathe? Is it too tight?"

"It's perfect, Sansa. You and the Septa have done an incredible job, just as I knew you would."

Sansa beamed up to her friend before resuming her task of making sure the dress fell evenly, and not too long in the front. Made of cream-colored wool, the dress was modestly cut, with something of a raised square neckline that transitioned into a fur-lined collar. Dany was thankful to have at least a little skin peeking out, even if it were just a modest amount of collarbone. She particularly liked the flowy trumpet-style sleeves that protruded from her elbow. With the slightest of motions, the fabric would swish around her arm, much less stiff than the rest of the woolen contraption. The dress had a small train behind it, which she already anticipated staining as it dragged along fallen leaves in the godswood. I don't care, I just want to be his, her mind chanted once more.
Margaery had joined them to discuss her many ideas for hairstyles, even marching in a few examples she'd prepared on her handmaidens. Daenerys felt a bit more strongly about this topic, batting away the many suggestions for exaggerated Southron updos. Coiffures so large, so hefty, that it looked as though the handmaiden's necks might split in two simply from the weight of their hair.

"Well Daenerys, you're being awfully choosy about this," Margaery cheerfully reminded her friend as her suggestions had been nearly tapped dry.

"I'd like braids of some sort. They suit me," Dany confidently said. "I'd like my hair down halfway, similar to yours. Maybe something like that?"

"Of course," Margaery relented, painting her face with a smile. "A simple style for a natural beauty. I will get to work."

After Margaery left them, the Septa explained in excruciating detail what was to take place in front of the heart tree the next day. She tried to picture Jon's voice saying all the required lines, and she felt a bit guilty that he'd had so much more to say than she.

"May I remove this dress?" Dany whined, feeling a bit too warm all of a sudden. The more she thought about the wedding, the harder it had been to will the air into her lungs.

"Not until Margaery comes back with the new braided hairstyles to choose from," Sansa reminded her.

"Is the dress necessary for that?" she whined further, sounding a bit like Sansa in doing so, herself.

"Yes, we have to make sure everything is perfect!"

Sighing, Dany slumped into one of the uncomfortable wooden chairs, tugging at her fur-trimmed collar, hoping to urge the cool air to find her neck. In an effort to soothe herself, her mind replayed three simple words—one more day.
The absence of both Jon and Ned had been glaring as Dany entered the dining hall that evening, just
as the sun was beginning to set. In fact, there had been a glaring absence of many of the familiar
faces she'd been hoping to see. Catelyn and Bran were missing, as expected. But so were Sansa and
Jeyne, and even Sam. Daenerys did spot Robb and Margaery, who had been back to their old ways,
doe-eyed with arms interlocked. She thought it best not to intrude.

She scanned the hall once more hoping to spot a friendly face. That's when her gaze landed on Ser
Barristan Selmy, sitting alone. *It might be worth getting to know him*, Ned's voice replayed in her
mind. *He knew your parents well.*

Sighing, she reluctantly made her way over to the man.

"Arstan," she announced herself as he looked up from his plate, "Mind if I take a seat?"

"It would be my pleasure," his face immediately broke out into a smile. Because it was still relatively
early in the evening, the tables hadn't been properly filled in. So long as they kept their voices low,
she could easily glean details about his time with the Targaryens.

"I know very little about my parents," she started right in, wasting no time. "Lord Stark tries his best
to hush anyone who would mention my father, though I am very familiar with the Stark take on the
Mad King. And yet, growing up, Viserys assured me they were nothing but tall tales. I can't say I
know the Starks to be liars, however."

"Understandably. I'm afraid Viserys was well shielded from your father's... madness."

"So my father was mad?"

Barristan nodded his head solemnly as he took a swig of wine. "Your grandfather used to say that
greatness and madness were either side of the same coin. That the gods would gamble on each
Targaryen, tossing the coin into the air as the kingdom held its breath to see which side the fates had
chosen," he explained.

Dany's gaze dropped to the wooden table, unsure how to feel about her grandfather's observation.
Briefly, she wondered which way the coin had fallen for her, or for Jon. She didn't feel mad, but she
didn't feel any particular measure of greatness, either.
"I believed him, too, that is until your father had been held captive."

"Captive? " she asked, resting her elbows on the table and placing her head in her palms.

"Perhaps there had always been some indication of Aerys' madness, but it had only become fully realized after the months he'd endured as a prisoner in Duskendale."

"Was he tortured?"

"He was, Your Gr-" he caught himself, stealing a few glances to make sure it'd gone unnoticed, "My lady. I believe his time there was responsible for his reaching that breaking point."

Daenerys cringed at the cruelty of the world in which she lived, "So it's true what he did to Lord Stark's father and brother? With the... wildfire?"

"By the time that Aerys punished the Starks, he'd almost completely lost himself. He'd seen nearly everyone as his enemy, even his own son."

"Rhaegar?"

He nodded.

"What about Viserys?"

"As I said, we shielded the portly little boy from his father's wrath and wickedness as best we could. An easy task, as we were sworn to watch over him day and night."

"Portly? " she asked, in disbelief, her voice trailing off as she thought of her late brother, "Viserys was skin and bones..."

Barristan's eyes fell closed. Though he had been aware of the boy's fate, perhaps the imagery of a once-robust boy simply wasting away had been a bit much to bear.
This was her wedding gift from Ned? To learn that her father had, in fact, been a monster? Daenerys was left feeling a bit discouraged. Steering the subject a bit, she asked, "You knew my mother?"

Barristan's expression, somehow, became more grave, "I was there the day she and your father wed."

"I've been doing some thinking about that. They were siblings. I grew up more or less believing Viserys would become my husband, that it was a family tradition. After growing up here, in the north, I realize how taboo it is for family members to marry. I've read that Targaryens preserved bloodlines for the sake of dragons, but there are no more dragons," as she tried sorting out her thoughts aloud, she saw that the knight had looked just as confused by the tradition as she.

"Your parents wed for the sake of duty. I'm afraid there was no affection between them. Your grandfather was under the impression that the 'Prince that was Promised' would be born of their line. And so he forced them to wed against their will."

Dany's face scrunched up the way it had when she first tried Dornish wine. Similarly, the news left a sour taste in her mouth.

"What gave him that impression? Or was he mad, too?"

"A woods witch, I'm afraid."

"He forced his children to marry against their will because of some witch in the woods?"

"Not exactly," he let slip a soft chuckle. "It's another name for women who practice healing, mostly harmless. If only every Targaryen had had your healthy skepticism, my lady..." his voice trailed off, as if his mind were re-writing some version of history.

"You can call me Daenerys," she said, still holding her head up in her palms.

"Daenerys," he smiled, "Your brother also took the prophecies quite seriously."
"He did?"

"Rhaegar was something of an enigma. Nothing like your father. In fact, quite the opposite. If the coin landed madness side up for Aerys, it had undoubtedly bestowed greatness on his eldest son."

"Arstan," she interrupted, "Do you mind if we wait to discuss Rhaegar? I'd prefer Jon to be present."

The man raised an eyebrow curiously but did not press the matter further. Rather, he nodded in agreement.

"Rhaella. Tell me more of my mother," she breathed.

Barristan heaved a pained sigh, and Daenerys instantly regretted broaching the topic, assuming the tale wouldn't be an easy one to hear.

"Rhaella," he similarly breathed the woman's name. "She had the same long silver-blond hair as you. Though, her face was sadder. Perhaps it was only her life's reflection peering out from behind her eyes."

A moment of silence passed between them before the man continued, "Rhaella was in love with a knight from the Stormlands. Your grandfather brushed off her infatuation, not even bothering to consider the match as he was too low of birth for the King's daughter."

A sharp pain pierced Dany's heart in that moment. In less than a day's time, she would marry for love, a bastard, no less. The thought of being Jon's wife had brought her so much more joy than the thought of being a princess. Being a princess meant being exchanged like a pawn in someone else's game of politics and royalty, high and low births. This imaginary scale against which everyone was weighed had infuriated her—the freedom of one's own choice exceeded any measure of wealth or royalty.

"Did my parents grow to love each other?"

The knight looked deeply into her violet eyes, "It is to my everlasting shame that I had not done more to protect her from your father's wrath. Rhaella was a kind, dutiful woman. She deserved better."
"He *hurt* her?" Daenerys couldn't help the tears that crept to her waterline. Every moment she spent with her soon-to-be-husband, she felt loved and cared for. She could hardly imagine marrying someone who would abuse her.

"Aerys was the one thing we, who guarded Rhaella, could not protect her from."

The pain was clear on Ser Barristan's face. Now she'd understood. Lord Stark didn't bring him here just for her, it was also for the knight's sake. Though their connection had been one of shared tragedy, there were few who could understand the pain she'd endured as the last of her kind. Daenerys suddenly felt a little less alone. She reached out to squeeze the man's hand, feeling a bit foolish and naive in doing so. Something in his weathered face, the crows feet etched into the corners of his eyes and the way he seemed to recognize something deeper behind her eyes, it made her trust him.

The pair shared a smile for a brief instant before more horns sounded in the distance. Ser Barristan immediately rose, pulling his hood over his head. Slipping easily back into his role as a Targaryen protector, he escorted Daenerys out of the hall and toward the east gate.

Ned stood just beyond the gate greeting another round of visitors. *What in seven hells?* she wondered. Barristan reached out for Dany's shoulder to stop her, "They mustn't see me, my lady," he quickly explained, "But don't trust them. That man has been sneaking around King's Landing, colluding with the same man who helped fester your father's paranoia—the Spider. If he's here, that means the Spider has spies at Winterfell. *Be careful.*"

With that, he had gone, disappearing out of sight. Daenerys likewise drew her hood up over her silver hair as she approached the gate. She fell in line beside Jon, who already had a look of fury clear on his face as he eavesdropped. Lord Stark had been in the midst of turning the man away. On closer inspection, he'd been the most peculiar man she'd seen since leaving Braavos. Adorned in a bright, lavish robe, he had a head of thick shaggy hair and a full beard split into two braids.

The bearded man smiled at Ned, "We're simply here to drop off a wedding gift for the Targaryen girl, and we'll be on our way."

Ned folded his arms, though his expression gave nothing away, "What should the wedding of a disgraced highborn mean to a merchant from Essos?"

"The little birds sing songs from all over the kingdom, even the north," he sweetly said as he bowed his head. As Ned moved in closer to speak with him, their voices fell too silent to overhear.
"I don't like this at all," Jon whispered to Daenerys, his eyes flashing with anger, "I can smell his perfume from here. It reeks."

"Arstan suspects his presence here must mean there are spies at Winterfell, that he's not to be trusted," she whispered back.

That was enough for Jon to let out something of a low growl as he watched. Impatience, or perhaps anger, had gotten the best of him. He marched right over to get in the middle of it, as well. Jon, unlike Ned, gave much away with his emotions.

Scampering over to better hear their argument, Dany began to smell it, herself. Had someone dumped a barrel of perfume upon his head? she wondered. She began to breathe from her mouth rather than her nose to spare herself the sickening floral fumes.

"If this indeed concerns me, I'd like to be made aware of... whatever is going on here," she interrupted, or, at least tried to.

Jon had already been in the midst of loudly arguing with the man, "Why in seven hells would you just give these away to a woman you don't even know? They must be worth a fortune."

"My lord, I already have a fortune," the bearded man let loose a jolly laugh as he assured him, "Who better to receive dragon eggs than the Last Dragon, herself?"

"I'm no lord," Jon spat from a full-on snarl. "You know damned well I'm a bastard."

"Jon," Dany said his name in a tone she hoped sounded pleading. Dragon eggs? She wanted them. Badly.

He ignored her, seething at the man as Ned contently watched it unfold.

"Leave her with your gift if you must. But do so with the knowledge that you're not gettin' anything out of her. She owes you nothin'. Not money, not favors, not even any of her time," he growled at the man, a firm grip on his sword's pommel.
"Jon," Dany hissed.

"What?" he hissed back at her before turning to the bearded man once more, "And if she does choose to grant you her time, trust that I will be by her side, there to hear every word you say to her. I won't stand for you plantin' any ideas in her head for your own agenda, whatever it is."

"Forgive our manners, my lord," Dany piped up.

"There's nothin' to forgive," Jon spat, turning to face her. He'd had the same feral look about him that she'd only ever seen come out during their more carnal encounters. She'd never seen him this worked up before.

Dany dragged Jon aside by the arm, whispering, "I understand your hesitation, but these are dragon eggs, Jon. Let it go. I won't let anyone take advantage of me."

"I don't trust any man who smells more womanly than even my bride-to-be."

Dany shoved him with both palms, her face contorted with frustration, "Keep saying things like that and maybe I'll reconsider being your bride!"

"You know what I mean," he softened his tone immediately, realizing his misstep in taking his frustration out on her. Unfortunately, his voice had carried to the fragrant man despite Dany's efforts to keep him hushed. He gave Jon a knowing glare.

"You're right to be concerned, of course," he began, "But I mean no harm, only a kind gesture. The hour grows late, and I must head back to White Harbor, in any case. Thank you for your time, Lord Stark," he nodded to Ned before turning to Daenerys, "My lady," he bowed. His guards carried forth a small, dark wooden chest and left it in the mud.

Without another word, the bearded man boarded a small wooden carriage as his guards mounted their horses and lead the way down the King's Road. And just like that, they were gone.

Daenerys and Jon exchanged irritated looks with one another. She wasn't actually upset with him, but she would be if he threatened to take her eggs away. Though he had likely been right to assume
it was some sort of trick, if it were real? It would be worth the risk.

Ned motioned a pair of guards over to open the chest. As he waved everyone in the vicinity backward, Daenerys finally noticed just how many people had wandered over toward the gate to watch the spectacle. Most notably, Lady Olenna, who had been stroking her chin with narrowed eyes as she watched the guards open the chest.

It hadn't been a trick, after all, or at least, it didn't appear to be. Three large eggs poked out from inside the chest's interior. Hesitantly, she inched closer. Jon beat her to it, kneeling to better inspect them before she finished her approach. After he waved her in closer, she knelt beside him.

*Targaryen black,* she thought, immediately drawn to the dark egg on the left. Once lifting it, she was discouraged upon feeling the sheer weight of it. As the light caught the egg's scales, Dany saw flecks of red that disappeared as quickly as they had surfaced. *It must be my imagination,* she thought.

Jon waited until Daenerys had handled the eggs first before moving in to inspect the green egg to the right. He studied its bottom, where the texture had been rough and gritty. He then ran his fingers across the scales, back up toward the egg's apex, similarly transfixed by its beauty. The scales glinted in the fading sunlight as if they were made of emeralds.

A small note had peeked out from underneath the cream-colored egg in the center. Dany tugged the note from under its weight.

*From the Shadowlands beyond Asshai to the Last Dragon, herself. Though the centuries have turned the eggs to stone, may they still bring you awe and wonder.*

Dany's heart sank. They wouldn't be hatching after all. She examined Jon's face in that moment, and he looked similarly awestruck. As he set the green egg gently back inside the chest, she passed the note to him. His face had clearly shown that he'd run the same gamut of emotions. Disappointment washed over him, too, upon the realization these were just historical relics, of no real use.

Jon rose and began discussing the strange objects with his father. Daenerys tuned them out, still convinced the eggs had dynamic colors that responded to either touch or perhaps sunlight. Lord Stark assured them the chest would be delivered to Dany's room after a more thorough inspection for safety. She simply nodded, wandering back toward the dining hall as if in a daze.

Once inside, she found Ser Barristan looking rather uncomfortable as he leaned against a wall, arms
folded. He'd been waiting for her. Cautiously, she approached him once more, hoping to get some clarification about his warning and why she shouldn't trust the bearded man.

"Who is this *Spider* you warned me of?"

"King Robert's Master of Whispers," he fittingly kept his voice hushed, glancing around to make sure his words wouldn't carry. "His name is Varys, and he's something of a spymaster."

"And you believe that bearded man to be working for him?" she asked, as Jon finally made his way into the hall and found his spot beside her.

"I'd heard reports of a man fitting his description lingering around King’s Landing," he said, without so much as a second's hesitation upon the sudden inclusion of Jon. Dany couldn't help but smirk. If only Ser Barristan knew Rhaegar's son stood before him in this moment.

"And you're sure his presence here means there are spies at Winterfell?"

"News of your wedding a bastard should not have spread so quickly. Varys must have his little birds listening. If not here, then perhaps just outside of town."

"*Little birds?* " Jon asked, another snarl playing at the edge of his mouth.

"That's what he calls those who do his spying for him."

"I'm sorry, *who?*"

"Lord Varys," Daenerys replied. "The Master of Whispers to the *Usurper.*"

Jon growled again, stomping off toward the exit with intent.

"Jon?" she called after him.
"I will find them," he turned his head to assure her before leaving.

"You said this man had something to do with my father's paranoia?"

"The admittance of that foreign spymaster was like adding a piece of rotten fruit to the basket. It spread all throughout the small council, infecting your father the most."

She considered a moment, "And now this man advises a new King?"

Barristan simply nodded as Lord Stark fastly approached them. Ned requested a private audience with the knight. The pair of men left the hall together. With Jon gone, as well, Daenerys scanned the hall for another friendly face, coming up short. Her nerves had gotten the best of her, so she simply retired to her room, alone, without even eating supper.

She lie on her bed, flipping through the black leather book. Rather than read ahead without Jon, she scanned the crude illustrations of dragons mounted by dragonlords, all the while stealing glances at the chest full of eggs that had since been delivered to her room. Closing her eyes, she remembered her vivid vision of Dragonstone, and the three enormous winged beasts. Could it be? Daenerys willing slipped back into her dragon dream, this time trying to discern the colors of the beasts, but it was all a blur.

As she came to, she flipped back to the front of the book. Daenys the Dreamer. Her relative had correctly foreseen the destruction of Valyria. Her mind wandered to the Prince that was Promised, and the curious woods witch Ser Barristan had mentioned. Her eldest brother Rhaegar had been something of a hero to Viserys. Even Ned had assured Jon he was a good man. And now Ser Barristan had gone so far as to say that Rhaegar was the opposite of Aerys, even applying the term 'greatness' to the Prince with his coin-flipping metaphor. Prince, she thought. Rhaegar seemed of sound mind. And he took these prophecies to heart. Why?

Suddenly, she felt overwhelmed with the desire to know more. She wished the gods, or whoever, would grant her visions, as well. Daenerys the Dreamer, she smirked at the thought. The Prince would be born of the line of Aerys and Rhaella. Rhaegar's demise has surely ruled him out, Viserys, too. She had been the last of the children born of Aerys and Rhaella. Or perhaps not, she considered, remembering Jon had been Rhaegar's son. Perhaps this Promised Prince even stirred in her womb...

"It's probably just a bunch of rubbish," she reminded herself, aloud. Sighing, she closed the book and briefly held it to her heart. Though she tried her best, she couldn't stop thinking about her three gifts. She wandered over to the chest, lifting the lid to peek inside. She considered building a fire and letting the flames lick the scaly egg-shaped stones. What harm could it do, she wondered, if they had
Before she could carry out the plan, a small slip of paper slid underneath her door. Raising an eyebrow, she carefully grasped it with her fingers. A series of thudding footfalls sounded in the hallway, away from the door.

"Hmm," she hummed, squinting to read the messily-scrutched note.

Daenerys' face was overtaken with a wide smile upon recognizing Jon's handwriting.

_Come to the courtyard in your blue dress. Play along._

The last two words had been underlined. _Twice._

_What was he up to?_ Suddenly, she didn't feel tired at all, rather, she felt a pulsing sensation forming deep within her chest. It emanated outward and throughout each of her limbs, extending even to her fingertips. As she dressed, a sheen of sweat had freshly coated her forehead as well as her palms.

_Why am I nervous?_ she chided herself, realizing her hands had even begun to shake as she laced herself up. Something about the peculiar invitation, no, _insistence_, had set her on edge. After drawing her cloak around her shoulders, she set out into the darkness, curious as to what her intended had in store for her on the eve of their wedding. _Play along_, she reminded herself.

Cautiously approaching the courtyard, Daenerys spotted Jon pacing, half-hidden by a shadow. She spied him a moment, noticing two distinct changes in his appearance. First, his hair was cut a bit shorter than usual, and second, his scruff had been closely trimmed, as well. Something about these small changes made her feel even more nervous to approach him, like he was suddenly different, somehow.

He was clad mostly in leather, save for his black fur-trimmed cloak. _Black suits him_, she thought, as he dipped in and out of the shadow, ruffling his hair nervously. Jon stopped pacing, likely aware of her soft footsteps the closer her feet had carried her to where he stood. Dany's heart skipped a beat as he slowly turned to face her.
For those of you who are sick of the smut, you can more or less skip this chapter and move onto the next, or maybe skip to the dialogue at the end. (Also, how on Planetos did you make it this far?) :D For the rest of you, it's going to be awkward for a few minutes to begin with. Bear with me!

Pacing the courtyard, Jon began to feel a bit silly about his plan to seduce his intended. All day as he practiced his lines for the wedding, his mind kept unwillingly slipping back to his inappropriate memories of her, and two things stuck out to him.

_Let's never stop sneaking around_, she'd said inside the First Keep after having reduced him to a mere puddle. Surely, he could find any number of places around Winterfell to sneak around with Daenerys. However, another series of words echoed inside his head, in her voice. _You could've asked me to do it_, she'd said to him, when he had confessed resorting to a brothel in an attempt to discover what all the fuss had been about. Ever since she hinted that she'd been willing to let him simply take her had he asked, he'd been dreaming of alternate realities where he'd done just that.

Light footfalls sounded behind him. _Dany_. He exhaled before turning to face her.

"Daenerys Targaryen," Jon breathed her name, taking in the image of the most incredible woman he'd ever met. _She's not yours_, he coached himself into character. _You can barely speak in her presence._

Dany couldn't help but blush as she clasped her hands together tightly in front of her.

"A sight to behold," he whispered, shyly dragging his gaze over the length of her body before resting it in the stiffened mud at his feet.

"Jon ..." she began.

"If you'd listen just a moment, my lady," he interrupted her, extending his hand as if to halt her words, eyes still cast downward. "I know I don't normally possess the courage to muster a word in your presence..."
As he cautiously peered at her from below a furrowed brow, she stayed silent. Daenerys raised an eyebrow at him, still unsure what he was up to. He nervously looked away from her, the same as he'd always done growing up.

"But now that I'm headed off to the Night's Watch to swear an oath never to touch a woman for as long as I live... I thought it might be worth explorin' what I'd be giving up," he snuck another peek of her from under his thick lashes.

"And why should you divulge that sort of detail to me, a proper lady?" she snapped. Good girl, he thought, fighting the urge to grin as she played along.

"To be honest, I considered just goin' down to the brothel, but then I noticed the way you'd been staring at my lips..."

"How dare you insinuate my behavior has been anything other than pure and modest and-" she trailed off, all the while making sure her gaze hung on his pouty lips as she heaved her chest in faux outrage.

"You're right, my lady. I'm sure it was nothin' more than wishful thinking, that the most beautiful woman I've ever laid eyes on should ever have any interest in a mere bastard," he said, quite unable to peel his eyes from her breasts as her lungs raised them up with each inhale. That stare hadn't been acting on his part.

"Well, it's not that you're a bastard..." she assured him, moving just a bit closer.

"It's not?"

"I've always thought of you like a brother. No. That's not quite right, is it? Perhaps a nephew," she said, trying to stifle a giggle, and not doing a terribly good job of it.

Jon winced, his gaze dropping to the ground again as she moved closer, still. She wasn't making his game any easier. As he should've expected.

"I'll let you in on a little secret. That kind of excites me, Jon Snow," she breathed. "I've always had a
fantasy about my *nephew* taking me atop his shoulder and whisking me away..."

"Always? You've *always* had that fantasy?" he asked, unenthused, looking her square in the eye as he broke character.

"Maybe not always. Just ever since I had a dream about it."

"A *dream*?" he frowned, "Well, what did this *nephew* of yours look like?"

"An awful lot like *you*, actually. The same pouty lips, dark eyes, dark tangled hair..."

Jon blushed for a moment, unsure how to continue his game. He thought he'd simply act out the scenario she'd hinted at, that she'd say yes the way she'd assured him she would have, had he the courage to have actually done so...

"Ask me again, *Jon Snow*. I might've reconsidered your request."

"Um," he stammered, "I think the moment's passed."

"*Nonsense*. Ask me."

Despite all of the times he'd been in complete control of her, he'd suddenly felt nervous. He met her unflinching gaze with his signature expression of a skittish pup.

"Your *vows*. You wanted to ask me if I'd assist you in trying something against your Night's Watch vows," she pressed him further.

"I, um..." he kept stammering, unable to find the words.

"I'm just a *maid*, *Jon Snow*. Never once touched by a man... you'll have to explain to me what you're asking me to do before I make a decision. In *detail*."
"Dany..." Jon truly had regressed into his younger self, unable to muster more than a word or two in front of her, utterly intimidated.

"Excuse me? Don't you mean my lady? Dany is too familiar for the likes of a bastard," she growled, "Apologize to me."

"I'm sorry, my lady," he stumbled over his words. What a mess this had become.

She sighed, "You're going off to Castle Black. And soon. Don't tell me you don't have the courage to ask me. After tonight, you may never see me again."

Jon closed his eyes. Why was this so difficult? He knew they'd end up tumbling around together, just as they'd done most nights. But something prevented him from putting words to his request, as if Dany really had been a mere maid. Suddenly, he cringed, remembering how he'd tried to flirt with her the night of the royal feast. A delicate flower, he'd called her. Somehow, his blood had managed to stain his face an even deeper red. This was not going to plan.

She kept pushing him all the same, "Were you asking me to relieve you of your chastity, Jon Snow?"

Again, his eyes fell closed. He focused on any sensual memory he'd had of her, compromised in some way. Pulling each image forth of her frightened or unsure violet eyes, completely at his mercy, luring the wolf back to the surface.

It had been enough to give him the small feral spark he'd needed. "That's one way of puttin' it," he'd confidently said. Finally.

"What's another way of putting it?" she countered, taken aback a bit by his sudden shift in demeanor.

He stepped closer to her, so close that her breasts brushed against his chest whenever she took a deep enough breath. And so, she kept right on taking exaggerated breaths.

"Daenerys Targaryen, I was wondering if there was any chance you'd let me fuck you tonight," he gruffly whispered into her ear.
Without a moment's hesitation, Daenerys raised her hand and slapped Jon across the face. *Hard.* The sound had even carried through the courtyard. Instinctively, he rubbed away the stinging sensation she'd left behind.

Taking a moment to study her eyes, Jon couldn't quite tell whether she had been merely acting her part or whether she was genuinely upset with him. She hadn't budged an inch, her breasts still bumping against his chest, even more-so now that she was visibly agitated. *It must just be acting,* he assured himself, *she'd never hurt me.*

And so, he continued, staring down at her with a dark and penetrating gaze, "You'd be the first and the last woman I'd ever know or touch."

Jon had been playing his part, but his words had rung true, and they'd landed on her perfectly. Her eyelids slumped just as her shoulders had, the girl had looked positively intoxicated. He wondered whether this would've been her genuine reaction upon hearing such a lewd request, but after all, it needn't be perfectly recreated.

"You have some *nerve,* Jon Snow," she snarled between quivering lips. Dany gathered her skirts in her fists before running toward a nearby stone archway, slipping right into the shadows. Jon listened a moment, certain she hadn't gone past the darkness. He followed after her, trying to hide his smile. This had been even more fun than he'd anticipated.

"You didn't make it very far," he noted, drawing closer to her shaded figure.

Wordlessly, Dany simply looked up at him, eyes glassy against the mixture of moon and torch light seeping in from either side of the archway, only just. The same dim light revealed the slickness of her lips, she must've just licked them. Had they not been playing a game, he would've moved in to kiss her.

"Have I upset you, my lady?"

Slowly, she shook her head. He'd noticed the dilation of her pupils had nearly engulfed the violet of her eyes in the darkness, making her seem even more unearthly than usual.

Jon raised an eyebrow curiously, reaching out to place his palm against the stone wall behind her, "What's got your tongue?"
Dany brought a hesitant hand up to his chest, clenching the leather tightly in her fist. Tugging him into her as closely as she could manage, she raised herself up onto her toes. Their lips brushing together as she spoke, "You."

True to form, the kiss had been a bit clunky as their tongues came together, hastily clashing against each other with the same urgency as the first time their mouths had met. Far too soon, she broke from the kiss, wiping the mixture of their saliva from her mouth's circumference, "Maybe I have been staring at your lips, Jon Snow. What of it?"

"What of it? You just kissed me!" he wanted to laugh at the absurdity, though by this point, he'd been pretty good at biting his tongue.

"A kiss is just a kiss. What makes you think you should get to simply take my maidenhead from me?"

Jon couldn't help but wince, for some reason he hated the term, finding it either a bit crude or distasteful, maybe both. Brushing off the discomfort it gave him, he reminded her, "Oh, I won't be taking anything from you."

"So that's not what you're after?"

"I didn't say that, either, my lady," he smirked.

"You're testing my patience, Jon Snow."

"I won't be taking it because you're going to offer it to me."

"Quite unlikely," she snapped, folding her arms.

"You just have to let me kiss you first," he confidently declared.

"You've already kissed me, Jon Snow, and I've made you no offers," Dany replied, unimpressed with his tactic.
Feeling cocky, Jon placed both palms against the stone on either side of her head, trapping her between his arms. After inching toward her, he brushed his nose against hers before saying "Not here," and placing a quick kiss on her lips.

"Then where?" she asked with a barely audible whisper, letting her arms fall limply to her sides.

Jon boldly brought his knee up to push her thighs apart enough to emphasize his point, "You know where," he whispered back.

Try as she might, the girl couldn't repress her whimper. Feeling victorious, Jon leaned in to kiss her once more, only to be halted by the sudden pressure of two small, white fingers against his lips.

"No," she whined before bringing her hands to his shoulders. "Not there," Dany bit her lip as she pushed down hard on the fur of his cloak, willing him to his knees. Though it was dark, Jon's face flushed so hard it felt like he'd been branded.

"Here," she ran a hand over her groin once he was on his knees before her. In the middle of the archway? he wondered, feeling nonetheless compelled to obey her as he always had.

His hands shook as he lifted her skirts up and over his head. Underneath the fabric, Dany shifted her weight between legs, perhaps also feeling nervous. As he tugged at the laces of her breeches, he reconciled the risky action, convincing himself everyone had, in fact, been asleep. Not the guards, his rationality reminded him as he inched the fabric down her legs. He chose to ignore it, as one might be prone to do whilst under a lady's skirt.

It had been dark enough outside this night, particularly and under the arch, though it was pitch black underneath the fabric. Now salivating, he'd been able to follow the aroma right to her cunt with his nose, alone. His aim had proved impeccable, tongue slipping easily between the silky heat of her lips, kissing her the same way he would her mouth. He fought the urge to begin sucking, knowing it to be the quickest way to reduce her to delirium, though he wasn't sure he'd have known to do that the first time. This was something he'd indulged in so often, the specifics had become something of a blur, but he tried to keep it authentic.

Small hands had traveled to the back of his head. She'd held it in place as she thrust against him, painting his face from nose to chin with her arousal and blocking his nostrils from aiding his lungs. Her curls, wet from both his saliva as well as herself, chafed against his skin; the scruff of his jaw had likewise chafed her slick thighs. He broke from his kiss only to breathe as needed, the turbid mist
of each exhale hung in the trapped air around him.

The moment he'd applied suction, it was over for her. Unable to support her own weight any longer as a deep shudder overtook her, she nearly crushed his neck had he not been quick enough to catch her by the hips. Still, he kept on working, delighting in the disarray of her poorly muffled cries. Finally, she stepped away from him with one leg, pulling the other to its side. As her skirts dragged across his back, Jon found his way out of the tent of fabric. He took in as much of the cool night air as his lungs would allow.

"Stand up, I think I hear someone," she managed to slip between breaths, sloppily tugging her breeches up from over the fabric of her skirt.

Jon obeyed her again, rising on wobbling legs as the blood flowed back into his sore knees.

"Quickly, let's go to my room," he suggested, taking her hand.

For just a moment she considered arguing, until she heard the unmistakable clinking noise of a guard approaching. With her hand clasped in his, the pair ran toward the keep, allowing themselves a moment to catch their breath between fits of laughter before heading inside.

Upon entering his room, Jon couldn't remember the last time he'd actually slept there. Depending on how things went for the remainder of their night, it may be his last night there. How perfect it had been that she'd followed him inside one last time, a swan song apt for the room he'd silently suffered in more often than not over the years.

He kept quiet, unsure whether they'd still been in the midst of the playful charade, or whether they were back to being themselves, just Dany & Jon. As he waited for her to make the decision, he moved to open his shutters, letting a bit of moonlight inside. The dull ray had illuminated her, dust catching the light and falling around her like snow. He couldn't help but stare. With mussed hair and cheeks aflush, she'd had the familiar drained expression, or rather, lack of expression after having reached her summit only moments ago.

"Now you've given me your kiss, and still I've made no offers," she folded her arms.

"In fairness, I was interrupted," he said with a smirk, "But you know what they say."
"No. What do they say?"

"Never assume," he breathed. The game had been unfair, suddenly stacked against her, in a sense. Though he'd only kissed her a moment, he knew full well the longer she dragged it out, the more her body would ache for him, only one way to truly pacify her craving. She was bound to give in, and soon.

Jon managed his way out of the straps beneath his cloak, pulling it over his head. Next, he unlaced his doublet, showing a bit too much of his torso as the fabric caught on the leather once he peeled it off. Even though he'd since adjusted his clothing, Dany's eyes made no effort to mask her hunger. A predatory gaze all her own, threatening to devour him whole.

"And why should you get to do all the kissing?" she asked, frustrated. After moving closer to him, she took his bottom lip between her teeth. Jon tried to initiate a kiss. "Not there," she playfully reminded him before placing a quick peck on his lips. Her hand was warm through the fabric of his tunic, moving from his chest, down his abdomen and finally brushing against his groin.

"Here," she breathed, wrapping her hand around his erection through his trousers, and gripping it hard.

Jon's breath caught in his throat, the sensation had fallen somewhere between pain and gratification. Too suddenly her hand had left him before she used it to spin him around, willing his backward steps. She'd had his trousers unlaced even before pinning him against the wall. As his back hit the stone, she dropped to her knees, pulling him out just above his laces and immediately taking his cock into her mouth. Watching for a moment in disbelief, Jon realized that somewhere along the way he'd simply stopped breathing. His body still couldn't decide whether to breathe or groan first as her wet tongue swished against his skin.

Only in hearing the anguish in his voice as he expelled the now-ancient air, had he realized how overwrought he'd been. Unable to stand still, his body had reacted to her as if it had been the first time her mouth had ever found him. He couldn't keep still. The usual ache for her had presented itself in the moment as a sweet sort of pain; which would ebb before a rush of ecstasy came flooding in, keeping pace with the movements of her greedy mouth. A different kind of torment had found him then as a cramp sent a stinging sensation straight through his neck—he must've been pressing himself too hard into the wall without realizing.

After letting something of a grumble slip from his mouth, Dany pulled away from him with a worried look, "Did I hurt you?"
He considered her words as he stopped rubbing his neck, bringing his hands down to help pull her up to her feet, "You might've, but it depends on your answer."

"You're a strange one, Jon Snow," she teased, trying to decipher his wounded expression.

Realizing that in both his actual reality and the parallel one they'd been acting out, it'd be the last chance he'd get to ask, he wrapped his hands gently around the back of her neck, pressing his forehead to hers. "Marry me, Daenerys," he begged her, certain that any reality in which he knew her, he'd be begging her all the same.

"A proposal of marriage after only a few short moments between my lips," she sweetly giggled, "Just imagine the things I could convince you to do after a few moments more..."

"Anything at all," he whispered, massaging the soft skin behind her ears with his thumbs, and letting his fingers roam all along her scalp.

The simple touch had already shaken free the grip on her composure, "Anything ?" her voice trembled as she challenged him, "Even if I never offer to let you deflower me?"

"Even if," he proclaimed in a raspy whisper.

Dany retrieved one of his hands from her neck before guiding him toward his bed. Once she'd made it to his bedside, she pulled off her boots before peeling her breeches off and kicking them to the side. She sat down on the edge of the bed, tugging her skirts up to her knees as he coyly observed.

"Sure looks like you're offerin'," he said, taunting her.

"I suggest you take me up on it before I change my mi-" she'd attempted to say before Jon's face crashed into hers, willing her further onto his bed as he climbed atop her. It helped that she'd left him exposed and hanging out of his trousers, he'd managed to slip inside of her before either of them could fully grasp what had happened.

Dany's eyes shot open, a cry hitched in her throat. For a moment, Jon thought he might've hurt her. That is, until she compressed his body between her legs as they closed around his waist, urging him further inside. Their bodies lunged together in a discordant rhythm. Both made an effort to take it slow, and both had failed miserably. Dany increased her momentum, using her legs to crush him into
her, right to the hilt. Though their first time had been gentler than whatever chaos they'd currently descended into, he knew he wouldn't last much longer even though they'd barely begun. Quite authentic for their little game.

Jon had already exerted himself trying to shove against the force of her locked legs. Similarly, she slid her hands over his back, clapping them tightly, smothering herself with his weight. Still, he fought against her restrictions before she'd enacted the final restraint. Jon's head fell into the silver net of her hair after she clenched her muscles inside as tightly as she could. She'd managed to grip his skin so hard it sent welcome waves of pain through his entire body with each thrust. With a staggered pace, he pitifully whimpered into her hair as he came. Though he couldn't tell while buried in her hair, she'd been wearing a triumphant smile.

Still unmercifully trapped as he tried to pull away, he pleaded through a laugh, "Dany, I can hardly breathe."

She let out an exaggerated sigh before unlocking her limbs, allowing him to slide next to her as he caught his breath.

"That wasn't very maid-like," he chuckled.

"I'll have you know, Jon Snow, that was my first time," she said, meeting his very skeptical gaze. "My first time since the last time, anyway," she couldn't help but giggle.

Jon joined in, wrapping her hair around his fingers, gently tugging at it to draw her forehead to his. She whispered, "I don't know what overcame me. I just wanted you closer to me."

"Oh, I wasn't complainin'," he reminded her.

"Jon?" Dany's voice had become too serious all of a sudden.

His stomach dropped at the shift in tone, "What is it, Dany?"

"You skipped supper tonight because you went off to find the little birds... did you have any luck?"
"I was hoping you wouldn't ask about that," he admitted.

"Why not?"

"I don't want you to worry about anything other than meetin' me in the godswood tomorrow."

"I can't help but worry," she said in a small voice.

"If there were anything to worry about, I would not hesitate to tell you," he promised.

Sighing, she agreed, "I'll let it go for now, but only because I trust you."

"I trust you, too," he smiled, eyes already fluttering as he fought the urge to drift off.

"I should probably go," Dany sighed once more, making a half-hearted attempt to leave.

"You should stay a while," he pleaded, gently tugging at her wrist in protest as she moved away from him. It didn't take much convincing to keep her in his bed. Leaning down, she tugged him back into his trousers before lacing them up. Laughter broke from his mouth as she squirmed from the touch. His ticklish reaction had given Dany an intense look of admiration as she watched him calm back down. They lay together, exchanging smiles. Jon willed his eyes open for as long as he could manage until they fluttered closed a final time. That night, he fell asleep with Dany's soft hands gently stroking his hair.
There had only been two sounds Jon could hear—the percussion of his heartbeat to the melody of his whirring blood. Positioned next to the heart tree, his only task, as he waited, had been trying to keep his heart from climbing into his throat. Each irregular beat rattled in his chest as if his heart were jumping up, aiming straight for his airway. Unable to remember how to stand still, he fought against the combined forces, hoping to regain some control of his own body. Hoping that, to the onlookers, he'd at least appeared relaxed. Judging by their worried expressions, he hadn't.

One by one, the guests had come into the godswood, sorting themselves out as they stood across the dark pool from him. Sam stood beside Margaery, whose arm was threaded around Robb's. Before them had stood Arya, tightly holding onto Rickon's hand. And to their side, Sansa had been arm in arm with Jeyne Poole. Even Theon came to see the ceremony, standing next to Jeyne a respectful distance, arms clasped behind his back. Behind them stood Hodor, Barristan Selmy, Howland Reed, Jory and Rodrik Cassel. Jon was surprised when he spotted Maester Luwin rushing in to join the lineup of men. Catelyn might've been there, but Jon would've rather she stayed at Bran's side, anyway.

The morning and afternoon were lost to time, all Jon had remembered of them had been the distinct lack of Daenerys, and the desperation to steady his breath. For hours he'd been far too aware of the need to intake air, and release it all the same. The awareness of an otherwise passive activity had been exhausting. By now, he'd felt dizzy. Or perhaps it was that he couldn't bring himself to eat—he'd had no appetite, and there'd be no way to get food past the lump in his throat. No matter how much he swallowed, it wouldn't budge.

What is happening to me? he wondered, examining his shaking palms and fingers, now slick with sweat, thanks to his nerves. Previously, Jon had felt sure he'd been prepared for this moment, that it'd be no big deal. Had it been the way his family and friends spilled into the godswood this evening, all lining up to watch him? Had it been the gods peering out from the reddened eyes of the weirwood? Was there some sort of secret fear Daenerys had changed her mind, that she wouldn't show? Gods, no, he berated his mind for bothering to wander down that path. She's coming. She'll be here.

Jon closed his eyes, sinking his teeth into his bottom lip to keep it from quivering. Must every inch of me be beyond my control? Just a few more moments, and then she'd be his, before his loved ones, before the gods. The silver-haired siren whose sharp mind could cut right through the mediocre wit of nearly any noble lord or lady; whose kindness knew so few bounds and which sought to quell the indifference nobility felt toward those deemed 'lesser'. Aerys, her father, may have been mad, but all he'd done is imbue her with the Targaryen greatness he, himself, had lacked. Her fairness almost served as a distraction from the goodness of her heart. Admittedly, Jon had always been taken with her otherworldly beauty, but he'd always been certain it simply radiated outward, originating somewhere deep within. And she'd be his.
The more he thought of her, the internal dissonance plaguing Jon had faltered. However, upon opening his eyes once more, the capricious nature of his nervousness began, again, to unravel him. Jon's dark eyes, unblinking, had rested upon the ethereal vision that was Daenerys Targaryen. She was breathtaking, as in, she'd quite literally taken his breath from him as her ghostly figure drifted closer. Arm in arm with Ned, she moved along the betrodden path of fallen leaves. His hand found its way to his chest to nurse his fatigued heart as his eyes swept over her. A milk-colored dress blooming beneath alabaster skin, the snow-white cascade of waves beneath a braided crown. Like a queen.

Her mouth had split into a smile as she coaxed a reassuring glance out of Ned, who patted the small white hand against his arm. As she turned her head, Jon noticed the small red rubies clasped at the gathered ends of her braids. The light that broke through the clouds had spilled into the godswood between swaying leaves, flickering against her like a candle's flame, but with a cold white light.

Now that she'd drawn near enough, he could see her lips had also quivered as they framed her pearly teeth. Jon hadn't realized he'd been wearing his own wide smile until he felt the ache at the corners of his mouth. The familiar heat had gathered in his cheeks, certain his own face had been as rosy as Dany's, if not more so. Finally, she'd planted her feet before him, perfectly efflorescent against the backdrop of ancient foliage; though it had all been a blur. Spilled pigments on an artist's palette, ranging from white, to green, to red. Violet irises dragged from his feet to his tangled hair, before finally wading into the dark pools of his eyes. Please don't wake up, please don't wake up, Jon chanted in his head, still unsure how his luck had ever forged such an untarnished moment.

"Who comes before the gods?" Robb's voice confidently boomed from beside him. In his distraction, Jon hadn't noticed Robb had moved toward him. For all he knew, his brother had appeared out of thin air.

"Daenerys of House Targaryen comes here to be wed, begging the blessings of the gods," Ned's voice likewise echoed off of the wall of trees. "Who comes to claim her?"

Jon gulped, attempting to shake himself from his reverie, though he couldn't find his voice. She's waiting, he coached himself. Once the girl's eyebrows furrowed together in a look of fear, he managed to clear his throat, jostling the lost words back to his tongue.

"I do," his voice shook, nowhere near as confidently as Robb's, or Ned's, for that matter. Once Dany's sighed in relief, he'd found a bit more conviction for his next words.

"Jon Snow," he simply said, for he'd had no house to claim himself to. At least not safely. "I claim her," his gruff voice had finally bounced off of the bark and back to his ears.
"Who gives her?" Jon asked, turning to Ned. Though, he felt awfully silly as he already knew full well who was giving her away. *It's for the gods, not for me*, he reminded himself, to help keep his composure.

"Eddard of House Stark, her guardian," Ned replied as he turned to her, "Lady Daenerys, will you take this man?"

"I take this man," she breathed, without so much as a moment of silence cushioning the space between Ned's words and her own. Hearing her certainty had felt like succumbing to the effects of a drug, sending his head swirling as if inebriated.

Jon pushed the air from his lungs before drawing more back inside, though no amount made him feel as though he'd caught his breath. He took her hands into his own, and on shaking legs, he knelt with her before the heart tree. Willing his eyes closed, Jon bowed his head, submitting before the gods who peered at them from behind the carved, weeping eyes of the weirwood. From every angle, he could feel gazes upon him. In any other context, it might be unnerving, though for the first time all day, he felt comforted.

Silently, he prayed to the gods. Not so much with words, but rather, with memories, with feelings. He thought of the crushing loneliness he felt before attempting to run away north, followed by the warmth that Daenerys had enkindled within him, slowly engulfing him ever since. Nothing in all of Westeros had made as much sense to him as he and Daenerys. She'd understood him, sought to make him better, and he sought to make himself better because of her. Before her, he wasn't sure he'd ever allowed himself the luxury of appreciating his own character or taking pride in the traits he'd honed. Daenerys had been the first person to truly see beyond the stigma of his bastardy, as if she saw straight into his core and pulled from him the truth.

Feeling a tugging sensation on his fingers, he opened his eyes to see Daenerys preparing to rise. Quickly, he rose with her, clammy hands still clasped together. Even his arms began to visibly shake as he removed her cloak—heavy dark grey wool with a black fur trim, emblazoned with a dull-red leather dragon. The sigil had been all wrong, but perhaps whoever had crafted it had been unfamiliar with the original. It even had just one head, rather than three. It looked almost like the Lannister sigil of an upright lion, but with wings. Targaryen history had, after all, been something of a taboo at Winterfell, so the strange sigil came as no surprise.

For a moment, Jon felt it wrong to remove such a cloak from Daenerys for two reasons. First, she was keeping the name Targaryen, and second, *it had already been the right one*. He handed the cloak off to Robb, who draped it over his arm before handing Jon its replacement. Fastened in its place had been a cloak of lighter grey wool with white fur trim, the head of a white direwolf at its center. It had reminded him of Ghost, and naturally, he smiled.
Jon and Daenerys stared into each other's eyes once he'd finished the transition. A rogue tear had escaped his eye, though his finger had managed to catch it just before it reached his cheek, wiping it away. Dany, on the other hand, had no qualms about the two streams that ran along either side of her face. Jon brought his hand to her cheek, using a thumb to wipe her tears away as he smiled down at her. He had no qualms, either, he just wanted an excuse to touch her skin.

The small crowd of spectators began to softly applaud, causing the newlyweds to flush even further. Sansa and Jeyne clasped hands, and began to sing a somber song, "I loved a maid as fair as summer, with sunlight in her hair," the girls sang in vibrato, their voices quivering as they fought against tearing up, themselves.

Feeling a sudden and unfamiliar gaze upon him, Jon's eyes broke away from Dany's. Just beyond the small gathering of guests, he spotted Jojen Reed standing between the figures of two wolves, sitting perfectly still to either side of him. Ghost, of course, and Summer.

"I loved a maid as red as autumn, with sunset in her hair," they sang.

Jojen's voice replayed in his mind. He has the ability to travel inside of Summer, the boy's words echoed. Brandon doesn't just dream it. He can do it at will. Another round of tears had welled in Jon's eyes as he thought of his little brother. Had Bran made it, after all?

"I loved a maid as white as winter, with moonglow in her hair."

The lyric had been a perfect fit for his bride, dressed head to toe in white. Jon waited a moment, willing his arms to stop shaking. Calm down, he reminded himself. You've made it through. Even the gods know you are hers and she, yours. Convincing his lungs to cooperate, he took several deep breaths before the final step. It was the best his body could offer given his current situation, so it'd have to do.

"Ready?" he asked Daenerys with a wide smile.

She nodded her head excitedly, lifting her arm so he'd have an easier time scooping her up into his. As he cradled her, Jon very carefully stepped across the fallen leaves, making his way slowly over the uneven terrain so as not to drop his wife. Once they were safely on the even ground of the courtyard, Jon's pace became more brisk.
"Am I too heavy?" Daenerys asked, likely noticing Jon was huffing a bit by this point.

"You're perfect," he assured her, though his voice was strained, and they'd only been about halfway there.

"Are you happy?" she asked him.

"I've never been happier, Daenerys," he whispered. She wrapped her arms around his neck, hoping to more evenly distribute her weight in his arms.

"Nor have I been happier, husband," she whispered into his ear.

Jon's face flushed upon hearing the word leave her lips. The heat of her breath against his neck nearly sent his eyes to the back of his head. However, his fear of dropping her prevented just that.

As they neared the great hall, Daenerys pleaded with him, "You can put me down now."

Carefully, Jon lowered her onto her feet, letting his hands linger on the stiff fabric at her waist, wishing they'd been alone so he could let his hands roam freely. Doing so with a physical touch may have been too inappropriate, but until the others caught up, he let his gaze penetrate her in a way that punctured her composure. He'd left her with a drunken sort of look beneath a pair of heavy eyelids.

"Save that for later," she commanded him breathlessly. Jon did his best to blink away his sultry gaze, but left behind a devious smirk. He couldn't help it.

The great hall had already been dressed in candles, the warm light flickered against the ground just beyond the entrance. Even the sound of chatter and live music had already carried outside, along with the scent of the roasted meats and baked breads. The pair waited for their wedding guests to meet them before entering, themselves.

Robb and Margaery were the first to approach them, breaking their clasped arms to embrace the newly wed couple.

"Lucky bastard," Robb laughed, clapping Jon on the back after a tight hug. He couldn't help but
"You must be the most beautiful bride the gods have ever seen, Daenerys," Margaery said, rocking back and forth as she squeezed her friend.

Jon wondered a moment, whether Robb and Margaery would wed before the old gods or the new. By this point, he was pretty sure they would be wed some day. Before he could dwell on the thought, the pair passed into the great hall, giving some of the other guests a chance to congratulate the husband and wife.

Rodrik and Jory were next, first shaking Dany's hand politely, and then clapping Jon on the back the same way Robb had done. Jeyne Poole threw her arms around Daenerys, who stumbled back a bit, laughing as she hugged her young friend. Theon moved in for an awkward handshake. Jon dodged it, and went in for a hug. Perhaps they didn't always get along, but so far as he was concerned, they were family.

As Sansa approached, Dany lifted her skirts enough to run to the girl, causing more of a collision than an embrace as her train trailed behind her. Jon couldn't tell what the girls had been saying to each other, to him, it sounded only like high-pitched squealing. Nevertheless, he found it rather adorable.

"Congratulations, Jon," Sam awkwardly moved in for a hug, "I'm glad I stayed."

"Me, too," Jon said, patting him on the back. "We'll be inside shortly," he assured Sam, who didn't do so well in crowds.

"Wait!" Dany yelled, running over to him and throwing her arms around his neck. "I'm happy you were here, Sam," she said, as a crying Sansa wordlessly wrapped herself around Jon, sobbing into his cloak. He stroked her back to soothe her. After a moment, she broke away with a smile, wandering into the hall as well.

From out of nowhere, Rickon ran up to Dany, holding three long-stemmed winter roses, thrusting them up to her as far as his height would allow. Dany knelt just a bit to hug the boy as she thanked him, "Rickon, these are simply beautiful! Where'd you find them?"

"The glass garden," the boy explained. "Arya said they're Jon's favorite!"
Dany raised an eyebrow at her husband, "You have a favorite flower?"

"I guess I do," he said, his mouth hanging open as Arya approached them. How had she known? Rickon wandered over to Jon, who ruffled his hair before lifting him up for a quick squeeze.

Arya stood there, arms folded, waiting her turn. She still seemed upset. After setting Rickon down, Jon moved closer to his little sister, raising a hand to ruffle her hair, too. Her arms dropped to her side in submission, her expression relaxed into her usual smirk.

"C'mere, you," Jon said, motioning for Arya to jump up into his arms the way she'd always done. Luckily he'd planted his feet firmly on the ground, for Arya had managed a bit of running start before crashing into him. The pair broke into a fit of laughter.

"Oof," Dany said, as Arya climbed onto her shoulders from Jon's. "You're growing like a weed, Arya!"

"Am not!" she spat, finding footing on the ground once more before running into the hall, laughing.

"Hodor," the giant man smiled as he chased after the kids, joining them inside for the feast.

Luwin was next to approach, simply offering congratulations and a slight bow of his head. The pair bowed back as they thanked him. It was about as emotional as they'd ever seen the stoic man get. Still, Jon was happy the Maester had managed to attend.

Ned had then escorted their special guests, Howland and Barristan, who offered polite handshakes and congratulations, though the expressions on the faces of the newlyweds had implied much deeper gratitude for the pair of men. Jon was happy to have met Howland, feeling it was as close as he'd ever come to meeting Lyanna. Though he'd only spoken a handful of words to Barristan, he couldn't help but trust the man, perhaps because he knew Daenerys had.

The men moved through the entrance to the hall, leaving Ned outside alone with Jon and Dany. First, he moved to Daenerys, leaning down as he embraced her. Ned whispered something in her ear that had been lost on Jon. When his father pulled away from his wife, he could see another tear making its way down Dany's face, though he was smiling.

"Thank you, Ned," she sighed before wiping it from her cheek.
He then moved to Jon, extending his arm for a handshake. Of all the people Jon had hugged tonight, he'd hoped Ned would've been one of them. Reluctantly, Jon extended his hand to grasp Ned's. His father simply laughed, tugging Jon's hand forward before wrapping his arms around the boy as he stumbled. "Congratulations, son," he quietly said before patting him on the back. Rather than entering the hall, Ned wandered off toward the great keep, likely to check on Bran and Catelyn. *I hope you're well, Bran,* Jon thought to himself.

Just as he tried to muster the courage to enter the feast thrown partially in his honor, Dany held her hand out to stop him, nodding toward the direction of the godswood.

Jojen Reed had been approaching, and for the first time, he didn't feel a sense of foreboding upon seeing the boy. "I trust you kenneled our wolves," Jon sternly said, a statement rather than a question.

The boy only nodded, offering a hint of a smile.

"Bran?" he asked, hoping it was the reason Jojen had brought Summer to the godswood.

"I can't be certain he was in there," he confessed, "But I thought I'd at least let Summer out had Bran been... traveling."

"Thank you, Jojen," Jon's tone was somber as he tried not to dwell on the state of his younger brother. The boy simply bowed his head before brushing past them to join his family inside.

By now the sky had sufficiently darkened. Grey clouds had rolled in, closing out the sunlight like a window's shutters. Jon smiled down at his bride, still wondering how any of this had come to be, still half-convinced he'd wake up at Castle Black, nearly frozen or concussed.

"I can't believe you're real," he blurted, staring at the seemingly intangible beauty of his bride.

Daenerys moved closer to him, "What can I do to convince you?"

Looking around, Jon could only spot a few guards patrolling in the distance. "Kiss me," he whispered.
She floated over to him, wearing a wide grin. Her hands slipped around his waist, traveling slowly up his back before wrapping around his shoulders. Pulling him closer to her, she lifted herself up on tiptoes to press her warm lips to his. Jon wrapped his arms around her, enjoying the cool sensation of her silky hair as it slipped between his fingers. Dany's hands abandoned his shoulders in favor of his hair, as well. She dragged her nails across his scalp, knowing just how to rile him up.

Just as their kiss became a little too heated, Robb called out to them, "Really? You two can't wait until after the feast?"

The pair pushed apart, gasping for air as if they'd just broken the ocean's surface.

"Come on, then," he waved them over, "Your guests are waiting on you."

Chapter End Notes

Yes, there was a wedding, and no, no one died. Allow my preemptive apology to those of you that it disappoints :P
Perhaps it was her state of elation tinting her vision, but the great hall had been the most glorious Daenerys had ever seen it. It seemed to stretch open further than the castle walls could allow for, lined with faces both foreign and familiar, all staring in her direction as she entered alongside her husband. With a quickening pulse, she shielded her eyes beneath thick lashes as the dinner guests began to applaud them. Before letting her gaze fall upon the stone tiles, she'd seen a frightening amount of food piled up on the tables between pitchers of wine.

Naively, she thought the night would be easier once the wedding was over, though the actual ceremony had been only their closest family and friends. With fingers bent under the pressure of Jon's hand clasped around hers, she felt some measure of reassurance despite being the center of attention. Virtually every warm body around Winterfell, save for those tending to Bran, had all gathered to feast in celebration of she and Jon joining together in matrimony. An array of goblets rose in the air, some clinking together as the applause died down, giving way to the low thrum of solemn stringed instruments.

As the pair stood there frozen and bewildered, Margaery had finally spotted them. She quickly sprinted over, dragging Robb closely behind her, a mischievous sort of look on her face.

"Did you have something to do with all of this?" Dany's jaw hung slack in surprise as she generally gestured to the hall's interior.

Margaery let Robb's hand fall from hers in favor of Dany's free hand, "Not me. My grandmother and my father helped plan the feast."

"Your grandmother? She doesn't even like me."

The girl laughed in a way that made Dany feel small. "Of course she likes you. She appreciates anyone with a sharp mind. Same as I do," she leaned into Daenerys as she corrected her. Dany's violet gaze lingered too long on the Rose, who'd left her feeling momentarily seduced, the same as she'd always done.

"You two 've got the best seats in the hall, tonight," Robb interrupted, motioning toward the Lord and Lady's usual spots.

Dany and Jon exchanged a confused look. Feeling instantly overwhelmed, Dany shook her head,
"No, no. That can't be right."

"The seats are empty tonight, in any case," he assured them with a wide, princely grin. "You might as well take them."

The pair had felt rightfully reluctant, as if the gesture must've been a joke. Dany could feel too many gazes upon her, which could've been hundreds. She and Jon clumsily seated themselves at the high table.

Once settled, she leaned into her husband, "Please tell me I'm not alone, that this feels wrong to you, too?"

"You know it does," he assured her, squeezing their clammy hands together once more, "I'd already like to get this over with."

A pair of servants delivered four prepared plates of food, setting them in front of the honored spots where they sat. It was then that a pang of hunger rippled through her, with an embarrassing and audible announcement. She had been hungry, terribly so. Skipping meals due to sickness since the previous day.

The noise hadn't been lost on Jon's ears, "Have you had any food today?"

She shook her head, "I couldn't eat. I tried this morning and my stomach revolted."

Jon shifted uncomfortably, as if his mind had jumped to the wrong conclusions. "Not from nerves," she assured him, gently pressing her free hand to her stomach.

"Right. I wasn't supposed to say the word food around you anymore, was I?"

"It's alright. Maester Luwin gave me a tonic so I could make it through the day without any... mishaps."

"Luwin knows now, too?"
"Of course Luwin knows."

"How?"

"The same way Lord Stark knew, I suppose. He could just tell."

Jon only sighed, letting go of her hand so she could finally eat.

"It won't be long before everyone else knows, too," she reminded him, unable to resist the urge to cut into the honeyed chicken on her plate.

Before she could finish, Margaery had returned before them, this time holding a small package. Dany begrudgingly set her silverware down, giving her friend her full attention.

"I have something for you," she donned a devilish smile as she thrust her gift toward Daenerys. As she began to unfold the parchment, Margaery's hand suddenly halted her progress.

"Jon, mind looking away?"

"What?"

"Just look away, please," she sweetly urged. Unable to resist the lady's request, Jon turned his back to the girls. Daenerys raised an eyebrow at her friend as she continued working the item free of its enclosure, revealing a shapeless pool of cool, crimson silk.

"What is this?" she asked, unable to tell, and reluctant to pull it out completely with several plates of food in front of her.

Margaery leaned across the table, her soft breath finding its way to Dany's ear as she explained in a whisper, "A nightgown. With a southern-style cut."
She couldn't help but blush as Margaery moved away from her. "I had a little help from Sansa," she explained, motioning her hands across her bust and hips, insinuating that Sansa, who'd helped prepare her wedding dress, had given Margaery her measurements.

Ever since the Rose had come to Winterfell, Daenerys had been taken with her, everything from her intricate hairstyles, her scent, and the way she dressed. She couldn't wait until she was alone and able to try it on.

"Thank you," Dany flushed as she carefully wrapped it back up.

"You're welcome, dear girl," she sang.

"Jon?" Hesitantly, he turned to face Margaery. Smiling in her usual flirtatious way, she assured him, "You can thank me later."

As she floated away to rejoin Robb, Sam had shuffled up to the table awkwardly, "Mind if I take a seat?"

"Please do," Jon nearly pleaded.

"You two look almost as uncomfortable as I feel," he laughed as he pulled out his chair.

Rather than confirm her discomfort, Daenerys quickly stuffed a few bites of food into her cheek, hardly chewing before swallowing them down. Luckily, Jon had done the talking for the both of them, "Tell me about it. We weren't expectin' a fuss like this."

Sam smiled, before reaching into a satchel he'd had at his side, "Before I forget, I've got something for you. Well, mostly for Daenerys."

Unfortunately, she had managed to stuff so much food into her mouth she couldn't speak. Jon gave her a sideways smirk, shaking his head at her.

"What is it, Sam?" he asked on her behalf.
"Well, I haven't had any luck in the library with anything on the Long Night," he explained, pulling a book from his bag and placing it onto the table, "I did find a small one about the Children of the Forest, and thought it might suffice."

With a final swallow, Daenerys had been able to respond at last, "Sam, I've been in that library tower hundreds of times, where do you keep finding these books?"

He simply laughed as he slid the book past Jon's plates so Dany could reach it, "I guess I've got a knack for it. I haven't had much else to do around here."

As the words left his friend's lips, Jon's expression drooped with guilt, "Sorry we've been so preoccupied."

"No, no," he laughed, "Don't be. Even cooped up alone all day in your library here feels like a breath of fresh air compared to traveling with my father."

"I've never seen this one before," Dany said, carefully taking the tattered book between her fingers, lifting it up for a more thorough inspection. "Children of the Forest," she considered, "Why did this one make you think of me?"

"Well, mostly for the legend about Bran the Builder, that the children helped him to raise the Wall. There's no direct link to the Long Night there, but, it felt related, somehow. It also has a bit about their greenseers," he explained, causing Jon to perk up, shifting all of his attention to the portly boy. "And skinchangers," he reluctantly continued, sheepishly peering up at Jon's sudden, intense gaze.

"Skinchangers? " her husband demanded of him.

Sam replied with a nod, "Well, yeah, it mentions the various forms of magic they used."

"Warging? Does it mention warging?"

"I wouldn't have pegged you as one to have any interest in ancient tales about magic."
Ignoring his last comment, Jon pressed him again, "Does it?"

"A little bit, yes..."

At that, Jon snatched the book from Dany's hands and began sifting through the pages, scanning them for the right passage. For a moment she thought to protest until she realized she'd never seen Jon so excited about a book before, and so she let it go.

"Show me where," he flatly said to his friend, who begun to help him search.

As Dany's gaze broke from the pair of boys, she noticed Olenna had suddenly appeared, pulling out the chair beside her.

"My granddaughter informs me that you are under the impression I find you distasteful," she said, looking rather amused as she took a seat.

Daenerys didn't have much practice in dealing with lords and ladies of Olenna's stature, and frankly, had been quite terrible at it. "You did say they tamed me, my lady," she explained in an irreverent way that made clear the passing comment had stuck with her, even all this time later.

"Oh, we're all tamed, aren't we?" she asked, taking a swig from her goblet, which looked too crudely molded in Olenna's dainty, wrinkled hand. After setting it down with shaky fingers, she pointed to Arya nimbly weaving through the crowd as she chased after Rickon, "All except for that one."

After spotting the wild girl maneuvering through the drunken adults, Daenerys couldn't help her face from softening. A few had tried to shout after the girl to watch her step, though, by the time they managed to voice the words, she'd been long gone.

"Is that why you avoid me?" Olenna tapped her fingers on the table. Before Dany could answer, the woman leaned in closer, dropping her voice to a mere whisper, "Or is it because you're afraid I'll discover your secret?"

Behind full lips pressed tightly together, Dany had gritted her teeth, trying her best to hold her tongue. Though, an expression of fear and fury had risen on her face, "My secret?"
Olenna glanced at Dany's belly momentarily, before meeting her gaze once more, "Not \textit{that} secret."

Dany couldn't help but look back to Jon in a pleading manner. Though it was of no use, he and Sam were still poring over the pages together, completely unaware Olenna had even taken a seat at the table.

"You and that bastard boy have got a secret worth its weight in gold," she said with certainty, studying Dany's violet eyes for confirmation.

Heart thudding hard, her empty stomach hadn't helped with the rush of dizziness the accusation had thrust upon her. Stunned to silence, Dany could only hold an unblinking gaze.

Olenna asked with a smug smile, "Am I so fearsome, girl?"

"Yes," Dany hissed, causing the older woman to nearly snort with laughter.

"Perhaps if I needed the gold, I might've given it more effort. Fear not, for I haven't solved it," she admitted.

"And to think, your granddaughter said you liked me," Dany nearly growled, whatever manners she had left slowly fell away piece by piece.

"I do. I find you most intriguing."

"Well, I find you most \textit{confusing}," Dany boldly said as she folded her arms. "But I am just a tamed Dragon amongst Wolves, after all. With \textit{ludicrous} silver hair."

"Oh, I was just trying to stir you up, girl," she admitted. "Seems to have worked."

"\textit{Why?} "

Olenna's demeanor shifted into a more serious one. She placed her hand gently upon Dany's arm, "Because you remind me of my granddaughter. Though quite unlike Margaery, you don't have a
boisterous old crone nagging you to become the Dragon you are. Lady Stark?" she sneered, "I think not. Smart girls like you shouldn't wilt away in someone else's castle."

"And yet you're considering leaving her here, to wilt away in the Wolves' kennel?" she gestured toward her dear friend, who'd been charming Robb with an animated story.

"You're telling me Lord Robb would let her wilt were she his?"

Dany scoffed, wishing she didn't have to agree. "No," she sighed. "Of course he wouldn't."

"I didn't think so," she said. "Though I admit my initial impressions of the Starks were a bit shortsighted."

"How so?"

"While at King's Landing, I spent a dreadful amount of time with the Master of Coin, Lord Baelish. From what I gather, he was close with Lady Stark as a child. As the prospect of a betrothal between Prince Joffrey and my granddaughter fell through, Baelish had been very insistent in trying to warn us against considering a match with the Starks. Meanwhile, here I had gathered that the whole reason Sansa's betrothal had broken was that the Starks were too loyal. Hardly a fault in the eyes of a protective grandmother, wouldn't you say?"

"The Master of Coin warned you against my family?" Jon suddenly joined the conversation. Dany couldn't help but wonder when it was he began listening. "What did he say?"

"What is it he said?" she hummed, scanning her mind for the right verbiage, "Quick tempers, slow minds."

Jon's lips tightened into a snarl, "Sorry, my lady, but what was his name again?"

"Petyr Baelish," Olenna flatly answered, completely unguarded, though Dany felt certain it must've been intentional.

"He tried to dissuade you against a betrothal with Robb even though one with Joffrey had already
fallen through?” Daenerys had sought more details, "Why?

"Perhaps he sees more use in a Tyrell alliance than the others on the small council. Being Master of Coin, he likes his gold. Littlefinger, they call him. He’d sure love to get his little fingers in our coin purse," she scoffed.

Daenerys fought the urge to ask why Olenna had bothered saying any of this to the Stark bastard and the Targaryen girl, she held her tongue hoping to glean more information.

"I must admit his warning did nothing but intrigue me. Now that I'm here, I see the ways in which Northerners differ from most south of the Neck. So spread out, far away from so many resources. You've been bred to trust and rely on each other. I take care of my own, and I see Lord Stark does the same."

Jon rose from his seat before Olenna had even finished speaking. Dany's eyes followed him as he found Robb and Margaery, jumping right into a heated discussion.

"You knew he'd do that. That he'd get up and go right to his brother," Dany accused her, with something of an impressed smirk.

"Indeed," Olenna confirmed, taking another sip of her wine. Something in the woman's tone put Dany at ease.

"So Robb and Margaery are betrothed?"

The elder Rose sighed, "As the days pile up, I can think of fewer reasons for them not to be."

"Are you upset she didn't end up with Prince Joffrey?"

Olenna's hand snapped to her mouth as if to stifle a laugh before batting the idea away, "Heavens, no. I'd love my family to stay well out of the way of the storm brewing at King's Landing. As for the Prince—that boy was a right royal cunt."

At the sudden crude remark, Dany couldn't help but giggle. Everything she'd heard from everyone
who had met him, aside from Sansa, had alluded to exactly that.

"Though I have my reservations about the Stark boy, too."

"Really?" Dany asked, having some trouble considering what they might be.

"Mostly the way he looks at my granddaughter," she admitted, her tone a bit too forlorn.

"He looks at her as if she's the most precious jewel in all seven kingdoms."

"Exactly. I've only seen a handful of men give that look. It's a dangerous look."

"Dangerous how?"

"You tell me, Daenerys Stormborn. How many people died because your brother gave that look to the Stark girl?"

"I never met my brother," she said through gritted teeth. "And I know scarce details of Robert's Rebellion."

"The answer, child, is too many."

As Lady Olenna moved to leave the table, Sansa had come running up to stop her, clutching a pair of objects to her chest.

"Lady Olenna, if you'd please. I have something for you, and something for the bride."

"What is it, dear?" she asked, settling back into her seat.

Sansa's face flushed as she began, "Well, I've been trying to keep my mind busy ever since our lessons were put on hold. To bide my time, I made these."
She handed one of the wooden hoops to Olenna. The older woman's steely expression melted as she examined Sansa's masterful cross-stitch.

"Oh, my. This is beautiful work, little love," she sighed, running her fingers along the tightly-threaded embroidery.

"May I see?" Daenerys curiously chimed. Lady Olenna handed her gift to Daenerys for inspection. It was an intricately detailed golden rose on a bed of leaves, encircled with a menacing looking stem full of thorns, some of which had droplets of crimson blood dripping from them. Above and below the rose had been the new House words Olenna had tasked Sansa with devising.

Admire the Beauty. Beware the Thorns.

"Sansa, this is just gorgeous! You're so talented," Dany beamed, passing it back to Olenna.

"You two really like it?" the red-headed girl shyly inquired, still clutching a second wooden hoop to her chest. Jon had returned, brushing past Sansa in order to take his seat once again.

"I shall hang it in my study at Highgarden so that every time I look at it I will think of you, dear child," Olenna said, rising to her feet, bridging the distance between herself and the young girl. She wrapped an arm around Sansa, giving her a quick embrace before wandering back to the seat beside her son. Dany couldn't be certain, but she thought she saw the woman wipe a tear away as she left.

Sansa turned back to Daenerys and Jon. She thrust the second cross-stitch she'd been holding toward them. It featured the same strange Targaryen sigil, the upright-walking dragon with just one head, similar to the one on Dany's wedding cloak, though this one had been spitting a red and orange flame. Also featured were her house words in black, Fire and Blood.

Like Olenna, Dany couldn't help but shed a tear. Sansa had clearly put a lot of effort into this homemade gift. As she eagerly awaited Dany's thoughts, her face had flushed as red as the threaded dragon. Rather than using mere words to thank her, Daenerys handed the gift to Jon, quickly rising from her seat. Once she reached Sansa, she wrapped her arms around her.

"You've already done so much for me, Sansa. You didn't need to get me anything else," her voice quivered as she squeezed the girl tighter.
"Don't be silly. You're my best friend, Dany."

"When you get married, I'll make your dress."

"Please don't," Sansa laughed, knowing full well Daenerys had been as skilled as Arya when it came to tailoring. She gave Dany one last smile before disappearing back into the crowd.

As the night wound down, the guests slowly emptied out of the hall. Daenerys restlessly poked at her plate of cold food as Sam discussed his trip to Castle Black down to the most arbitrary of details, per Jon's request. The boys were in the midst of debating the Night's Watch vows, and whether or not the celibacy clause had been necessary, or whether it had existed at all. Jon insisted its existence and necessity, whereas Sam had been dissecting semantics. The pair were so different in some ways, it was a wonder they'd become so close.

Eavesdropping for lack of anything better to do, she silently thanked the gods, or whoever, that Jon had never made it to Castle Black. Everything about it had sounded dreadful. The weather, the inescapable chill, the all-male bluster of hardened criminals. Her selfish desire to keep him at Winterfell aside, Jon would've been terribly out of place there—too good, too humble, too honorable.

Daenerys noticed Jeyne approaching the exit and moved from behind the table to hug her friend one last time before she departed. Theon hung back, wearing a cocky expression.

"Why do I get the feeling you're here to torment us?" Dany asked once Jeyne walked out of earshot. Though, he blatantly ignored her and walked up to Jon, folding his arms.

"Greyjoy," Jon said through gritted teeth, just waiting for the ward to test him.

"Afraid of the bedding ceremony, Snow?"

Daenerys stepped closer to Theon, likewise folding her arms, waiting to see how far he'd take it. Often, she wondered why in seven hells he'd ever mess with Jon, who'd already made several public scenes defending her honor, and who could easily take him in a fight.

Jon didn't respond, rather, his face hardened in a way that made him look several years older than he
was, despite the boyish look his trimmed hair and beard had given him. Sam's eyes bounced from Dany, to Theon, and back to Jon, likely expecting another scene.

"What are you scared of? Your wife realizing her mistake in marrying a bastard once a proper lord gets his hands on her?"

Jon was suddenly standing, his fists planted on the table. His movements had been so swift, Dany couldn't recall how it'd happened.

"I'd hardly call you a proper lord, Theon," Daenerys said, unenthused with his tactic, herself, even if it got under her husband's skin.

Jon's face relaxed as he curiously watched her moving in to taunt the ward on his behalf, "Does Jeyne know you're over here moaning about not ripping my dress from me?"

Theon tried to keep his glare on Jon, but shot her a look upon hearing Jeyne's name, finally acknowledging her presence.

"What else is it the men do?" she scratched her chin, "Shouting out suggestions as they stand outside the door to listen, is that it?"

Daenerys reached down to grasp a small piece of cheese, popping it in her mouth. "I'll tell you what, Theon," she paused to chew. "Give us your suggestions now, and Jon will save them when he's ready to put me to sleep."

Surprisingly, Sam spat out a small chortle, which Theon quieted with a snarky glare before turning to sneer at Daenerys, "I expected more gratitude from you after that fool's errand you sent me on in the wolfswood."

"You have my sincerest gratitude, my lord, however, that's an entirely separate matter. I don't appreciate you wandering over here trying to provoke my husband about some perverted tradition I happen to want no part of."

Jon's grin stretched from ear to ear as he watched Daenerys wedging her way under Theon's skin, for a change. The ward reluctantly backed away, moving toward the exit as Daenerys shouted after him, "Tell Jeyne I said goodnight!"
After one last wordless glare, he was gone.

"I wish I had a backbone like yours," Sam said, impressed, as he rose from his seat. "I'm going to head out of here, as well. Thank you for letting me sit with you tonight."

"Anytime," Jon said, "And thank you for the book."

"Sure thing," Sam replied before dipping out of the hall.

Daenerys sighed, moving back to her seat, determined to see the feast through, even though she'd been bored to tears for over an hour, at least.

"You never did explain how you got Greyjoy to burn those bodies for Osha."

Dany's body began to rock with laughter, "I'm not sure you want to know."

Jon's features compressed into something of a worried, jealous look. While squeezing his hand under the table, she explained, "You know how I wasn't feeling well?"

"Yes..."

"When Theon finally found me, I'd been mid-heave. I could hardly voice my request in full before he'd agreed to it. He said he'd do whatever I wanted, so long as he didn't have stay and watch me vomit any longer," she laughed. "Which was a relief, since I hadn't come up with any other bargaining tactic."

"How in seven hells did that work?" he asked, in disbelief.

She simply shrugged, "For being Ironborn, he sure has a weak stomach."

They shared a quick laugh before Jon's demeanor became all too serious again.
"What is it?" she asked with a frown.

"When Greyjoy came back from the woods, he said he'd found a fourth body."

"What? Whose body?"

"I'm not sure. He had insisted on discussing it with Lord Stark, but I haven't heard anything about it since."

"Did he burn that one, too?"

"I assume so," he said, "Not that it matters. Dead men don't rise south of the Wall, if at all."

Daenerys sighed, "You sound just like Maester Luwin when you insist White Walkers and dragons aren't real."

"I might've come around on dragons."

"One should hope so, considering you've held a real dragon egg."

Before the pair could bicker any longer, Ser Barristan Selmy wandered over to their table. Though he'd only been enrobed and hooded with simple linen, it'd been a great disguise. He certainly didn't look like one of the finest knights the seven kingdoms had ever seen. Barristan looked no different from any other old man.

"That was quite a feast," he said, smiling. Gesturing to the chair beside Dany, he asked, "Mind if I take a seat?"

"Please do," she said, perhaps a bit too enthusiastically.

Once he was settled, she probed him immediately, still using his alias to be safe, "Arstan, would you
mind telling us of my brother, Rhaegar?"

"What would you like to know, Daenerys?"

"Everything."

He laughed, "Unfortunately, it's rather late, I'm not sure we've got the time for everything."

"Anything, then," she conceded. "Tell us what you thought of him."

"He was the finest man I'd ever met," he said with certainty.

Still holding Jon's hand tightly, she ran her thumb over his fingers, hoping the knight's opinion had comforted him as much as it did her. "What made him so?" she asked.

"I'm not sure I can explain it simply," his eyes narrowed as he considered. "He was an interesting character. Princely in many respects, a rebel in others. Sometimes he'd make me escort him into the streets of King's Landing, he'd pick a spot on near Aegon's High Hill. Then he'd sing for the people, same as any other minstrel," it was the warmest Barristan's face had looked since he'd arrived.

"You're joking," she insisted.

"No, he'd even have me collect the money to see how much he could make."

"Was he any good?"

"He was. He was very good, in fact. Viserys hadn't mentioned it to you?"

"To Viserys, Rhaegar was little more than a warrior. And since coming here, well," she explained after a drawn-out sigh, "he hasn't been painted in the best light."
"Rhaegar was a skilled warrior, that's true. Though, he never liked fighting. His true passion was music."

"What would he do with the money he made?" Jon asked, a suspicious look on his face.

"Sometimes he'd give it to other minstrels. Other times, to orphans. I fondly recall one occasion he dragged me into a tavern where we got terribly drunk," he laughed.

Dany couldn't help but join in the laughter. Her husband, however, still looked rather daunted, as if he were trying to add it up in a way that made sense.

"Did he have any other passions?"

"His head was always buried in books," the older man recalled.

"That sounds familiar," Jon interjected, eyeing Daenerys in an accusatory, but playful manner before nudging her. There had been one thing he wanted to know most of all, and she knew exactly what it was.

"Was Rhaegar married, Ser?"

The knight shifted in his seat before confirming, "I attended his wedding to Elia Martell."

Jon winced upon hearing a woman's name who was not his mother. Daenerys understood his reluctance. Northerners were rather old-fashioned. She knew with certainty now that she and Jon were wed, he was hers, and hers alone. The thought of Rhaegar leaving his wife for Lyanna was something that just didn't sit right with Jon, it went against the grain of his entire character.

"What was Elia like?" she hesitantly asked.

"She was warm," he smiled, "Gentle, kind."

"Did Rhaegar love her?"
"They had a much happier marriage than your parents, but they also wed out of duty rather than love. Elia was a good woman, hard not to garner affection for such a sweet person, especially over time."

Reluctantly, Dany turned to Jon, letting her eyes travel from his hands to his eyes. He was stone-faced. Even his head had been tilted in a way that allowed his now-shorter curls to fall over his eyes as if to shield them. What little she could see of his dark eyes had been unreadable. She had no idea how he was digesting the news, though her guess had been not well.

"What happened at the Tourney at Harrenhal, if you don't mind my asking?"

Barristan looked pained as he pulled the memory. After a silent moment, he still made no move to answer.

"What is it, Arstan?" she asked, concerned.

"If I had unhorsed your brother, he might still be here today."

"What do you mean?" Jon asked.

"Had I the choice to crown the queen of love and beauty, perhaps he'd have never run-" he caught himself, "Perhaps he'd have never stolen her."

The near-slip had not been lost on Daenerys, "You believe that Rhaegar would take a woman against her will?"

His mouth flattened into a hard-line as he carefully considered his answer, "What I know is that he took Lyanna Stark, the same thing everyone else knows, Daenerys."

"What would motivate someone like Rhaegar to abandon his wife for another woman?"

Barristan shrugged solemnly before tipping back his goblet. After a moment, it was clear that was the
extent to which he cared to answer.

Suddenly, Jon tugged Dany's hand so hard that she'd nearly fallen against his side from the sheer force of his strength. A cloud of warm breath enshrouded her ear. "I would _never_ do that to you," he pressed in a quiet whisper, as if she'd expected the worst of him upon hearing the story. "I'm _not_ like him."

She met his gaze with something of an incredulous look all her own, "You _are_ like him. Except that you married your Lyanna."

His only response had been a frown. Daenerys knew he felt protective of his mother, that he already felt a deep connection with Lyanna Stark that he hadn't yet, with Rhaegar. It didn't seem to matter that the man Jon looked up to most, Eddard Stark, had assured him that Rhaegar was a good man, or that one of the most honorable knights in the seven kingdoms had called her brother the _finest man he'd ever met_—Jon still had his reservations. Perhaps it had only been a lifetime of being misled, but she hated that he was still so wary about accepting Rhaegar as part of his identity. She decided to let it go, _for now._

"The hour grows late. I should get back to my room," he said, rising gracefully from the seat beside her.

Daenerys thought to ask the man how long he planned to stay at Winterfell, but decided she didn't want his answer to depress her for the rest of the night, had it been soon. Already, the man felt like a father figure to her in a way that Lord Stark hadn't. Ned had done his best to shield her from any unintentional hurt, going so far as to keep his own children in the dark about some of the history regarding her family. Now that she was older, she wanted to devour all of it, to finally know the mythical figures she'd only heard about through eavesdropped whispers. Barristan Selmy's stories helped bring her family to life, helped her feel as though she weren't just some sad, orphaned girl.

Rather than ask how long he might stay, she hinted that she'd like to keep him around a bit longer, if possible, "Thank you so much, Arstan. I hope to pry more of your stories out of you, soon."

Taking a quick look around the room, and finding only a few dedicated drunkards determined to empty the remaining pitchers of wine, he lowered his voice nonetheless, "It would be my pleasure, Your Grace."

With a quick bow, he set out, leaving them alone at the high table.
"What an exhausting night," Jon groaned. As if on cue, Daenerys raised her hand to cover her yawning mouth.

"Oh, no. You're tired," he managed to say before yawning, himself.

"Of course I am."

"But it's our wedding night," he nearly whined.

"Don't you worry. I'm awake enough to consummate our marriage before we retire," she purred, her hand finding his thigh beneath the table and giving it a good pinch.

"I had somethin' else in mind," he said, trying to bite back his smile and doing a terrible job of it.

"Of course you do," she teased. "Well, what do you propose?"

"Let's drop off your gifts and we'll go for a walk."

"A walk? At this hour? Where to?"

Jon swiftly rose, gathering up her belongings in one arm, and holding the other out to escort her. She slipped her arm around his. By this point, his smile had engulfed his face in a way that sent a shiver down her spine.

"You'll see," he promised, guiding her out of the hall.
Jon carefully placed the three blue roses atop Dany's gifts, all stacked neatly on her desk. Once his hands were free, they quickly found their way to her dress, "Let's get you out of this. Don't want to muddy it up on our walk, do you?"

His arms had suddenly enveloped her from behind. Slowly, he coaxed her body into rocking along with his as if they were dancing. His hands emerged from beneath her arms, following the curve of her tightly woven bodice. Silver-blonde waves lightly grazed her skin as he nuzzled into her neck. His touch had rendered her weightless. Had it not been for his fingers interlocked around her waist, keeping her grounded, she felt as if she'd float away.

Their bodies swayed together as his nose dug through her tresses, searching for skin to kiss. Sweetly distracted, she unfastened the clips from her hair, letting them gather in her palm as her braids loosely fell around her shoulders. Jon's hands wandered back up, taking extra care to trace the curve of her breasts before moving on to help unravel her hair.

Unable to resist his natural scent of musk and leather, she turned into him, urging him to kiss her as he finished with her hair. After his hands slid down to her jawline, cupping her face before meeting her mouth with a satisfied groan. The ruby clips scattered across the ground as her hands went searching, instead, for the warm nest of soft black curls. Behind her back, Jon tugged her laces loose. As he pulled his mouth away from hers, she had trouble prying her eyes back open.

"No, Dany. Don't get sleepy yet," he warned her, grabbing a fistful of her hair and playfully tugging it, jolting her awake. She stood there, vulnerable, as he peeled the dress from her like the skin of a fruit, looking positively starved.

Once her breasts were left exposed, he made no effort to hide the intent behind his eyes. Though she'd love to be ravaged right then, she thought it best to remind him. "Don't get any ideas," she warned. "We've got a walk to go on."

"I know," he smiled. "Just appreciating the view."

Blushing like the maid she wasn't, Dany watched Jon's eyes follow the dress as it fell to the floor. She stepped aside, wearing only breeches and hose as Jon gathered up the dress and draped it over the door of her wardrobe. He distracted himself away from her half-naked form as she dressed in a
more simple gown.

After locking their door, they set off to retrieve Ghost. It wasn't a long walk from the kennels to the godswood. It had been plenty dark outside as-is, but once they passed under the stone archway, not even the moonlight could penetrate the heavy brush. Ghost led the way, able to see all of the things the newlyweds could not. Relying solely on luck, Jon held Dany's hand tightly in his own as they maneuvered around slippery beds of leaves and surfaced roots.

Even more-so than during the day, the godswood was alive with the raucous sounds of nocturnal life. In the distance, Dany spotted what looked like stars swirling and flashing amidst a blanket of fog and rising steam.

"Beautiful," she crooned, watching the fireflies dance mid-air.

"Yes, you are," Jon said, his smirk apparent in the way he'd shaped the words.

She could finally make out his serene expression against the black backdrop of the godswood. Either her eyes had adjusted enough to the darkness, or perhaps the glow of the flitting insects had properly illuminated the immediate area—she was just happy to finally distinguish whether her eyes had been opened or closed.

Once they had reached the thick mists blanketing the hot springs, Jon whistled for Ghost. His loyal canine trotted over expectantly. "Ghost," he said with the wave of his hand, "Go on, boy. Go play."

With granted permission, Ghost tucked his tail before running off into the woods, perhaps to hunt or simply run freely without any confinement. After the white blur had disappeared from sight, Jon began stripping off his clothes. The dim light seemed to spread amongst the fog, illuminating his perfectly sculpted torso to the best of its ability. Swallowing several times had done nothing to deter her glands as he stood before her, her mouth coated in expectant salivation.

"Jon, it's freezing," she complained, shaking herself out of her daze, finally feeling the chill in the air after the sight of his body sent a shiver through each of her bones.

"It won't be for long," his smile unmistakable in his tone as he assured her, carefully untangling his clothes and arranging them into a neat pile near the edge of the water. "Have you ever dipped in the springs here?"
"Once or twice when I was a child. But now that I'm older, I'm too aware of that feeling of being watched. It makes me uneasy to disrobe here," she explained, rubbing her arms while warily looking around to spot the eyes she'd felt on her, though she knew they weren't physically there. What made it even stranger was that Jon, who was normally more modest, seemed to feel no hesitation about undressing in the open.

As he pulled his boots off, he shook his head at her. "It's the old gods," he explained with certainty, moving on to untie the laces of his trousers.

"I'm not so sure," she said, still eyeing him intently. "The eyes on me feel no different from people watching me."

"Yes, that's what it feels like," he assured her once more, without so much as a lick of uneasiness in his voice. After stepping out of his trousers, he held them up, folding them in front of his groin as Dany tried to sneak another peek. The sight of Jon's bare body had been enough to warm her up.

"You like being watched?" she asked, unable to help her teasing as she gaped at him.

"Don't be silly," he said, jumping into the water before splashing at her.

Dany managed to shield her face and twist her body to avoid the ambush, though some of the droplets had landed in her hair and on her cloak. Turning back around, she quickly removed her clothes, letting them pool around her feet. She took no care to neatly arrange or fold her clothes before getting into the water. A decision she might regret later, but her uneasiness demanded she quickly submerge herself in the black depths to avoid the unseen gazes.

"You want to give the gods a proper show, Jon Snow?"

Even in the darkness, she could tell he'd raised an unenthused eyebrow at her.

"What?" she asked, making her way further into the springs, enjoying the slow burn of the water as the steam licked her skin and filled her lungs.

"Now you've made it weird."
"Me? You're the one who brought us here, where who knows how many eyes are on us while we make love," she further teased, splashing at him. Unfortunately, he managed to dodge her counter-attack. Slowly, she approached him, resting her wrists on his shoulders.

"You like it, don't you? You liked it when Robb walked in on us when I was under your sheets," she continued.

"Of course I liked it, but not because Robb was there," he scoffed, managing to fold his arms in what little space had been between them.

"Then what was it you liked?"

"You know what," he whispered, staring at her mouth.

Suggestively licking her lips, she challenged him further, "I'm not so sure I do. Tell me, Jon Snow."

"I like your mouth."

"What about my mouth?" she asked, pulling her bottom lip into her mouth before sinking her teeth into it.

He sighed, "I know what it is you like."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Makin' me uncomfortable, apparently."

"Why should it make you uncomfortable to tell me where you like my mouth?" she seductively asked, nuzzling against his warm neck. Dragging her tongue through the droplets of water that clung to him, she cruelly robbed them of their chance to fall and travel down his skin.

Now that her gaze hadn't been as intrusive, he offered up a breathless answer, as close to her ear as he could manage. His words slurried with lust, "I like your mouth around my cock."
Daenerys kicked off of the wall behind him. Quickly, she gave him a wicked grin before taking in as much air as her lungs would allow and disappearing into the dark pool of water. She knew vaguely where he'd been, though the ambient light hadn't penetrated the water's surface whatsoever. She swam toward him, her arms outstretched before her. First, she found a hip, and then a thigh, and she knew her way from there. As she moved closer toward his groin, she managed to strike her forehead with his surprisingly buoyant erection. She couldn't help but laugh at her clumsy attempt. His body shuddered against her hands as the swarm of bubbles from her laugh brushed against him. Quickly, she took him between her lips, causing his knees to buckle. Luckily, they'd been underwater, so the consequences weren't so dire as they might've been otherwise, she simply chased after him with her mouth.

Wondering how satisfactory it was in the already warm, wet environment, she let a stiff tongue do most of the work. Even underwater, she could hear the sound of his muffled groan above her. She tried to last as long as she could before the burning sensation in her lungs became too much to bear. From her estimation, it must've only been a moment, as she hadn't had much practice staying underwater. Begrudgingly, she had to come up for air.

As she gasped, Jon had nearly smothered her with a kiss, to which she pushed him off of her.

"Let me," she breathed, "Catch my..." Two more quick gulps of air later, she finished, "Breath."

"Right," he stayed a safe distance away from her as she composed herself, though his eyes remained luminescent and predatory.

She placed her elbows up on the rim of the springs, finally feeling the fleeting sensation of the burn that lingered with each breath. Suddenly, the feral quality of Jon's eyes had given way to an uncomfortable, worried expression.

"What's wrong?" she frowned.

"I didn't think things through. I had dreamed of bringin' you here a hundred times yet there was a detail I had never thought to add— a baby. This heat can't be good for 'em."

Placing a hand on his chest to soothe him, she softened her tone, "My bath water is hotter than this, and we've both been fine."
"Hotter than this?"

Nodding her head enthusiastically, she reassured him, "Our baby will be fine, I swear it to you."

She managed to catch his collarbone with a kiss as he dipped his head back, wetting his hair. The water had flattened his signature curls as he tucked the hair behind his ears. Dany found herself wishing for a better source of light to see all the new features revealed that had usually been hidden behind his coiled hair.

"How come you haven't already brought me here? Now it seems so obvious."

"I didn't want to come here until we were wed," he admitted, dragging his fingers across the water to create small waves. "Sometimes I wish I had waited until tonight to make love to you. I'm ashamed at my utter lack of control where you're concerned."

"Don't say that. You spent your entire life maintaining control. I'm honored to be the one thing that pulls you out of that dutiful restraint."

Jon shook with laughter for a brief moment before slipping back into his self-imposed guilt, "Still, I have my regrets. Such as not havin' the nerve to get to know you sooner. We did everything backwards. I would've liked to... court you."

"Court me?" she blushed at the thought of Jon Snow pursuing her all on his own.

"I would've liked to get to know everything about you before I grew brave enough to reach for your hand," he whispered, his fingers skimming the water in search of hers before clasping them together.

"And that's all I'd do for weeks until I worked up the nerve to finally kiss you," he closed the distance between their mouths, gently pressing his full lips to hers.

"I'm so sorry that you felt like you had to give me everything to get me to stay," he breathed as he moved away from her enough to look her in the eyes.

"Jon," she chuckled as she coaxed her irises back down and into their proper place, "I was at the
limit of how much more I could bear looking at you and doing nothing about it."

Moving back in, she pressed her forehead to his, "Besides, everything I had to give was already yours, you just hadn't come to claim it yet."

The romantic moment shattered as a sudden sharp snap of wood sounded in the distance, followed by a mammalian cry cut a bit too short, likely in some horrific maiming she didn't wish to dwell on.

"It's just Ghost. He's hunting," Jon assured her with a throaty whisper, moving behind her and slipping his arms beneath hers. Against her back, his chest felt twice as hot as the water, leaving her feeling dizzy in the already stifling heat. After securing his hands around her shoulders, he pulled her back so the pool stretched out before them.

"Inhale," he gruffly instructed, "And hold your breath a moment."

Wide-eyed and curious, she did as she was told, holding air hostage in her lungs even as Jon's hands seared their way down her body somewhere below the murky water, just daring her to gasp. Before she knew it, she was weightless, after a short trip in his arms, suddenly floating. Looking down, she could see her breasts, knees, and feet poking out of the water.

"You can breathe now," he assured her, chuckling a bit as she gasped for air.

"This is incredible," she breathed, fixing her gaze to the sky as Jon's body ascended into place beside her.

For a moment they lay there afloat, simply enjoying the out of body experience as the steam swirled above their heads. A bit further up, fireflies were hard at work painting the black canvas of the godwood with faint yellow streaks of light as they blinked in and out of existence. Beautiful, she thought. And then she remembered who had been floating just inches away, somehow, an even more incredible sight to behold.

Like she'd done with her own body, she peeked down at Jon's—knees, feet... and the welcome sight of his erection lying across his lower abdomen. The view alone had been enough to encourage her tongue to snake out of her mouth and wet her lips. Finally, she met his gaze, realizing he'd been eyeing her the entire time. Jon simply smirked at her before driving the air from his lungs, his body buckling as it disappeared under the water.
"Jon? You'd better not be drowning down there. I'm a shit swimmer," she warned him in a raised voice, unsure whether or not he'd even be able to hear it underwater.

Still no sign of him visually, though she could feel his hands pawing around her knees. She looked down again, just in time to see his head slowly emerge between her legs, his shoulders drawing her thighs up, supporting their weight as her lower legs dangled against his back.

Struggling to keep the top of her body afloat as Jon's tongue unfurled and began mapping her over again, she flapped her arms below the water as if she were flying. Each heavy exhale threatened to sink her like an anchor, though she had little control of her reactions as she felt him pulling her hard between his lips with suction alone.

The water sloshed against her ears, drowning out the night's song of insects and wind-rattled leaves. Her body writhed too much, too hard, and she began fighting to stay above the water, her groans turning to gargling. What little she could hear had been the sound of Jon's laughter at her pitiful struggling.

Finally, a firm had planted itself on her back to steady her for a moment before sweeping her up into an embrace. Jon effortlessly guided them to the edge of the springs, lifting Dany onto the moss and fallen leaves before climbing out of the water and on top of her. Droplets fell from his hair to her face like a warm rain. The soft wind cut like ice wherever their bodies hadn't been touching, small tufts of steam rising from their skin.

Using his fingers to swiftly guide himself inside, a shiver ran through her as they stayed, lingering there a moment, teasing her with stillness. Once Jon began stirring, Dany met all of his movements with enthusiasm, bringing her warm legs up to his waist as they kissed. Fallen leaves had quickly coated her skin, each of Jon's thrusts driving her further into the ground until she struck mud. Seeing her disheveled state had ignited something in him, and so he lifted his hand to cover her mouth, almost in warning, as his movements became unbridled.

Dany cried into Jon's palm as she struggled for something to grab onto, only finding soft mud and moss. Her legs fumbled to grab hold of his waist, only to slip from the slickness of their skin. Jon lowered himself onto her, resting his tangle of cold, wet hair against her neck. The throng of incandescent insects above them seemed to match the cadence of her heartbeat with each sudden flash of light. She closed her eyes, shielding them from the distraction, focusing only on all the ways she could feel Jon's body on and inside of her. Each time he withdrew by even a few inches, she fought to bring back that unavoidable fullness between her legs, locking them together in symbiosis.

Painting his back with mud-caked nails, she dug them into his skin as he groaned against her neck in climax. His gruff voice had always been the perfect complement to the warm trickle between her legs as he withdrew. Her dirty fingers traced the line of his jaw, leaving behind a trail of mud as evidence.
Jon couldn't help but chuckle upon seeing the sorry state he'd driven her into, leaves glued to her hair and skin with silt, dark stains in her otherwise snowy mane.

Swiftly scooping her up, he tossed her back into the springs. A cluster of leaves broke away from her skin, a few submerging in the whirlpool of her sudden impact.

"Come here," she cooed once she'd found footing, motioning him to join her.

Jon jumped back in with a splash, shaking the water from his hair like a wolf as he surfaced, laughing all the while. In all the years she'd spent at Winterfell, she struggled to recall any comparable day where Jon had laughed or smiled so much.

"Let's get you cleaned up," he said, gliding over, tenderly brushing the muck from her skin with his fingernails. His flat, wet hair seemed to hang twice as long as it had when dry.

Hesitantly, Dany turned away from him, asking, "Why did you trim your hair?"

"It felt like the right thing to do. Get prettied up for you before our wedding."

She sighed in frustration.

Jon frowned, "You don't like it?"

"It's not that," she turned back around to cup his face. "You're beautiful."

"Beautiful?" he winced at the compliment.

Afraid she may have accidentally emasculated him with a word usually reserved for women, she clarified, "Always beautiful, no matter if it grows to the ground or falls from your head leaving you completely bald."

"Don't say that," he warned her, raising his hands to caress his precious, flattened mane, "Don't ever say that."
Unable to refrain from laughing, she apologized, "Sorry. I just... worry that you pushed back our trip to Dragonstone."

Jon hadn't done a very good job disguising an eye-roll as he blinked, "By having my hair cut shorter?"

"Yes, by cutting your hair," Dany pursed her lips together, unsure how to explain her cryptic comment, only knowing that his hair had been much longer in her vision. Dream. Whatever it was...

"And you think I need long hair to travel back there?"

"Back there? You've never been."

"No, but you have," he pointed out.

"Castle Black, then?"

"What?"

"I still want to meet Maester Aemon, you know. I bet Ser Barristan would take us. He's the finest knight in all seven kingdoms, so we'd be safe. And he's still fiercely loyal to my brother, your father."

"I wouldn't be so sure about that. He's got better things to do than to take a pair of kids up to Castle Black on a whim. He's Lord Commander of the Kingsguard, Daenerys. I don't even know how he managed to slip away to meet you."

"Because he still cares deeply for our family," she said with confidence. "I'll talk to him. Would you go, then? If he agreed?"

Jon sighed as if trying to find the right words to placate a child, "I'll think about it."
"You've already done your thinking on the matter."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Because you told me you'd give me anything I want."

Jon groaned in defeat. To relieve him of the dreaded conversation, she changed the subject, "What do you think Jojen meant about the dragon here? In the godswood?"

"I think he was makin' up stories for Arya."

"By the weirwood tree, though? Do you think there might be eggs here?"

"You've already got three eggs."

"But they're petrified," she whined.

He sighed, "No, I don't think there are dragon eggs here."

"Of course not. You've seen dragon eggs, and you still think dragons aren't real."

"I told you I've come around on dragons."

" You believe in dragons?" she scoffed.

Picking the last of the leaves from her hair, he yanked her arm with enough force to pull her into to him.

"Of course I do. You're a Dragon," he growled, drawing his wife's naked body into his arms.
"So are you."

As Jon soundly slept, Dany lay behind him supporting her head on his upper arm. Though utterly exhausted after such a long day and night, she couldn't sleep. Instead, she gazed into the flames that danced in their fireplace, almost convincing herself she could see the three beasts beating their wings against the fire, the same ones she saw at Dragonstone. Unable to shake the thought from her mind, she rose. Her body may regret her decision the following morning, but if her plan worked, it would be well worth it.

After slipping the black dragon egg into a large satchel, she threw it over her shoulder and set back out, leaving Jon alone, fast asleep. Ghost was happy to be retrieved for the second time in one night, happily trotting through the godswood, escorting Daenerys back to the springs.

"Stay here, Ghost," she commanded him, carefully setting down her satchel before pushing her sleeves up.

Ghost stayed put, head bobbing along as he watched the fireflies flickering above his head, occasionally nipping at any that dared swoop too low. Daenerys couldn't help but smile at his efforts as she removed the egg. Taking one last look at it before submerging it in the water, she exhaled, "If you're in there, I'd really like you to come out so I can meet you."

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for hanging in there and being patient. I'm finally finished with my move and updates should get back to being quicker!
As the sunlight pierced the uneven cracks between the shutters, Jon reached out to embrace his wife as he lazily readjusted. Rather than Daenerys, he found cold sheets exposed where the furs had been pulled back. Though he'd heard no shuffling about their room, reluctantly, he pried open his eyes one after the other. Indeed, the room was empty, *dreary* even.

Jon's eyes fell on the peculiar wooden chest, home to three opulent dragon eggs. The latches had been hanging open, unlocked. It may have been a small detail, but it unsettled him enough to pull him from the warmth of their bed to investigate. His worry alone had shielded him from the chill of the room, his naked body unaware that the cold had brought his finer hairs to a point all along his arms and legs.

Crouching once he reached the chest, he hesitated as he fondled the latches. Usually rather observant, he felt almost ashamed to have no memory of locking the door after they'd left for the godswood. In his anger, he'd pretty much shouted to everyone within earshot that the dragon eggs *must* be worth a fortune. Sighing at his own ineptitude, Jon finally pulled open the chest. His heartbeat became so erratic that his legs began to shake, his chilled skin suddenly slick with a nervous sweat. The *dark egg*, arguably her favorite, was gone. Just *gone*. Daenerys would be crushed, and Jon had never felt so helpless in all his life.

He raised himself up on wobbling legs as the door swung open. As his wife's small figure came into view, Jon was suddenly thankful to be caught naked and utterly vulnerable, knowing it would serve as a much-needed distraction. He tried to compose himself in light of his dreadful discovery. Dany closed the door behind her, causing Jon to wince as she locked it. The sound, like salt in the wound, reminded him of the small oversight that might've cost them a dragon egg.

"What are you doing up?" she asked after turning to face him. Her eyes never once wandered near the chest, or anywhere near his face, for that matter. Clutching a small tincture, she merely gaped at his naked body as she awaited his answer.

"You were gone," he explained. "I couldn't sleep."

As Dany's eyes swept over him, Jon resisted the urge to cover his groin. "What is that you're holdin'?" he asked, nodding toward her hand, and effectively snapping her from her daze.
Taking one last peek before meeting his eyes, she explained, "I went to see Maester Luwin for something to settle my stomach."

"How long does the sickness last, anyway?" he asked, slipping beneath the furs before gesturing for her to join him.

"I'm not sure," she admitted, downing the liquid before settling in beside him.

"No matter," he crooned, wrapping his arms securely around her, "I doubt anyone is expectin' us this morning."

Humming with delight as she nuzzled into his neck, Jon stroked her hair. Letting his fingers slip between silver-blonde strands, he lightly massaged her scalp, willing her to sleep. As she dozed off, his eyes drifted back to the damned chest. He still had no solution in mind. Though, the more he thought about it, the odder it seemed. Why would a thief steal just one egg?

Finally, Dany had slipped back into a sound sleep, leaving Jon free to peel himself away from her. As quietly as he could manage, he pulled on his clothes and set out to find answers regarding the whereabouts of his wife's most prized possession.

. . .

Hours had passed and still, he'd had no luck in his endeavor. Though he couldn't directly ask if they'd taken it so as to not arouse suspicion, his sisters seemed innocent enough. They had been more or less distracted by other tasks, particularly Arya, who had been itching to give Daenerys her wedding gift.

Not even Jojen Reed could offer any clue to point Jon in the right direction. He'd managed to find the boy sitting alongside Summer in the godswood, not far from the heart tree. Nearby, there had been a thick surface root, a perfect seat for Jon as they spoke.

"I'm sorry I can't help in the way you'd like. I could help physically look," Jojen offered.

"Eh," Jon said, pulling at weeds that poked through the bed of leaves beside him, "Askin' you was worth a shot. I've got to take a break soon, at any rate. Arya and Meera will be lookin' for me."
"Right," Jojen said, likely aware of the girls' plan.

"You know, you've got my wife thinkin' there are dragons here in the godswood."

"Sometimes there are," he grinned, his knowing gaze slicing away at Jon. He still felt rather disconcerted by the boy's veiled remarks.

"Perhaps not actual dragons," he continued, "Just legends of Winterfell. I doubt a dragon could sustain itself underground in order to heat the springs."

"And beside the heart tree? That's just a tale, too?"

"No," Jojen admitted, dragging his nails through the scruff of Summer's neck as the wolf happily leaned into the scratches. "I dreamt it. A white dragon lie dying beside Winterfell's weirwood tree. The wind blew a white wall of snow, obscuring him. Afterward, all that was left where he had lain was a dark, frigid pond."

"A dream? A green dream?" Jon shivered, watching crimson leaves floating in the black pool beside him, rippling the curiously cold water as they sailed along.

"I don't think so, though I guess it is possible."

"Mind telling Daenerys this, so she won't go combing the godswood for eggs that aren't here?"

"What does she need more eggs for? Hasn't she got three?" he asked, a bit perplexed.

"Hopefully three, assumin' I can find the third," he sighed. "Though I think she'd prefer dragons to eggs, considerin' the eggs are petrified."

"You don't believe that, do you?" the boy pressed, another aggravating smile lifting the corners of his mouth.
Summer suddenly perked up, his ears curving and bending back as he heard a shuffling in the distance. The wolf kicked off, sending a spray of leaves in his wake as he thumped his way to the beaten trail. Jon and Jojen both rose to see what the cause of the commotion could be.

Nymeria tackled her brother, driving him into a bed of leaves as he playfully yelped. The wolves growled ferociously as they nipped at each other, though Jon had seen it enough times to know they were only playing. Arya had followed up the trail after Nymeria, taking her time, unlike her galloping companion. "Daenerys is awake," she shouted to her brother.

Jon simply nodded to her before turning to Jojen, "I should get going."

"Good luck," he replied as Summer came happily trotting back toward him.

"Thanks," Jon said. "I'll need it."

Arya had parted ways with her brother in favor of the courtyard, where she managed to find a shadow to slip into as she waited for him to return. Like Jon, she seemed to feel most comfortable when blending into shaded corners or small clefts, going unseen.

Daenerys had finally been up and about for the day, much later than usual. He'd received a few suspicious glances from some of the guards and other smallfolk as he searched for his wife. They might've suspected her late arrival had something to do with their wedding night. Jon couldn't help his cheeks flushing red with embarrassment once he realized what the strange looks had been about. Ugh. Everyone knew for certain that he and Dany had coupled last night.

Ignoring their prying eyes, he finally spotted Dany walking alongside Ser Barristan not far from the crypts. They had paused several times while exchanging stories, whether it be to laugh or to let their hands express some finer point that words, alone, could not. Had it been any other man making her beam in such a way, Jon might've felt jealousy seep in, though there was something about Barristan he couldn't help but like.

Momentarily, it was as if his mind slipped from his body as he admired her, staring at her lips as she mouthed his name. Once she waved him over, he shook himself from his trance, bridging the distance between them.
"Jon, why don't you join us?"

"Actually," he said, feeling a bit guilty for interrupting. His gaze dropped to his feet, "I was hoping to find you on Arya's behalf."

"Arya? What does she want?"

"Well, you'll have to come with me to find out," he said, unable to curb the smile that crept across his face.

"Hmm," she smirked before turning to the knight, "Ser, would you mind if we continued our walk a bit later?"

"Not at all, my lady. I look forward to it," his eyes narrowed as he waved the pair off.

Once out of earshot, "What is it you two are up to?" she probed, nudging his arm.

"Must you work to ruin every surprise?" he asked, feigning irritation.

She simply groaned rather than try to argue or pry for any further information. Once they reached the courtyard, she let out a small gasp as she spotted Meera Reed standing there alone, leaning against one of the walls. "Meera?" she asked.

"You want to travel the world and take back your castle one day?" Jon asked in a whisper. He leaned in a bit too close, his nose dragging her hair across her collarbone, unable to resist encompassing himself in her scent.

"Yes," she hesitantly answered, seemingly unsure of his intent.

"Good. You're not going to be defenseless while you do it," he began grinning ear to ear. "I vow to protect you at any cost, but that's no guarantee I will always be within range to help you."

Meera had kicked herself off of the wall, her wild curls bounding as she sprinted over to greet them.
Jon introduced her, "Daenerys, this is Meera Reed. She's going to show you the way around a bow."

"And I'm going to help," Arya said, appearing from seemingly out of nowhere, holding a bow horizontally at her side.

"Please do," Daenerys begged the small girl with a laugh. "I can use all the help I can get!"

Arya grinned at Jon, her irritation with him seemed to subside since they'd devised the plan together. He'd let his little sister take all of the credit, of course, as her gift to Daenerys.

"Pleasure to meet you, Meera," Dany said, rosy-cheeked in front of the girl she'd only admired from afar.

"The pleasure is mine, my lady," Meera bowed, her voice as soft as her demeanor.

"You'd be hard-pressed to find two better archers within the castle walls. I've talked to Rodrik, as well as Lord Stark. No one should bother you girls, and if they do, they'll have me to answer to," he threatened, sounding an awful lot like Ned as he did so.

Jon clapped Daenerys and Arya on their backs, before turning to walk away. Dany caught his arm, "Thank you," she whispered. Even through the leather, her touch made his skin tingle.

He simply nodded and left the girls to it.

Unbeknownst to Daenerys, Jon had already set a plan into motion. Though there had been no proper bowyer at Winterfell, Mikken, who'd fashioned Needle for Arya, promised Jon he'd come up with something for his wife. Hopefully, it would be finished before they'd left Winterfell. He was still quite unsure when that would be, or where to, but he feared it was only a matter of time.

Though he'd been hoping to resume his search for the dragon eggs, Jon felt his heart drop a second time when he caught sight of Rickon. The boy had been all alone and running toward the kennels. In the moment, he remembered of the sort of trouble Bran got into when left alone, and couldn't help but chase after his unaccompanied baby brother.
The messy-haired boy had been struggling to open the gate that separated him from his direwolf, Shaggydog. More-so than his litter mates, Shaggydog had a knack for taking on Rickon's emotions, and thus, started whining and yapping as he impatiently awaited freedom.

"Here, let me help." Jon said, intervening, as he released both Shaggydog as well as Ghost, who certainly wouldn't stand for remaining cooped up after seeing Jon letting another wolf free.

"Thanks, Jon," the boy said as his dark wolf began encircling him, seeming antsy, just as Rickon had been.

"Is something the matter, Rickon?"

"They won't let me see Bran," the boy whined, fisting his small hands in Shaggydog's fur. Jon's younger brothers were rather close. Wherever Bran seemed to be, Rickon usually hadn't been far behind.

"Well," Jon said, crouching down so he'd be at level with his brother, "They're not lettin' anyone see Bran until he's feelin' better."

"That's not true!" he shouted, "Osha's there. And Hodor!"

"Well, I'm sure it's for a good reason, maybe he needs the help," Jon tried to assure him.

"Bran asked for Osha, but not me."

"He asked for Osha?"

Rickon simply nodded his head, still angrily petting his wolf, though Shaggydog seemed to like it.

"Well, Osha is a servant," Jon continued after a moment.

"Not a good one," Rickon said with a bite behind his words rarely heard from a boy of five. Jon couldn't help but chuckle.
"I miss mother," he whined again.

"I know," Jon sighed. "Once Bran is better, things will go back to normal."

"No," the young boy said with certainty, "They won't."

He'd been right, after all. Could things ever be normal for Bran again?

"No one wants to play with me anymore," his brother quietly said as he nuzzled into his wolf's coarse fur.

"That's not true," Jon raised his voice for emphasis. "I want to play with you," he said, patting his chest, "Right now, in fact. Anything you want to do, you choose."

"You're not too busy?" Rickon's eyes lit up at the chance to spend the day with his big brother.

"Not at all," Jon lied, though not poorly, for once. The egg hunt would have to wait for the time being.

"Can we play swords?" the boy asked, wide-eyed and beaming.

"Sure thing," Jon said, ruffling the boy's unkempt hair, "Just lead the way."

Rickon broke into a run toward the godswood, Shaggydog and Ghost slowed to match stride with the boy.

As the courtyard came back into view, Jon's gait had similarly ebbed. The cool wind nipped at his cheeks and pushed his curls in all directions as his body came to a halt, distracted. Daenerys stood sideways before her target. Holding a bow aloft, she nodded along to Arya's instructions as Meera helped her manually tilt the weapon. After loading an arrow, Dany steadied it on a bent finger before drawing back the string before releasing. The arrow struck just inside the target near its leg. Jon took a moment to appreciate the way her smile dominated her features as she and the girls celebrated a
rather successful shot. Her aim had been particularly impressive for a novice. As she turned her head, the breeze had carried with it silver strands, blowing in the wind like streamers.

"Jon?" Rickon called impatiently from just inside the godswood.

Hesitating, he took one last look at the silver-blond beauty before inhaling deeply, the cool air inflating his lungs. Finally, he pulled himself away and joined his brother. The boy broke into a sprint as soon as Jon made it inside the darkened, leafy fortress. Rickon had already begun to forage for sticks to pretend to spar with as his brother caught up with him.

The sunlight had barely filtered through the thick canopy above the godswood by the time Jon wrapped up his afternoon with Rickon. He was utterly exhausted after a tiresome game of hide-and-seek. Unlike other children his age, Rickon had been rather good, actually managing to disappear into the many hidden crevices in the woods. Gods forbid the times he managed to hide above Jon's head, cradled in a tangle of ironwood branches. Though the youngest, he'd been able to hone many basic skills beyond his years based solely on having so much competition from his older siblings.

"Alright," Jon managed to catch the hanging part of Rickon's tunic before he ran off and into another hiding spot, sending Jon on another exhaustive search. "We should start heading back for supper."

Even Ghost and Shaggydog had been lying side by side, bits of crumbled leaves and twigs strewn in their fur as physical proof of their exhaustion. Neither looked in any particular rush to head back to the kennels.

"They look kind of like us, don't they?" Daenerys' disembodied voice reverberated as though it'd been Jon's inner monologue. He turned, startled to see her even though she'd just announced her presence.

"What do you mean?" he managed to ask as he gawked.

Dany squinted her eyes as she stepped over to him. Raising her hand to better reach him, her fingers dove into his curls, pushing them into further disarray. "You look a bit like Shaggy," she said, her voice playful.
"And you, like Ghost," he breathlessly said. Had they been alone, he'd have buried his tongue between her lips.

She raised a hand to stop the wind from carrying her hair wherever it pleased. That's when Jon had spotted it—securely wrapped around her left index finger.

"What's that on your finger?" he asked.

Untangling her hand from her hair, she held it out to Jon for inspection, "My mother's ring."

"I've never seen this before."

"Of course not, as it's never left my room," she sighed. "Despite my best efforts to keep it in pristine condition, over the years it has tarnished all the same."

Jon ran his fingertips over the smooth, twisted metal. He would've expected something a little flashier from a Queen.

"Turns out that just because you keep something secured away, that doesn't mean you've ensured its safety," she cryptically said, her gaze burrowing into Jon as he lifted his eyes to meet hers.

"Why do I get the feelin' you're not just talkin' about a ring anymore?"

Dany simply sighed, fondling the dark metal, herself, "Because you're more clever than you get credit for."

Eyes suddenly softening, "Speaking of clever," she crooned as Rickon crashed into her, latching himself to her leg.

"Dany! Jon and I played all day," he confessed, taking her by the hand before leading the way back to the kennels. Jon whistled for the wolves to follow as he walked behind the pair.

"Is that so?" Dany asked.
"It is," Jon smiled, "I'll warn you now that he wore me out pretty good."

She only chuckled as Rickon recounted their day together in full detail, his little cheeks flushed red from exhaustion. Shaggydog and Ghost had no complaints, for once, about being kenneled. On their way to the great hall, Rickon had walked between Jon and Dany, taking a hand from each of them to hold. Once inside, the boy took off toward Arya, likely to brag about his day spent in the godswood.

Dany took a seat next to Sam, and Jon, next to Dany. Across from Sam sat Robb, and to his side, Margaery. Before anyone bothered to get a conversation started, Barristan and Ned walked into the hall together, looking jovial as they spoke in hushed whispers. They stopped not far from Sam, their voices carrying just enough for Jon to listen in.

"Being here at Winterfell, I can't help but remember the time we fought on opposite sides at the Trident," the knight commented.

Ned chuckled, "Had I met you in the field, I might not be standing here today."

"Don't be so modest, my lord. You've taken down a dozen great knights. I've seen it, myself."

"My father had told me once that you were the best he'd ever seen. Where matters of combat are concerned, I've never known the man to be wrong."

"Your father was a fine man," Barristan's words were genuine.

"Indeed, he was," Ned agreed. Both men slipped into their memories as they stared ahead.

Jon cleared his throat, hoping to divert attention away from the collective eavesdropping the table had been doing. Barristan's cover had already been blown to Robb, whom Margaery had kept few secrets from.

"Have you any word of Bran?" Jon inquired of his brother.
"Not much, I'm afraid."

"Rickon says he's been asking for Osha."

"Osha," Robb's face scrunched up. "What for?"

"No idea."

"Ask Greyjoy, he's headed over," he said to Jon before shouting to the ward, "Greyjoy! Over here!"

Theon escorted both Jeyne and Sansa over, the three of them sitting in the empty seats beside Margaery. Jon eyed him closely as he set his plate down before settling in.

"Jon?" Theon asked, a little perturbed by the unyielding eye contact.

"Since you seem to know everything lately, is there any word of Bran?"

"Heard he's doin' well, but still pretty out of it. Milk of the poppy an' all."

"And the infection?"

"I assume no news is good news," he said, shoveling a spoonful of food into his mouth, taking care to chew more carefully than usual, what with Jeyne beside him.

Surprisingly, Lady Stark had wandered inside, looking gaunt and pale. Walking right over to her husband, they slipped into something of a spat. Ned took care to preserve decorum amidst the hall as bodies continued filling in the seats, though Cat made no effort, herself.

"If Lady Stark is here, who is with Bran?"

"Probably the wildling," Theon offered. "Doubt Maester Luwin has left his room since..." his voice
trailed off, reluctant to put words to what happened to Bran. "He's pretty torn up about it, even though it was the only choice."

A hush fell over the table as everyone directed their gazes back toward the Lord and Lady. Ned tried escorting his wife to her usual seat, gesturing for one of the servants to bring her a much-needed plate of food. Cat kept fighting against him, looking as though she'd been yelling, except that her voice hadn't carried even an inch.

"What could they be arguing about?" Dany whispered.

Theon lowered his voice to match, "They've been summoned to the Vale."

"What?" several voices asked at once.

"Lady Stark's sister is to be wedded soon."

"What?!" Jon, Robb, and Sansa angrily shouted in unison, drawing unwanted attention from a few people seated at the neighboring table.

"No, that can't be," Robb waved away the idea. "You must've heard wrong."

"Jon Arryn just died," Jon added.

Theon shrugged in his usual annoying manner, as if the news had been no big deal.

"To who? Who is she marrying?" Robb asked, looking rather incensed.

Shrugging once more, Theon admitted he didn't know. He even looked to Jeyne for an answer, to which she only shook her head.

"I don't like the sound of this at all," Robb growled. "Must be a bold man, swooping in to become Lord of the Vale just like that. And what of Robin?"
Everyone at the table eyed each other, having no answers or even guesses to offer up.

"They can't leave," Sansa added after a moment. "What about Bran? We've too many guests here, they can't leave," she insisted once more.

Robb shifted his attention to Margaery, "Your family wouldn't leave if my parents left, would they?"

Grasping his hand under the table, "I doubt it," she said. "Though, does that mean you'd act as Lord of Winterfell while your father is away?"

Taking a moment to ponder the possibility, he whispered, "Only if you'd be my Lady."

Unluckily for Robb, his words hadn't been lost on the rest of the table, all of whom participated in a collective groan in response.

"That's enough," Robb hissed, his threat met only with a round of laughter.

"Don't mind them, darling," Margaery sang, lifting her hand to twirl one of his copper curls around her finger, the sly gesture enough to momentarily pacify him.

"You're not makin' it any better," Jon chuckled, that is, until he saw Sansa looking past Jeyne and Theon, sighing through a sudden hurt, lovesick expression.

Clearing his throat, Jon tried to subtly inquire, "Sansa, how come you aren't sittin' with Jojen and Meera?"

She turned to look at the Reeds, sitting together with their father as well as Arya and Rickon.

"I don't know them that well," she said. "They're more Arya's friends than mine."

"Jojen's about your age," Jon added, nodding toward the boy again.
"Is he?" she asked, obviously disinterested in the comparison. "He's rather short."

"That's not fair," Dany suddenly chimed in, her mouth still half-full of food. She swallowed it down before continuing, "You're taller than anyone else your age. Hells, you're taller than I am!"

Dany's comments encouraged a few laughs from the table at her expense.

Jon only smirked, he liked that his wife was short. Looking down the table to Sansa once more, he pressed the issue further, "He's much more interesting than most kids his age, you know."

"Hey!" Sansa shouted through a smile, tearing off a piece of bread before throwing it right at her brother.

Jon managed to dodge the projectile before clarifying, "Gods, I didn't mean you, Sansa!"

"Now, now, children..." Margaery smirked as she warned them, shaking her finger the same way her grandmother might do.

"Why do you look so upset all of a sudden?" Dany asked, noticing Jon's glum expression as they set out toward the keep.

Jon slowed his pace, raising a hand to run through his hair as he hesitated.

"I know it's not about Bran, since I received all the same news as you. Hmm," she pondered aloud, squeezing at her chin as she considered. "Is it that stuff about your aunt's wedding?"

"My aunt's wedding," Jon groaned, letting his arm fall to his side.

Dany couldn't help but laugh at his reaction. "Sorry," she said, before wiping the smile from her face,
"Well, if it's not that, I'm out of ideas."

Taking a step closer to her, Jon took her hand in his, "I will tell you, but before you get upset, just know that I'm workin' on it, alright?"

"Alright..." she slowly agreed.

"When I woke up today, I noticed one of your eggs was missin', the black one."

"You noticed my egg was gone? How?"

"The latch was open on the chest..." his voice trailed off as he realized she looked more-so confused rather than upset. "I spent a great deal of the afternoon tryin' to figure out where it went, afraid to tell you and break your heart," he paused to examine her face. "How are you not more upset about this?"

"Because I'm the one who took the egg, Jon."

"What? Where did you take it?"

"To the springs..."

"The springs? For what?"

"I thought maybe the heat might coax him out," she coyly replied, casting her eyes away.

Jon shifted his weight between feet as he considered the reality of her plans, "Um, Dany?"

"Yes, Jon?"

"Can dragons breathe underwater?"
As soon as he voiced the concern, two sets of feet began pushing the ground swiftly behind them, headed straight for the godswood. Inside, it was pitch-dark as expected, no light source bright enough to pierce the dense blanket of leaves. Dany's legs had carried her quite a bit further than Jon's, much to his chagrin. He managed to yell, "Be careful!" just as a clutch of upended roots sent him tumbling into the ground.

After dusting himself off, he took more care as he sprinted toward the springs, dimly illuminated by the light of the fireflies, just as the night before. Dany's sleeves had been bunched up nearly to her shoulders as she felt around in the dark pool of water. Jon held his breath as he stood before her, unsure what to expect as she raised her arms up.

"Jon," she said, her voice quiet. "Come here."

Cautiously, he stepped around the edge of the water to meet her as she pulled the unbroken egg up before handing it over to him.

"Well, no worries, since it didn't work," she said, sounding rather discouraged. "And on top of that, it's cold."

Grasping the egg, Jon was surprised to find she'd been right, "You put it here this morning?"

"No, last night."

"Huh," he said, running his fingers along the scales, noting that even the water that clung to them felt warm. "Well, that is odd."

"I just assumed Jojen's comments about the dragon in the godswood had been some sort of clue."

"He said there was a dragon near the heart tree, the springs aren't near the heart tree."

She sighed, "What could it mean, then?"
"They're just stories, Dany. I asked him about it earlier today."

Her expression fell blank as she snatched the egg from his hands. Jon felt as though he'd broken her heart after all. Though he didn't want to get her hopes up for nothing, he felt it was all he could do to cheer her up. He began, "Jojen did have something else to say..."

"What?" she asked, her lips as flat as her voice as she pursed them tightly together.

"When I mentioned the eggs were petrified, he asked whether or not I actually believed they were."

"So?"

"He asked in that unsettling way, like he knows more than he's lettin' on."

Dany only plopped onto the ground in defeat. Placing the egg between her legs, she delicately stroked the scales, petting it as if it were an animal rather than an egg.

On hands and knees, Jon crawled over to her, wrapping his arm around her shoulders for comfort after settling in. Squeezing her, he tried to provide some measure of hope. "You're the only person in the world fit to break those dragons free, Daenerys. You'll figure it out, you will," he said, surprised by his own conviction.

"Tell me you see it too," she whispered, leaning into him as she raised the egg up for inspection. Previously, Jon might have been able to blame the sunlight for the faint red ripples that flared as if bubbling to the egg's surface, though he knew the fireflies alone could not produce an effect like that.

"I do," he confessed, as they stared into the dark scales as she turned the egg, both hypnotized by the indistinct crimson swirls that seemed to glow in the darkness.

Together, they sat by the water's edge. The rising steam struggled against the cold night air, leaving a sheen of condensation on their skin, and on Jon's leather clothing. Slowly, he rocked his wife as he held her, the nocturnal harmony of insects serenading them. Unsure what thoughts might've been dancing through her busy mind, Jon simply enjoyed being there beside her, in no rush to retire for the night.
Chapter End Notes

Sorry if I broke your heart like Dany's. But y'all know it can't be that easy! :D Don't worry - they're coming!
He Will Break No Bread

Chapter Notes

This chapter took a bit longer to release than expected, as the approaching holidays have brought a lot of unwelcome distractions my way. That being said - hope all of my beautiful readers have equally lovely holidays!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

After nestling into a discreet nook on the bridge above the armory, Jon had a decent enough time spying Daenerys and Arya in the courtyard. From this vantage point, he could easily discern the plumpness of his wife's growing belly despite the distance. A pregnant woman working to master the bow was a strange sight indeed, nevertheless, Jon couldn't peel his eyes away from her. Over the weeks, she had directed most of her focus on improving stamina. She'd practice loading arrows and releasing them as quickly as she could manage, rather than worrying about her aim. Her dedication was impressive, much like the muscle she'd been building up in her arms.

Now that her parents had left for the Vale, Arya was likewise free to practice with Needle out in the open. Some days Jon would join them, other days she'd practice on her own beside Daenerys. Often, they'd compete to see who could shoot the most arrows as quickly as possible, a game Meera used to win each time.

Much like when they arrived, the Reeds had slipped away under the cover of darkness, offering farewells only to Ned and Bran. After their departure, as well as Lord and Lady Stark's, life at Winterfell seemed to slow. So much so, that some of Dany's wanderlust had even spread to Jon.

After all, Robb had been busy acting as Lord of Winterfell in his father's absence. Much to his brother's chagrin, Ned had made a very demanding job look effortless and easy, and his eldest son had been put to quite the task while left in charge. Theon and Margaery remained loyally at his side to help in whatever way they could. Jon, however, thought it best to keep his distance unless personally requested.

There had been one saving grace from the stagnation he'd felt each day—his little brothers. Bran's condition had been steadily improving as the days pressed on, and finally, he'd been allowed visitors again. Rickon had more or less moved into Bran's room to keep him company. Occasionally, Jon would retrieve the young boy to give Bran some peace and quiet.

Before he knew it, his feet began moving of their own volition, drawing him out of the shadows and across the bridge to the great keep. It was then that Daenerys had finally noticed him.
"Say hello to Bran for me," she called with a wave, her smile the only brightness on an otherwise gloomy, cloud-covered day. Either she knew Jon too well, or he'd become too predictable. He simply nodded to her, as well as to Arya, before opening the door and heading inside.

The walk to Bran's room was a welcome one. He used that time to mentally prepare himself for the sight—the form of only one leg beneath his furs, which never ceased to break Jon's heart.

As expected, Rickon had been lying beside Bran, both boys staring at Jon as he appeared in the doorway. A third pair of eyes, Osha's, had also fallen on him as she sat in Old Nan's usual chair.

"Snow," she greeted him by his surname, as she had taken to doing the more familiar they became. "The boys 've been expectin' you."

"Have they?" Jon smiled, making his way over to Bran's bedside.

"Bored to tears, they are," Osha laughed, rising from her seat before gesturing for Jon to take it. "And I'm runnin' low on stories for 'em."

"Don't know how much help I'll be," he smirked at his pair of brothers huddled up together in bed. Reluctantly, he sunk into the chair, watching as Osha stacked a few plates from around Bran's room, tidying up.

"Since you're 'ere now, I'll be takin' a bit of a break."

"Take all the time you need," Jon softly replied.

With a personality as unkempt as her looks, Osha provided a certain welcome departure from the otherwise formal nature around Winterfell. Jon had even developed something of a fondness for her and the way she'd taken to caring for Bran. By now the kids couldn't get enough of her and the strange tales from beyond the Wall.

"I'll be back soon enough," she said to the boys, balancing the stack of dishes on one palm so she could shake a free finger in their direction. "Don't you give 'im a hard time."
"We won't," both boys monotonously said as they pulled themselves up into sitting positions.

The three of them watched Osha as she left, allowing her footsteps to fade before anyone dared to speak. As it had been the first time Jon caught Bran without any supervision other than his own in weeks, he decided to quench his curiosity on the matter.

"I hear you requested for Osha to start lookin' after you."

"I did," he agreed nonchalantly, dropping his gaze to his hands, folded neatly atop his furs.

"Strange choice, don't you think?" Jon asked. Though he harbored no ill will toward Osha, the run-in she had with his little brother is what left him with only one leg, after all.

"I wanted her to get to know me before we went north."

Jon sighed. The first time Bran mentioned this adventure with Osha and the Reeds, he'd been under the influence of milk of the poppy. He'd still been taking small doses for the pain, but he'd been more or less coherent now, and apparently still determined.

"I want to go north, too," Rickon said.

"No, you don't want to go north," Jon added, in hopes to intervene.

"Yes, I do! There are giants in the north, Osha's seen 'em."

"There are no more giants. They're all gone," he reminded his brothers, skepticism clear in his tone.

"Osha's seen them," Bran pressed on his brother's behalf.

"Maybe she's just tellin' stories to you," Jon waved his hand as if to dismiss the tale.
"She tells lots of stories. Better than even Old Nan's," Rickon confirmed.

"What else has she told you about, then?"

"The red comet," Bran answered.

Jon rolled his eyes, "How is that a good story? Everyone saw the red comet."

His brothers exchanged a quick look before Bran asked, "Is it true Dany has real dragon eggs?"

"Yes... she hasn't shown them to you, yet?"

Bran shook his head. "I'd like to see them before they hatch."

"Before they hatch? Did Jojen say somethin' about 'em?"

Shaking his head again, he clarified, "Osha says the red comet means only one thing. Dragons."

"White Walkers, giants, and now dragons?"

Bran crossed his arms, just as unenthused by Jon's disbelief as Dany had been. "She has dragon eggs. And she's a Targaryen."

Jon heaved another sigh, torn between agreeing and possibly getting Bran's hopes up for nothing, and sounding too much like Maester Luwin, insisting everything fantastical wasn't real.

"Rickon," Jon turned to his youngest brother, who'd immediately perked up. "Want to do Bran a favor?"
The boy nodded his head quickly with a sudden rush of excitement.

"Go find Dany, and ask her to have the eggs brought up so you two can see 'em. She should be in the courtyard."

He swiftly jumped from the bed and pulled on his boots. Before Jon knew it, the boy had been halfway down the hall, already in pursuit of his new mission.

"Bran," Jon lowered his voice. "I wanted to ask you about something."

"What is it?"

"I always thought skinchanging was just somethin' else Old Nan told stories about. That is, until Jojen said you can do it at will. Through Summer."

Bran looked down at his hands once more, fidgeting with and picking at his nails. He neither confirmed nor denied anything.

"I have dreams like that, too, about Ghost. But I have no control over them," Jon admitted. After another moment passed between them, he continued, "How do you do it?"

"Summer lets me, he trusts me," he whispered. The boy had closed his eyes, his head bobbing slightly. After a moment or two had passed, Bran's lids fluttered open just in time for Jon to see his irises flee, leaving behind a pair of vacant white eyes.

Shifting to the edge of his seat to better inspect Bran's face, Jon jumped when he suddenly heard Summer's high-pitched howl in the distance. After a few blinks, Bran's irises fell back into place before focusing on Jon. Several direwolves had since joined in the distant howling as Jon stared in amazement.

"Were you there in the godswood? For my wedding ceremony?" he asked in a whisper.

A small smile crept across Bran's face as he nodded.
Jon swallowed the lump in his throat, "Tell me, Bran, how do you do it?"

Before his brother could answer, Osha came back with a fresh plate of baked apples, "Told you I wouldn't be long."

Instinctively, Jon rose from his seat in order to offer it back to her.

"It's hard to explain with words," Bran said, outright ignoring his caretaker's sudden entrance. "Next time it happens, try to remember it's not a dream."

"A dream?" Osha curiously inquired, turning around to face them.

Before either could provide an explanation, horns sounded in the distance, further riling the still-yowling direwolves. Both of the brothers looked to Osha for an answer.

"Do you know what the horns are for, Osha?" Jon asked.

"Every time I hear that sound it means visitors," she guessed with a shrug.

Visitors? Jon thought, suddenly feeling his stomach tying itself into knots with worry, particularly now that Ned and Catelyn had been away.

"It's okay, Jon. Go see who it is. Daenerys will be here soon," Bran said.

With that, Jon gave his brother a nod before making his way outdoors as swiftly as he could manage. The moment he set foot outside, Rodrik Cassel had found him. "Follow me," he said, placing his arm around Jon's shoulders and leading him toward the great hall. "Don't like the looks of this one."

"Who's here? I didn't see."

"You will," the old man insisted. "Come on."
There had been an air of chaos once inside the hall. As expected, Margaery was seated in Catelyn's usual chair, her grandmother to her side. Grey Wind had been there, anxiously following his master around as he helped prepare the hall for the unexpected visitor.

"Close the doors until every bit of food you can find is taken back. He'll break no bread while under this roof," he shouted to the few servants who'd been busy setting up for supper. With haste, they began removing the few plates of food that had dressed the tables.

"Head to the kitchens, and tell them to delay supper until further notice," Robb said to a nearby guard before straightening his belt and unsheathing his sword.

Rodrik rushed to stand behind the high table, taking a spot behind the Queen of Thorns. Fewer than half of the candles had been lit so far, allowing, instead, for the fading sunlight to trickle in, just enough to tuck ominous shadows beneath each suspicious brow.

"What's going on?" Jon cautiously asked, still unsure what all the fuss had been about.

"Up here with me," Robb ushered him over, looking thoroughly displeased as he approached his father's usual seat. "Lord Baelish has apparently come seeking an audience."

"Lord Baelish? The man whose wedding your parents left to attend days ago?"

"One in the same," Robb growled. On instinct, Grey Wind lowered himself into a lying position in front of his master's feet. Before taking his seat, Robb carefully laid his sword across the table, a clear signal denying guest right to the unwelcome visitor.

"Sit down, Jon," his brother sternly ordered.

Quickly, he sunk into the seat beside Robb as several guards marched to stand behind them, their round helmets casting enough of a shadow to completely darken their eyes. A stream of light poured into the dimly-lit room as the door swung open, the elongated shadows of another round of guards painted the walls as Petyr Baelish was escorted inside. The guards then fanned out to either side of the room, leaving him alone to stand before the Stark heir.
With his chin raised and shoulders squared under a hefty fur cloak, Robb managed to make himself look larger and more imposing than he actually was. Jon likewise shifted in his seat, hoping to exude the same intimidating first impression.

Making no effort to speak first, the acting Lord of Winterfell let a moment of silence pass between he and his guest as they eyed each other. Robb, clearly unimpressed, meanwhile Lord Baelish gave nothing away other than the hint of a smirk.

"Lord Stark, I've come to Winterfell hoping to speak with your father," he finally said.

"Lord Baelish. I'm afraid you've just missed him," Robb flatly stated, his voice filling the room from wall to wall, the same way his father's had.

"Perhaps your mother is available to speak with?"

"My mother," Robb began, irritation clear in his tone, "Received a raven from her sister. Inviting her and her husband to your wedding in the Vale. And yet here you are, at Winterfell, mere days before you are to wed my aunt Lysa."

The man's expression remained smug and unflinching, "It is on Lysa's behalf that I stand before you today."

"I must say," Robb said, pulling a small scroll from his pocket, "I'm even less impressed with this second scroll recently found on the body of a rider just beyond our gates. Addressed to Lady Stark, accusing the Lannisters of murdering Jon Arryn."

He tried to conceal a look of either disappointment or worry upon hearing how the scroll had actually found its way to Winterfell, only small facial tics giving away his surprise.

"Perhaps my mother might believe you due to your history together. But so far as I can see, the person who benefits most from Arryn's death is you. Rushin' off to wed my aunt just weeks after his passing, becoming the new Lord of the Eyrie, just like that."

"To be clear—it was Lysa's suggestion we wed, not my own."
"I'm sure it was," Robb hissed. "Maybe the Lannisters did poison him. Or maybe Arryn simply died of old age. My father is Warden of the North. He has obligations to his people and to his family. As much as Arryn meant to him, what's done is done. If you'd like a murder investigation, I suggest you perform it yourself, my lord."

"Very well," Baelish said. "I'm headed back to the Eyrie. I'll be seeing your mother there, soon enough." Petyr's tone had been carefully measured, with just the right amount of snark but not enough to be confronted about it.

"The hour grows late," Robb sneered. "There should be room at the inn just outside the gates if you need lodgings. I'm afraid we're full, Lord Baelish."

With that, Robb rose from his seat, folding his arms as he and Petyr eyed each other from across the room. Admiring the way he handled himself, Jon folded his arms alongside his brother. He didn't trust the man, either. *Quick tempers,* he thought, visibly scoffing at the idea. *I'll show you a quick temper, just test me.*

The guards lining the hall moved forward, hands on their hilts as they saw Lord Baelish out of the room, and hopefully out of Winterfell entirely. Robb walked toward the fireplace just behind him, and threw the scroll into it. Petyr had turned his head around just in time to watch it pop and crackle in the flames before rounding the corner and out of the door.

Margaery rose from her seat, gliding to Robb's side. "That was incredible!" she beamed, placing her hand on his chest. His rigid pose faltered just a bit under her touch.

"You shouldn't have burned that scroll, boy," Olenna spoke up.

Flashing his princely smile to his would-be grandmother-in-law, Robb agreed, "That's exactly right. Which is why I didn't." Pulling the real scroll from his pocket, he handed it off to her. Olenna studied the scroll several times, likely considering what it might mean.

"Theon came across the rider, said both he and his horse looked mangled, possibly the work of a direwolf. After searching him, he brought the scroll straight to me."

"And neither of you told Lord Stark?" Jon asked, perplexed.
"It happened just before Bran lost his leg," he explained. "Father had been rather preoccupied. I didn't trust my mother to see his intentions for what they were. So yes, I waited."

Before any of them could dwell on Robb's conclusion, Maester Luwin barged into the hall with yet another scroll for the young lord. He took a moment to exchange looks with both Tyrells as well as Jon before breaking the seal.

Whatever delight his brother had felt from seeing Lord Baelish out had been fleeting. Robb's previous satisfaction had been wiped clean from his face as he read the scrawled words.

"What? What is it?" Jon asked as worry seeped right into him.

"It's Benjen."

Jon's stomach dropped immediately. His uncle meant a great deal to him. "What news of him?" he pleaded, fearing the worst.

After a moment's pause, Robb explained in a voice as glum as his expression, "He went ranging beyond the Wall and only his horse returned. He's gone missing."

...  

It was still dark out as Jon reached the east gate after a pit stop by the kennels to retrieve Ghost. Though he'd informed his wife they'd depart for Castle Black at first light, he still felt surprise upon seeing the wagon almost completely loaded by the time he joined his party. Sam stood nearby speaking with Margaery, and not far from them, Robb had been saying his farewells to Daenerys.

Barristan Selmy had remained at Winterfell all this time later, likely at Dany's request. Seeing him beside his horse right inside the gate, Jon knew she had also managed to convince him to escort them north, as well.

Jon sprinted to the wagon to inspect and double-check its contents, surprised to see nearly all of Dany's belongings in tow. After Robb released her from their embrace, his teary-eyed wife joined him at the back of the wagon, finally donning a weather-appropriate fur cloak which seemed to dwarf her.
"Are you seriously bringin' everything you own, Dany?"

"It's not everything," she assured him.

"Damn near everythin'," he griped, specifically nodding to her two chests of priceless goods. "What if we get robbed?"

"We'll have a direwolf. And Arstan will be with us."

"About that," Jon lowered his voice so only she'd be able to hear. "If he gets recognized ridin' around with the Targaryen girl outside of Winterfell, it could put his and your safety in jeopardy."

"Don't worry about that," she simply said. "Mikken fashioned a helmet that hides his face, save for his eyes. It's crude, but it'll work all the same. I even paid him for his work."

Jon sighed. All he could do is voice his concern, though he knew the knight must've been aware of the dangers before agreeing to the sudden excursion. For all Jon knew, Barristan wanted to meet Maester Aemon, as well. At least Daenerys would have someone to keep her safe as Jon hopefully attended the ranging missions beyond the Wall to help search for his uncle.

"Have you got all your things, Sam?" Jon shouted to his friend as he lifted himself up into the seat of the horse-drawn wagon.

"I have, don't worry about me," he called back, making room for the two additional bodies that would be sitting beside him shortly.

The pair of guards Jon had hand-picked to accompany them had been the last to approach. One escorted a pair of horses—Jon's horse to the left, and his own to the right. The second guard likewise escorted a third horse, as well as two young boys in chains.

Daenerys cocked her eyebrow at the sight. "Jon?" she simply asked.
"The little birds," he whispered.

His wife winced upon seeing two young boys in constraints. Jon wondered how she'd react upon learning the *Spider* required his birds have their tongues cut out, and that the boys could only communicate through the use of ravens, or perhaps nods. *Not well*, he imagined. After the children were loaded onto the wagon beside Sam, Robb strode over to Jon.

"You look sick," he said, squinting his eyes as he examined his brother. Jon had managed to say his farewells to all of his siblings the previous night—all save for one. *Arya*.

"I feel sick," Jon admitted. "I couldn't find Arya. I know she'll be furious when she realizes I've left without even sayin' goodbye to her."

"I'll explain why you left. She'll understand."

"Tell her I'll write to her, too. If I can."

"I will," Robb laughed. "Send a raven when you arrive, will you?"

Jon only nodded. The brothers stood there in silence for a moment, prolonging the inevitable moment they'd have to say goodbye, unsure when they'd next see each other or whether they'd ever see their uncle again.

"Farewell, Snow," Robb finally said with a steely resolve that hadn't quite matched the glassiness of his blue eyes.

"And you, Stark."

The pair embraced, Robb squeezing Jon so tightly that the air expelled from his lungs. Jon couldn't help letting a chuckle slip as his brother stepped away and back to Margaery's side.

With only a whistle for instruction, Ghost leapt up into the wagon, settling in on the loosely-drawn tarpaulin stretched over the back. Daenerys had been patiently waiting beside Jon's horse. Underneath her cloak, she donned crudely made leathers rather than a dress.
Upon seeing what she had on under her cloak, Jon smiled in approval before hoisting her up onto his horse's pillion. After mounting, himself, he instructed her, "Hold on to me. Tight."

"As you command," she cooed as small, gloved hands caressed their way across his midsection.

Grabbing the reins, Jon turned to take one last look at Winterfell. Already, there had been a sense of foreboding, perhaps due to the pained expressions of the few gathered at the gate to see them off. Unsure exactly when he'd return, he tried to savor the last image of his home. Daenerys nuzzled into his cloak as they set off, her familiar warmth pressed against him likely the only comfort he'd have for weeks to come.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer for fans of Littlefinger: His fans may be unhappy with my portrayal here. The inclusion was never meant to dumb him down, only to show that the man's schemes are being thwarted left and right - carefully calculated moves being compromised by unpredictable changes: Bran having never caught Cersei and Jaime in the act, Stannis becoming Hand rather than Ned, Lysa bribing him into an earlier marriage, as well as her rider never quite making it to Winterfell, and instead, making it into the hands of two suspicious boys rather than his lifelong friend. His efforts foiled by pure happenstance. Anyway, that is all! :D
"Do you want to know what my favorite part of traveling is?"

"Well, since we've nothing but time, mind if I take a guess?" Jon asked, his smirk easily hidden from Daenerys, who'd been clutching him tightly from behind.

"Why not?"

"Let's see. Could it be the endless grasslands, giving no indication of how far we've come or how far we've left to go?" he complained.

"Jon," Daenerys lightly scolded him. Indeed, the countryside had consisted of little more than sprawling plains as far as the eye could see, blotted with dark trees atop its rolling hills. Though on this evening, the trees inched closer to the path, becoming more abundant as they rode along. In the distance, Dany could even discern a wooded area which seemed to swallow the kingsroad ahead—an extension of the wolfswood, she guessed. A place she'd heard all about, mostly from Robb, but never set foot in, herself.

"Is that not it? It must be the clopping of the horse's hooves, then, never a moment's peace."

"Oh, and the castle was so quiet, was it? What with you boys clattering swords in the courtyard day after day? Guess again."

"What's left? The numbness in your ass and legs? Or is it the cramping you prefer?"

Dany laughed, "Do you miss Winterfell so much, already?"

"Do you not?"

"Why should I? I've got everything I need right here," she insisted, squeezing him tighter.

"Yes, you do. Because you've brought everything you own save for our bed."
From the right angle, she could tell from his apple cheeks that he'd been smiling. He'd taken to bickering quite well, especially when they had little else to do to pass the time. Though, Dany wouldn't be distracted by his sarcasm and teasing. Instead, she let one of her hands slip down to his thigh, muscles taut from a long day of riding. She half expected he wouldn't even notice, as she had enough trouble feeling her own thighs, spread a bit too wide to accommodate the horse's width.

"Daenerys," he warned.

"Daenerys? Am I in trouble?"

"You will be if you keep that up," he groaned as her hand inched closer to his groin.

"Keep what up?" she asked. "I'm simply holding on to you, as instructed."

Jon attempted to bat her away, but she didn't budge. Once his hand returned to the reins, she properly grazed him, already feeling a familiar stiffness.

"Speaking of beds, I miss taking you to bed," she softly moaned, as close to his ear as she could manage, considering the height difference.

"There's been no bed to take me to for days."

"You know what I mean," she remarked, boldly squeezing him through his trousers, surprised by how quickly he'd responded to her touch.

"Stop that, Dany," he warned her, "I'm going to fall right off of this horse and I'll have no choice but to take you with me."

Though his body seemed to agree with her more often than his words had, she reluctantly complied. Their trip so far hadn't afforded them much time alone, and she had been merely taking advantage of a rare opportunity. The wagon had been trailing rather far behind them, after all, the guards further behind it, still. Barristan had been quite a ways ahead of them, letting his horse gallop at full speed, doing his precursory check of the road ahead before they chose a spot to set up a camp for the night. They'd only seen other travelers in the early going, and by now, things were starting to seem rather
"This is my favorite part of traveling, by the way," she continued after a moment.

"Which is what, exactly?"

"Spending each hour of daylight holding you in my arms."

"I seem to recall you hold onto me pretty tight in the dark, as well," he said. His cheeks may have hinted at his first smile, though this time, his firmly rounded words gave his grin away.

"That's my second favorite part—sleeping out in the open, under the stars," she admitted.

"Well, you'll be back under 'em, soon," he said, taking a moment to nod toward the small rips in the blanket of clouds, revealing a soft reddish sky beneath. "Sun's goin' down fast."

Growing up, Septa Mordane had always made sure the girls thoroughly studied maps of Westeros. As a result, Daenerys had focused much of her attention south, knowing her familial ties to King's Landing or Dragonstone, and even daydreaming of distant locations such as Dorne. In comparison, the Wall had always seemed close to Winterfell. Yet, the days stretched out, each as dull as the last, little more than plains and grey clouds, chilled winds and, yes, numb asses. Though he was only teasing her, Jon had been right about all of it.

For as dull as the north had been—far more-so than she could've imagined—her mind had been the perfect place to retreat. With open eyes, she dreamt of dragons, flying high above the plains, swooping along with the curves of the hills. The wind picked up the further the sun dipped on the horizon. Dany shook out her hair, letting the breeze carry it wherever it pleased. As the wind whipped her skin, she imagined herself not on horseback, but on dragonback, an unimaginable beast carrying the pair wherever they wished to go—in a matter of days, rather than weeks.

The wolfswood had been quite different from the godswood, Dany noticed. It had the same ancient presence, but the smell had been much less enticing, a clear stench of death masked with pine. At some point in the past, surely the forests were one in the same, but the godswood flourished under the protection and care of the Starks over the centuries, whereas these woods were battered and
dreary, with thick, half-rotted trees covered in moss.

Somehow, the party managed to find a clearing large enough to house the wagon, with the horses tied up nearby. The trees were dense, shielding them from much of the cold wind, but there was a chill coming from the stream nearby. Daenerys found comfort in the babble of the water, excited at the prospect of the sound lulling her to sleep in a few hours' time.

Dany sat alone watching the guards build a pair of fires, feeling somewhat useless as the men around her put their skills to use. She remembered her lessons as a girl with Septa Mordane, being taught how to sew and sing, meanwhile, the boys were taken on hunts and taught skills to survive the wilderness if need be. Suddenly, she felt thankful that Jon insisted she learn to use a weapon in some measure, knowing pretty songs or a tight stitch wouldn't serve her will on a cold night in the woods.

From across the fire, she eyed the little birds, sitting under the supervision of the guards, still shackled. Their presence left her feeling terribly conflicted. On the one hand, she knew they worked for a man on the Usurper's small council, and therefore put her entire family's safety in jeopardy. On the other hand, they were just children, and now they'd be forced to spend their lives at Castle Black, swearing vows to become sworn brothers of the Night's Watch. Can they swear vows without tongues? she wondered to herself, as an inevitable shiver shook her spine.

After several moments, their expressionless stares began to unnerve her so much that she rose up, hoping to find a place their eyes couldn't follow. She wandered over to the stream, alone, perhaps a bit too trusting of the outcropping as she stood right at the water's edge. Both Jon and Barristan had been rather light on their feet, so when she heard a heavy crunching of twigs and leaves, she knew it had to be Sam.

"Are you as tired of traveling as I am?" he asked as a way to announce himself.

"No," she responded without a moment's hesitation before turning to him. "I've dreamed of this ever since learning I was forbidden from leaving Winterfell."

Sam laughed. "Forbid anything, and it becomes a temptation, doesn't it? Maybe I'd feel the same way if I hadn't already made this trip months ago."

"Right," Dany said. "I had forgotten. Do you know how much longer it will be, then?"

"Mmm," he raised a hand to stroke his chin. "A fortnight, at the very least."
Dany winced, "Does it get much colder?"

"Oh yeah," he confirmed. "This is downright balmy in comparison. Just wait until you see the Wall."

Dany shivered again, admitting, "I can't wait to, actually. Though I'm more excited to see Aemon."

"It will be nice to see him, again, if nothing else," he agreed.

They stood together for a moment or two, just listening to the lull of the stream. Somewhere, on the very edge of what earshot allowed, she could hear wolves howling.

"Dany?"

"What is it, Sam?" she asked, turning to face him.

"Not all of the men at Castle Black are like Benjen Stark."

"I know that, I overheard you telling Jon at our wedding feast."

"No," he said, dropping his voice. "They're a bunch of animals, really. They're not going to be happy to see a woman there, especially knowing they can't touch her. Believe me, Dany, they're almost certainly going to try."

Before she could respond, Jon and Barristan were headed back, carrying several fish for supper. Jon handed his catches off to the knight, along with his pole, before sprinting over to join Sam and Daenerys.

Unable to help herself upon seeing her husband, she walked toward him, clutching at the straps of his cloak as she raised herself up on tiptoes to kiss him. As she broke away, Jon offered Sam an apologetic shrug.
"I should go help with supper," he said, offering the pair a smile before crunching back through the leaves, back toward camp.

"Now you've scared him off," Jon said.

"I couldn't help kissing you. It's been ages."

"Ages? It's been what, an hour?"

"Like I said, ages."

"Why are you kissing me at all when I reek of fish?"

Dany moved closer to him, wrapping her arms around his waist and taking a big, exaggerated whiff. "Fish, yes," she agreed, moving in even closer. "Also horse, and direwolf."

Jon laughed as she nuzzled into him. She planted another kiss on the cool, exposed skin of his neck as he groaned, "Gods, I could use a bath."

Though perhaps it was true, she didn't mind him dirty. Briefly, she imagined Jon covered in muck and smelling as rancid as spoiled meat, and decided she'd be drawn to him, nonetheless. However, the closer she cuddled up to him, she had no trouble finding his familiar scent of musk and leather.

As Jon wrapped his arms around her in return, he turned his gaze toward the others. He shook his head, exclaiming, "He can't fish, but he can debone one."

"Can you debone a fish?" she probed.

"Well, no..."

"But you can catch one?"
Tilting his head like a curious direwolf, Jon's only response was to raise an eyebrow at her.

"His mother taught him to cook," she explained.

"Is that so?"

"And to sing."

"Much good that'll do him," he smirked.

"Tell me about it," she groaned.

"Hmm," Jon pondered, wrapping his cloak around her as they held each other. "What about you? You must've had singin' lessons, same as Sansa."

Dany playfully shoved him away, "Shut up."

"And yet, you never sing for me," he sighed, over-exaggerating his feigned disappointment, even bringing a hand to his chest as if to nurse a broken heart.

"Nor will I," she shoved him a second time. Despite his best efforts, he couldn't quite wrench the satisfied grin from his lips.

"Sing to me, Dany," he cooed in a voice as smooth as butter with glazed eyes to match.

She knew he was simply teasing her, but everything about his tactics made her weak in the knees. For a moment, she really had been tempted to serenade him. Luckily, she regained her wits and decided to challenge him, instead.

"You should be the one singing to me," she declared, folding her arms.
"I don't know how to sing."

"Oh, I bet you do," she insisted. "And I bet you have a voice just as beautiful as your father's. Sing to me, Jon Snow, make me weep."

Their banter came to an abrupt halt when Jon slipped into a frown. Though she meant no harm with her jest, she knew he was rather protective of his mother, and likely didn't enjoy her poking fun of Lyanna in any measure. Before she could apologize or explain her intention, Barristan gently cleared his throat beside them, making his presence known. Dany had been so caught up in the moment she hadn't even realized he'd approached them.

"Supper's just about ready, if you'd join us," he quietly said before making his way back to the fire.

Sighing, Jon took hold of Dany's hand before guiding her toward the others. Under his breath, he scolded her, "I bet he heard that, and he knows damn well you weren't talking about Ned."

"You can't know that for sure."

"Can you picture Lord Stark singing? Making women weep?"

"It's not so far-fetched," she said, trying to lighten the mood. "After all, he's a rather handsome man, isn't he?"

Jon's gait slowed as he audibly grimaced, "Ugh, please don't talk about him like that."

"Are you jealous?"

"Of Ned? The one man at Winterfell who wasn't in love with you? No, Dany, I'm not jealous. I just don't need to hear about his handsomeness."

"Well, he is. All the Stark men are, really," she couldn't help but chuckle.

"Even Bran and Rickon?"
"Especially Bran and Rickon. Somewhere out there, a pair of unsuspecting girls have no idea of the gold they’ll have struck in their future betrothed," she laughed, thinking fondly on her last day at Winterfell spent in Bran's room, his and Rickon's utter delight at getting to see and hold real dragon eggs.

"Meera Reed, so Bran hopes."

"Meera?" Dany nearly shrieked with delight, having made fast friends with the girl during her last few days at Winterfell. "Oh, gods be good. I hope so, too!"

Jon only smiled, gripping her hand tighter as they approached the fire back at camp. They settled in beside the other men for a quick meal before turning in for the night. Sam did the honor of telling tales of his time at the Wall, more or less preparing everyone for what to expect. Her husband seemed to have forgiven her for her slip up, though part of her wished they could just tell Barristan the truth and be done with it.

. . .

"Where's Ghost?" Dany asked.

"I tried to call him over, but he won't leave the damned wagon."

"Hmm," she said, drawing the blankets up around their chins as they settled in for the night. "Looks like it's up to me to keep you warm, then."

"It's strange, isn't it? He'll even whine when I call him. He hardly ever whines," he frowned.

"I bet he misses his brothers and sisters," she offered.

"That could be it, actually. I know how he feels."

"You miss Ghost's brothers and sisters, or yours?"
Jon laughed, "Both, now you mention it."

Wrapping her arms around him, Dany delighted in the way his ribs shook when he laughed. For such a quiet, reserved sort of man, he had a rather hearty laugh.

"Shh," someone piped from near the opposite fire.

"Sorry," Jon quietly apologized before turning to his wife. Dany could just barely make out his features in the fading light of the fire. Suddenly, Jon's thumb was grazing her lips as they stared into each other's eyes.

"Do you know I resented you when you first came to Winterfell?" he whispered.

"You did?" she asked, leaning in closer to better hear him.

"I did," he smirked. "I was jealous of you from the moment I saw you coming up the kingsroad."

"Jealous?"

"The Targaryen Princess? Come on. Of course I was jealous."

"So says the Targaryen Prince," she whispered as low as she could manage, pressing her lips right to his ear. The sudden presence of her mouth had been met with a light whimper.

"You think about the past a lot," she said, sweeping kisses across his ear before moving away enough to examine his face.

"Don't you?"

She shook her head, so close to his that their noses brushed. "I prefer the present," she breathed, before burrowing into his neck.
The night song of crickets, rushing water and crackling wood had been enough to lure Jon's eyelids down as he began to doze. Dany lightly shook him awake, "No," she demanded with a whisper.

"No?" he asked, attempting to pry his eyes open and already having trouble with it.

"I'm not through with you," she explained, her hand swiftly finding the laces of his trousers.

"Dany," he warned her, grabbing her wrist under the blanket and furs. "We can't. Not here."

"No one will even know."

"Sam?"

"Is asleep," she nodded in his direction, his light snoring, just another noise blending into the busy soundscape of the forest. The others had been near the second, larger fire, rather unlikely to see or hear anything, she determined.

Since she managed to loosen his laces enough, she easily slipped into his trousers on the second pass, her cold palm burning as she found his skin.

"Dany," he gasped her name, jumping from her chilly touch. Though, this time he made no effort to stop her as she began gently caressing him, only wincing as he no doubt endured a mixture of pleasure and discomfort as her temperature acclimated to his.

Softly, she gripped his shaft, nudging his loose skin upward with a slow stroke. Running her thumb over the tip, she found him already slick with anticipation. Realizing his breath was hitching as she explored him, she examined his face once more. His eyes were clenched shut, his whole face, really. One after the other, Jon pulled his lips into his mouth to wet them as she methodically tugged at him. He looked terribly vulnerable, which did nothing but further entice her.

Dany lowered her face to his, pulling his plump bottom lip between hers, fighting the urge to sink her teeth right into it. Very softly, he chuckled before his tongue breached her lips. Jon began moving his hips to meet each of her strokes, even swaying them side to side, angling himself as he thrust into her palm.
She fought to keep her hand locked around him as he began doing most of the work for her. Each of his thrusts felt like torture—what started as a simple tingling between her legs had grown into a thudding pain, both her mouth and cunt surged with wetness, her body desperate to sheath him anywhere but her palm.

Attempting to remove her hand from him, she felt his fingers hooking around her wrist again, holding her in place. Though this time, he had a different request. "Don't stop," he grunted.

It was a command she couldn't deny, squeezing him as she matched each of his thrusts. Jon held eye contact with her a moment before tilting his head back, looking as though he was losing a battle to keep his irises from retreating. His movements faltered the more white had been exposed. After a moment, Dany let her hand go as limp as his body, realizing wherever he'd gone, he was no longer in the moment with her.

"Jon," she gruffly whispered, attempting to shake him out of it. For a moment she thought it might be a seizure, but he hadn't been shaking or moving at all. He was breathing just fine, deeply even, though his expression remained as blank as his eyes.

"You're starting to worry me," she growled, as quietly as she could manage. Twisting his leathers into a tight grip, she shook him harder. The seconds he'd been gone began amounting to full-fledged minutes. Her initial shock warped into fear the longer time dragged on without a response. Shaking him hadn't worked, nor had kissing his mouth. She brought a hand up to pinch at his cheek—nothing. Climbing on top of him, she twirled her fingers through his hair, tugging on his curls hard enough to cause pain, and still, he hadn't come back to her.

Having no other option, she decided it was time to wake Sam for help. Terror had gripped her so thoroughly that her legs buckled the instant she tried to raise herself off of his listless body. As luck would have it, the collision had been enough to finally coax his ink-black irises back down into place.

"Oh, thank the gods," Dany cried out, clutching his face between her hands. Jon looked around for a moment, as if confused about his surroundings.

Still in a daze, he blinked a few times before shaking his head as if to clear it. By now, the others had woken up due to the commotion, the dim light of the fire illuminating their irritation as they stared. All except for Sam, who'd still been lying not far from them, looking both frightened and concerned.
Jon gently slid his wife off of him and to his side before sitting up, looking over his shoulder and into the darkness of the woods beyond.

"What happened?" she begged, "Are you alright?"

When he turned back to face his wife, his expression had contorted with both anger and fear. A low growl reverberated in his chest. Baring his fangs like a wolf, he snarled, "Arya."
Without providing any explanation to the curious onlookers, Jon clambered to his feet as he set off into the woods. The further his legs carried him from camp, the more the shadows fell upon the brush like a blanket. Darkness had so thoroughly enshrouded the woods that the trees had been discernible only after they'd whipped by. Jon followed the stream since that's where he'd seen her, in the full color and clarity of daytime, feeling nearly blind upon reverting back to his own eyes. Clutching unlaced trousers to his waist, Jon lifted his legs as high as he could with each stride, hoping to avoid getting tripped up on the ground he couldn't see.

After pushing his body too hard too fast, Jon's stomach lurched. Bile crept up, licking his throat like tiny flames and threatening to spill his supper. Reluctantly, he halted, swallowing the air like water, the cold only aggravating his already burning lungs. Doubled over, he took the time to tie his trousers and spit the saliva that had come flooding into his mouth.

"Who's there?" a soft voice quivered in the distance, attempting to disguise its fear.

Jon fought the urge to growl upon hearing his sister's question, confirming that what he'd seen through borrowed eyes had, in fact, been real.

Rather than respond to her, he held still, doing his best to quiet his breathing until his eyes adjusted to the pitch-darkness. Leaves began to crunch underfoot as Jon strained to listen to her movements over the sound of the blood pulsing in his ears.

Finally, the dim light of the crescent moon had filtered through the leaves as a soft wind blew, illuminating Arya enough to discern. She stood before him, Needle drawn between them as a means of defense.

"Ghost, is that you?" she asked, her head turning from side to side as she looked around until finally, her gaze fell upon Jon's form.

"Identify yourself," she demanded of the dark figure.

"How dare you," Jon huffed as he swooped in. Grabbing hold of her wrist, he pried Needle from her left hand, disarming her. Tightening his grip, he began marching her back toward camp. Ghost had
re-appeared before them to lead their way through the darkness.

"Let go of me!" Arya pleaded, wriggling her arm in hopes of loosening his grip, to no avail.

Instead, Jon only clutched her tighter as he dragged her over the leaves, her short legs struggling to keep pace with him. As they approached the camp, everyone had been awake and sitting up near their respective fires. Letting go of her wrist with something of a shove, Jon caused his sister to stumble, her waterskin skidding across the ground as she met the curious gazes of the party.

"Arya?" Daenerys gasped, reaching out to steady the small girl as the water glugged onto the frozen ground.

"What in seven hells were you thinking?" Jon demanded as he began to pace around the small encampment.

Arya nonchalantly reminded him, "I told you I wanted to go with you."

"That wasn't up to you," he hissed back.

"I want to help Uncle Benjen, too."

He stopped pacing and turned to her, his voice deep with authority, insisting, "Oh, I don't think so. We're turnin' around and you're goin' back home at first light."

"Jon," Daenerys softly called, careful not to incite him further.

"What?" he snapped.

"If we're headed up to find your uncle, time is of the essence. If we turn around to drop Arya home now, by the time we get to Castle Black it might be too late."

He broke into a delirious cackle at the mere suggestion, "And I'm meant to let Arya just tag along? I can't even imagine what Robb must be goin' through right now."
"I told Bran where I was going," Arya piped. "He'll tell Robb once he realizes I'm missing."

"And that makes it alright, does it?" he shouted as Arya cowered just a bit under his intense scrutiny. Softening his tone, he continued, "I can't believe you would do that to your own brother. He has enough to deal with as-is. Lord Stark will have his head if he finds out, and mine too, while he's at it."

"No, he won't," she simply said, folding her arms. "Besides, we might be back home before father even returns from the Vale."

"You can't count on that," he reminded her. His face scrunched up in disgust before asking, "What help do you think you'll be, honestly?"

Arya took a moment to consider before answering, "You said Dany would be hard-pressed to find a better archer at Winterfell. That means you think I'm even better even than Theon."

Jon rolled his eyes at the sentiment, "What sort of justification is that? Castle Black is no place for a girl of twelve."

"And what of Daenerys?"

"What of her? She's not goin' ranging. And even if she were—she's an adult, a clear distinction."

"If she's not going with you, then why have her learn to shoot a bow?"

"For self-defense, not for scouting beyond the Wall," he griped. "Besides, they don't allow just anyone through their gates. Especially not a highborn girl."

"No? What about highborn boys?" she mocked him.

"What?"
"Nothing."

Jon grasped Arya by the sleeve before marching over to investigate the wagon. He still had no idea how she had managed to go unnoticed for so long. Lifting the tarpaulin, he squinted to see dozens of dried apple cores scattered amidst a pile of furs, forming a makeshift bed between Dany's chests and various belongings.

"Is this all you've been eating? Apples?" he asked, gesturing toward her mess.

Arya folded her arms, avoiding his gaze as well as his question.

"Jon," Daenerys interrupted again, keeping her voice low as she shuffled over.

He turned to face his wife, making little effort to conceal his temper. She nearly flinched upon seeing the anger so clearly etched into his features. The weight of her reaction had been enough to shake him out of it, at least a little. It wasn't Daenerys he was angry with.

"What is it, Dany?" he asked.

"We have two guards and Ser- I mean, Arstan."

The slip had not been lost on Arya, who raised a curious eyebrow as she listened in.

"You really want to turn all of us around, losing over a week of progress and prolonging our travel time all while Benjen is still out there? We can't afford it."

Jon pulled his wife aside, "Are you honestly suggesting we take her with us?"

"We can send word to Robb that she is alright, and yes, we'll take her with us," she whispered. "Once we're there, the others can leave, drop her at Winterfell, and then make their way to White Harbor as planned. We can find different means of travel for our return trip."

"This is madness," he laughed.
"It's not ideal, but Robb wanted us to go," he reminded him, somehow managing to keep her cool all throughout the revelation.

"Us. You and I. Not his twelve-year-old sister. And how do you suggest we send word to him? We've no ravens and we're in the middle of a forest, if you hadn't noticed."

Dany sighed, ignoring his sarcasm, "The kingsroad has been mostly empty for days. We could stand to lose one guard to send a message."

He couldn't help but glare as she spoke, each suggestion sounding even more surreal and ludicrous than the last. It was something he couldn't wholly wrap his mind around.

"Let's get some sleep, please," she pleaded. "We'll figure out the details in the morning?"

Hesitantly, Jon nodded his head in agreement, giving his sister one last glare before they walked back toward the camp.

"Are you staring at me?" Jon whispered, feeling Dany's eyes on him though he could hardly see her in the darkness as they lay beside one another.

"I couldn't tell whether your eyes were open or closed."

"Open."

"You can't sleep, either?"

"Of course not," he replied, hardly able to hear himself over the rustling wind and Arya's snoring as she lay between them. As Dany cradled the sleeping girl, Jon became aware of her knuckles digging into his side as a result.
"What happened to you earlier?" she asked, making sure to keep her voice low.

"What do you mean?" he asked, shifting uncomfortably, as Ghost likewise readjusted next to him.

"When we were..." as her voice trailed off, Jon suddenly remembered their secret almost-tryst before the abrupt discovery of his sister.

"Shit, Dany. I'm sorry."

"I wasn't looking for an apology. I wanted an explanation of what happened to you. You had me terrified."

"A wolf dream, I think," he quickly replied.

"But you weren't asleep."

He considered her observation for a moment, only to realize she'd been right. He'd been so caught up in finding Arya that he hadn't dwelled on how he'd done it.

"You're right. I wasn't asleep," he simply said, considering the implications. He certainly didn't will himself into Ghost, however. Thinking back to what it had felt like to inhabit his wolf's skin earlier in the night, he remembered little of the transition in or out of Ghost.

"He was scared, I could feel that he was anxious," he continued.

"About Arya?"

"He couldn't find her, and he'd been keepin' her company all this time, every night since we left."

"That's why he'd never join us when you called him," she guessed.
"This is going to sound strange," he warned. "But I almost think he helped pulled me into his mind, that I had little to do with it."

Daenerys was silent for several moments, so much so that Jon turned to look at her, trying to determine whether she'd drifted off. Just as his eyes adjusted enough to clearly make out her features, her lips began to move again, "You were tired. Exhausted, even..."

"Yes," he agreed.

"And I imagine your mind had been clear of its usual clutter while we-" she paused again, looking down at Arya lying between them, "While I-"

"That's one way of puttin' it," he interrupted with a quiet chuckle, relieving her of finishing the thought completely.

"Do you suppose warging has something to do with clearing your mind, then?"

"It might."

"We'll practice, then," she insisted.

"We?"

"You know what I mean," she said, extending an arm past Arya to lightly shove him. "We should get some sleep."

A moment of silence passed before Jon broke it once more, "Dany?"

"Mmm?"

"I'm sorry."
"I told you I didn't need an apology."

"You might after a couple of weeks with Arya lyin' between us each night."

She groaned, "Well, I'll have to get used to it, won't I? Soon, we'll have one of our own."

Jon smiled, the mere reminder that his child stirred within her had been enough to warm him against the chill of the night air. He took a moment to examine Arya as best he could in the darkness, already feeling his irritation with her waning. After all, it was her rebellious nature that had appealed to him in all the years he'd watched her grow.

As he drifted off to sleep, his mind began to paint vivid visions of his wife. Draped in heavy grey and white furs, she cradled a small bundle in her arms. Her hair, a nest of mussed silver-gold, peeked out from a hood drawn tightly around her head. She exhaled with something of a sob, her breath hanging in the air like fog. Tears clung to her lashes as she hummed a soothing lullaby, swaying the bundle from side to side. Jon stayed there with her, listening to her gentle hum until he, himself, slipped into a dreamless slumber.

Chapter End Notes

I've already explained this to a few readers/pals, so if it's repetitious, I apologize. To explain my uncharacteristic absence - I struggle with insomnia, most of the time I can manage it, and other times it gets really bad and I'm pretty much a zombie. In this state, I refrained from writing because what I was able to do was not up to my standards. Just wanted to ensure anyone invested that I haven't gone anywhere nor have I lost interest in continuing my fics! Apologies if this chapter felt off. I'm out of practice, after all! Thanks for your patience! :D
The Edge of the Known World

The latter leg of the trip to Castle Black had proved much less enjoyable. As the woods gave way to snow-dusted hilltops, the mountainous region had been a gamble—sometimes acting as a shield against the winds, but more often a trench, allowing the gusts to fall between them like water, the rush of the cold wind permeating their furs, leather, skin, bone.

Just as soon as Daenerys thought she couldn't bear it any longer, Mole's Town revealed itself like an ant hill before the unearthly icy monolith. Already, the Wall could be seen in the distance beyond the small settlement, engulfing the horizon above the treeline. The abnormal sight gave Daenerys the sense they really had reached the edge of the known world, paired with the nagging urge to see whatever might lie beyond it.

Mole's Town would be their last stop before reaching Castle Black. Even calling it a town had felt generous, as it was more like a village at best. Rows of small stone shacks comprised the meager outpost, smoke tirelessly bellowing from every chimney. Each modest building had been in some state of disrepair, harsh winds the likely culprit. Ser Barristan had explained that most of Mole's Town actually rested beneath the ground, thus providing its namesake. Tunnels and cellars lent a warmth the ground could not, as well as protection from the elements.

Upon their arrival, the few town residents above ground offered little more than curious or suspicious glances. Though it wouldn't be long before they reached Castle Black, Daenerys was in desperate need of thawing out, and to give her aching thighs a much-needed break.

As the party dismounted, Daenerys couldn't help but notice a peculiar red light emanating from a tiny shack nearby. She nudged Jon, hoping to get his opinion of what it might be. Unfortunately, he shrugged her off in favor of tying up his horse.

After a moment or two, a small figure emerged from beneath the red lantern. At first, Dany thought it might be a child, until she squinted, spotting what looked like a crude flagon in his hand. Quickly, she turned away, abandoning her curiosity. It can't be, she told herself. Pulling her hood tighter around her hair, she focused her attention, instead, on helping Jon with his horse.

"Why are you so flustered all of a sudden?"

"No reason."
"Horseshit," he smirked, glancing around to determine what had spooked her.

Daenerys closed her eyes, hoping the man she'd spotted had since disappeared.

"Tyrion Lannister?" he asked, in an almost accusatory tone.

Damn, she thought. So it is him.

"Ah. The bastard of Winterfell," Tyrion replied, in an aristocratic southern accent. "So the rumors are true."

The Imp's gaze burned at the back of her neck, even through her many layers. Though she hadn't managed to see him first-hand upon his visit to Winterfell, for weeks afterward everyone about the castle had gossiped about the halfman. She kept her back turned to him, hoping to shield her silver hair and violet eyes, which would be a dead giveaway to her identity.

"Rumors?"

"That you've taken a wife."

Peripherally, Daenerys eyed Jon as he dodged the question with a shrug.

"You went to the Wall months ago, you're still here? Decide to swear their oath or somethin'?" he asked, boldly sarcastic as he steered the subject away from her.

"The realm couldn't afford my vow of celibacy, I assure you," he laughed. "The whores would go begging from Dorne to Mole's Town."

Cringing from the crudeness of his statement, Daenerys wanted nothing more than to escape the Imp's grasp and avoid any further questioning. Realizing her husband had remained silent, she stole another glance at him. Jon shook his head, a shy smile clear on his face even through his signature veil of thick, tangled curls.
"Since your uncle stayed behind at Winterfell waiting on your answer, I went along with their recruiter, Yoren. Unfortunately, this entailed a trip to King's Landing before heading to the Wall."

"King's Landing? Why?"

"An irresistible financial incentive, I presume. I had nothing better to do at court, in any case, so I decided to go along anyway."

"Why are you in Mole's Town then, and not Castle Black?"

"Looking for something... better to do."

"Bored, are you?"

Tyrion laughed again, "Ask again after a week at the Wall, boy."

"I'm not your boy," Jon snapped, though even without looking, Dany could tell from his tone he was still smirking.

He left Tyrion's side to help sort out the rest of the party. As the Imp followed after him, Daenerys angled herself away, shielding herself once more. After he passed, she took another brief peek at him as he approached her husband.

"Admittedly, I'm having a bit of trouble finding an escort back to White Harbor."

"Afraid to travel alone?" Jon jested again.

"Look at me and tell me what you see," the Imp demanded.

Sighing, Jon turned to the small man, scrunching his face as he inquired, "Is this a trick?"
"What you see is a dwarf, Jon Snow. Had I been born a peasant, my father might've left me out in the woods to die. Lucky for me I was born a Lannister. Unlucky for him, though, as my father harbored all the same inclinations. I'd rather not to give him the satisfaction of dying in the wolfswood thirty years late."

All precaution melted from Jon after hearing the Imp's sentiment. Even Daenerys was reminded of Catelyn in that moment, and his entire childhood of mistreatment at her hands. Once Jon met Tyrion's eyes once more, the Imp continued, "Since Yoren is dead-set on waiting until your uncle returns before leaving again to find more recruits, I'm more or less stuck here. I'm not sure how much more I can bear—the brothel here is... subpar, I'm afraid. The ale, too."

Tyrion emptied his flagon with a wince. By now, everyone had been shivering, just waiting to find some place in the small town that might provide a hot meal and a bit of warmth before the final push of their trip.

"Well," Jon heaved another sigh. "Sam here is headed to White Harbor, though I can't say how soon," he explained, gesturing toward his friend. "You're welcome to tag along, but you're to pay your own way. Somethin' tells me you can afford it."

Even Daenerys couldn't help but notice the extravagant golden embellishments of Tyrion's crimson leather doublet peeking out from beneath pristine white furs, looking far more kingly and royal than even the Baratheons had.

"White Harbor!" he clapped his hands together. "I'd be willing to pay for your friend's fare, too. Where's he headed, anyway, King's Landing?"

"Oldtown, actually," Jon clarified with a sly grin.

The Imp's posture slumped just-so, perhaps in regret at offering his generosity too soon.

"Jon, a word? " Daenerys pushed right past the dwarf, tugging her husband's cloak so hard he had no choice but to follow her off to the side. With her free hand, she kept her hood tightly drawn around her hair, still hoping to conceal her identity.

"You're going to just offer to help a Lannister ?" she tried her best to keep her voice low as she confronted him. "Are you mad? You do realize his brother is the Kingslayer ."
"I do realize that," he said, shooting the Lannister an apologetic glance over her shoulder. "Tyrion isn't responsible for his brother's actions. Lest you forget what your father did to my grandfather and uncle."

All she could do is glare at him. *He may have a point,* she thought as she stewed, *but this is hardly the time nor place...*

"Daenerys Targaryen is your wife?" Tyrion interjected, interrupting her thoughts. The weight of his stare lingered like a physical touch.

After pulling down her hood, she turned to reveal her silver-blonde hair. She glared at the Imp just as she'd done to Jon, imagining she looked more like a spitfire than someone's *wife.*

"My lady, if I may," Tyrion offered her an awkward bow as she folded her arms expectantly.

"So far as I know," he continued, his free hand cautiously splayed before her. "It wasn't an easy decision for my brother, a dishonor that haunts him still. However, your father certainly *earned* his moniker—the Mad King."

"I'm afraid the opinion of a Lannister means little to me, *my lord,*" she sneered.

"Daenerys," Jon hissed her name, begging her to behave.

However, Tyrion appeared *amused* rather than offended. He paid the girl no mind, finally distracted by their companions.

"Quite an assemblage you've got there, Jon Snow. Let's see," he said, meeting Dany's gaze with an infuriating air of smugness. "The last Dragon, *forbidden* to leave Winterfell, last I heard."

He stepped to the side to better inspect the others, "And for some reason, your baby *sister.* Odd choice, indeed."

"I'm not a *baby,*" Arya piped up from the back of the wagon, Ghost tightly wrapped around her. She'd been glaring at the Imp, same as Daenerys.
Ignoring the girl's comment, his gaze fell on Ser Barristan next. Even dressed down, he was still an impressive figure. Oh, no, Daenerys thought, realizing Tyrion was bound to recognize him.

"Though most curiously," he said, clicking his tongue. "You're escorted by the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard, himself!"

"What business is that of yours, Imp?" Daenerys snapped defensively.

"Daenerys, please stop," Jon pleaded.

"No. I'm not going to stand here while he threatens us."

"Threatening you, am I? Dear girl," he laughed. "Just wait 'till the honorable men of the Night's Watch greet you."

Arya jumped down from the wagon, wandering over to Dany's side. As the girl wrapped her arms around Daenerys, the fabrics pulled tighter around her body, emphasizing the roundness of her belly. Tyrion's eyes were immediately drawn to her midsection, his mouth agape at the unexpected sight. Unfortunately, Daenerys would have to get used to it, her belly was bound to at least triple in size.

"Perhaps it's the ale playing tricks on your eyes, my lord," she continued, drawing her cloak around her body to hide it from further inspection. "But you're mistaken."

"And what is it I've mistook?"

"Our guard for one of the Kingsguard."

The smugness returned to his expression as his eyes flitted to the armor-clad old man. "Have I? May I ask his name?"

"Arstan," she replied without missing a beat.
"Mmm," he scratched his chin. "And his surname?"

"Surname?" Dany asked, drawing her eyebrows together in confusion.

"I just assumed, what with Winterfell being staffed by various nobles from minor houses... that this Arstan might be, say, a Poole? Or a Cassel, perhaps?"

"He's, um," Daenerys stole a glance of Barristan, who had remained upright and unflinching, offering no denial, admittance, or help, "Arstan..."

Tyrion followed Dany's eyes back to Barristan, raising a suspicious brow as he awaited her answer. Daenerys inspected Barristan for a moment, her eyes fixating on the now-unkempt beard peeking out from the bottom of his helmet. "...Whitebeard," she said.

"Arstan Whitebeard?" Tyrion asked, immediately pursing his lips to disguise either a smile or laughter.

Jon pinched the bridge of his nose at the absurdity of the situation, meanwhile, Arya buried her face in Dany's cloak. Daenerys, however, didn't budge—she wouldn't let the Imp agitate her.

"Well," Tyrion said, rubbing two gloved hands together. "If the trip north has been as cruel to you as it had been to me, I assume you're in need of a hot meal. I know just the place, if you'd follow me."

None in their travel party made any move, the awkwardness of the moment captured in perfect stillness, as if posed for a painting. After a moment, each head turned to Jon for guidance, even the little birds beside Sam.

"My treat, of course," he added.

"Lead the way," Jon smiled, gesturing toward the narrow path before them.
Tyrion had proven more agreeable while they broke their fast, expertly steering any conversation away from politics as well as past transgressions between the three noble houses. There was something about him Daenerys couldn't help but like, her gut pleading to give him a chance, while her head argued its case against him. He was funny, she'd give him that, and knowledgeable, too. *Ugh.* She didn't want to be impressed with him, but it was hard not to be at least a little charmed.

It was decided that Tyrion would ride back with them for the remaining half-league left before reaching Castle Black. He retrieved his own horse before meeting up with the party. Much to Arya's chagrin, he singled her out upon his return.

"Lady Arya," he waved her over. With a deep scowl, Arya wandered over to him, nervously fondling her hair through moleskin gloves. The Imp inspected her—she'd been dressed in boy's clothes, likely Bran's, covered in furs atop a dark grey cloak.

"Is it true you joined your brother without permission?"

She looked to Jon before providing the small man with an answer. With folded arms, Jon simply glared at her with an indignant smirk—staying angry with her hadn't come easily for him. Turning back to Tyrion, she nodded hesitantly, unsure of what his intentions might be in asking.

"No doubt you've heard the Wall is a dangerous place?"

Arya nodded once more, looking almost sick with guilt. Tyrion snorted with satisfaction before reaching for something beneath his cloak. Before anyone could react, he pulled a small ornate dagger on the girl. Arya instinctively flinched as the blade found it's way up to her neck. Grabbing hold of her hair, he took one long braid clean off in a single swipe.

"*Lord Tyrion!* " Jon shouted carefully enough so as not to startle him, should the blade slip. He held his hands out as if pleading. Likewise, Daenerys cautiously stepped forward, unsure how to safely intervene.

"Castle Black is *no place* for a girl her age," the dwarf sternly said before taking the knife to her second braid.

After prying her eyes open, Arya looked *dumbfounded*, her gaze dropping to the ground where her freshly-shorn braids had fallen into the muck.
"It'll grow back," he assured Jon, quickly shearing the poor girl's hair into a convincing boy's cut.

A few tears fell from Arya's chin as she watched her hair continue to fall in chunks around her.

Once Tyrion finished, Daenerys moved over to the stunned girl. "Don't cry, Arya," she soothed her, brushing her tears away, "We'll even it out later. And it's true, it'll grow back in no time."

True to form, Arya scowled, "It's fine. It's just hair."

Daenerys clutched Arya's head to her chest, glaring at Tyrion for having the audacity to take a blade to a lord's daughter. After seeing how upset and worried he looked, she already felt her anger with him waning, especially after Sam's words echoed in her mind—*they're a bunch of animals.*

Meanwhile, Jon had stomped over to Tyrion, his face red with anger, "Mind tellin' me what in seven hells possessed you to take a knife to my sister's head?"

"Had I asked permission, you wouldn't have granted it."

"You're damned right about that," he growled.

"Precisely. A couple of tongue-less children were the worst you encountered on your trip. Whereas I had the pleasure of traveling north with rapists."

Aside from swallowing the thick lump in his throat, Jon had no retort.

"It's true your uncle is a well-respected man, and the Stark name carries a lot of weight at the Wall, along with a certain measure of safety."

"But I'm not a Stark," Jon interrupted.

"You're Stark in all but name," Tyrion assured him. "Unfortunately, it's the ones who remain unimpressed by names such as Stark or Lannister that you'll have to worry about."
"She's just a girl," Jon babbled, almost incoherently in his bewildered state. Not only had he let Arya continue along all the way to the Wall, he'd be returning her back to Winterfell with hair shorter than even *his*. Likewise, all Daenerys could do was blankly stare at the Imp.

"*No,*" Tyrion corrected him with a pointed finger. "*He's* just a boy. I suggest you spent the rest of your short trip thinking of a boy's name to call her by."

Finally, they emerged from the hills for a proper view of the colossal barrier of ice—grey, yet stricken pink, reflecting the sunset like a clouded mirror. Upon seeing the way the Wall nearly *kissed* the clouds, Daenerys knew in her heart that such a monstrosity hadn't been built to keep out *free folk* alone. She clutched Jon tighter to her chest, hoping to quell her fears.

Tyrion's horse strode ahead, turning just enough for him to gesture toward the tiny black castle in the distance. "*Welcome,*" he said.

Daenerys leaned to the side as much as her balance would allow, managing to steal a peek of Jon. His mouth hung agape at the sight, and he hadn't been the only one. Everyone, even Ser Barristan, had been moved, awe wiping each face clean of all emotion.

"Best hurry," the dwarf continued. "The sun sets quickly."

The cold all but vanished as Dany's heart began to pound. The horse moved both too fast and too slowly—though she wanted nothing more than to *finally* make it to Castle Black, knowing she'd be the only woman there had finally sunk in, setting her on edge. Likewise, she felt nervous to meet Maester Aemon, her only living relative other than Jon. Despite the chill, her hands felt clammy inside her gloves as she gripped Jon harder still.

The castle reminded her of a smaller, cruder version of Winterfell—having a similar function-over-form aesthetic. Each building was made of dark stone dusted with snow, absolutely nothing architecturally impressive about the stronghold, save for the pulley system that stretched the length of the Wall beside it.

The rickety-looking wooden gates opened up to allow their party inside. Tyrion still led the way, followed by Ser Barristan and Arya. Jon and Dany rode in next, flanked by their wagon and the
remaining guard.

Dany's heart fluttered once more when she noticed a small welcoming party already awaiting their arrival. She tried to find Maester Aemon amidst the throng, but none of the men seemed to match his description. Her eyes didn't linger long on the crowd, as most of the men had been giving her a thorough visual inspection that made her uneasy. The gazes that hadn't fallen on her, had instead fallen on Ghost. Even though he was still small for a direwolf, he'd grown into an impressive size for a canine. His albinism making him all the more intriguing, she assumed.

Jon dismounted, taking care to help Daenerys down from the pillion as gently as he could manage. He ran a thumb across her belly as he did so, a small loving gesture shielded from prying eyes. Unsure where to look, Daenerys turned toward the wagon to see Samwell slipping off of it rather ungracefully, his legs likely as sore and numb as her own.

"Jon Snow, I presume," one of the men stepped forward—a grizzled bear of a man. Cloaked in black leather and furs, he gripped his sword belt as he inspected his strange visitors.

"Lord Commander," Jon replied, offering his hand for a shake.

"We've been expecting you," he said, his voice raspy with age.

"You have?"

"A raven came from one Lord Stark of Winterfell," he smirked, handing Jon a small scroll with a broken seal. "Your brother."

Quickly, he unraveled it, giving it a brief scan before tucking it away. Daenerys had the burning urge to snatch it from his pocket and read it for herself, but decided against it, knowing she'd still been a source of entertainment for the assorted group of men before her.

"I come bearing gifts," Jon said.

"Gifts?" the Lord Commander cocked an eyebrow.
"Two new recruits," he said, gesturing toward the little birds. "And some grain from the Reach, compliments of Lady Tyrell."

"Lady Tyrell? As in Olenna Tyrell?"

"One in the same."

The old man chuckled to himself, shaking his head in amusement. He waved a pair of younger boys over to retrieve the little birds. After they were ushered off, he turned back to Jon.

"I wouldn't recommend letting them near your rookery," he quietly said. "They can't be trusted with ravens."

The Lord Commander only nodded in understanding. Daenerys imagined he accepted any manner of recruit without much inquiry. From what she'd heard, Castle Black had been severely undermanned.

"We don't get many visitors," the old man began again. "As a result, the King's Tower has fallen into a disrepair. We've prepared a room for you in the tower, but I'm afraid it might not be enough space for all of you. As a result, you're also granted use of Benjen's personal quarters. If he comes back-" 

"When," Jon interrupted.

"What?"

"When he comes back. He's alive out there—I know he is."

"Indeed," the old man huffed, furrowing his brow. "I'll have my stewards escort you—and your belongings—to your rooms. Supper will be served shortly in the common hall."

"Thank you, Lord Commander," Jon said, bowing his head respectfully as a few men stepped forward to stable the horses.

Daenerys jumped from a sudden touch on her back. Whipping her head around, she was relieved to
see Sam beside her. He'd been donning the widest smile she'd ever seen from him.

"That's him," he whispered, turning her body slightly to face a wooden staircase. There he was—a feeble old man with skin almost as pale as his snow-white hair, draped in a heavy black robe and a mismatched Maester's chain. "That's Aemon."

With his hand still firmly planted against her back, Sam pushed Dany forward. At first, her legs refused to move, and so she stumbled just a bit. The sound hadn't been lost on the Maester, who tilted his head slightly as they approached.

"Samwell Tarly," he began to laugh, his clouded eyes staring sightlessly into the distance just above their heads.

"You knew it was me?" he asked, bewildered.

"Your footsteps are unmistakable."

As Sam chuckled nervously, Aemon drew his eyebrows together, tilting his head as if listening a bit more intently as they finished their approach.

"Samwell," he gasped. "You've brought a lady with you."

"Actually," Sam said, "The lady brought me."

Daenerys simply watched their interaction, stunned to silence. Her nose tingled, and her eyes were hot with the threat of tears.

"Introduce me, Samwell," the Maester insisted.

The boy sighed, grabbing hold of Dany's hand to give her a reassuring squeeze.

"Maester Aemon, it is my pleasure to introduce to you Daenerys Targaryen."
The Maester's smile fell from his face. Even his breath caught in his throat, and in an instant, his eyes became milky pools of unshed tears. "Daenerys," he whispered. "Truly?"

He held his hands out before him as if searching for her. Quickly, Daenerys removed her gloves, handing them off to Sam before grasping her uncle's bare hands in her own. He began examining her fingers, palms, and wrists—perhaps making mental notes of the size and shape.

Letting go of one after a moment, he raised a hand to her face before asking, "May I?"

"Please do," she whispered.

A tear traveled the length of his cheek upon hearing her voice. His fingertips began tracing her jawline, her cheeks, tapping at her nose, lips, and even her eyelids—his hands helping to paint a vivid picture of her in his mind.

"What in the world brought you to Castle Black?" he asked, breathless.

"Well... you did."

"Gods be good," his voice quivered as he chuckled. "Daenerys, would you do me the honor of joining me for supper?"

Her heart leapt at the offer, until a pang of guilt overtook her. Dany spun her head, spotting Jon with Arya by his side as he helped to unload their belongings. Almost immediately he met her gaze. She nodded toward Aemon, her husband offering a permissive nod in return.

Turning back to the Maester, she took his hand once more, beaming, "I'd love to."
As the Maester led his distant niece by the hand, he skillfully dodged every splintered and broken step. Daenerys followed suit, taking each of his cues to avoid all the same traps, admiring his familiarity. She inspected her new surroundings, careful to avoid eye contact with anyone she didn't already know.

"The Wall is beautiful, tonight, Maester," she grinned, "Grey with streaks of purple, like paint on a canvas. It reminds me of the sunset over a lake, but... vertical."

"I can almost see it," he laughed. "What of the stars? Are they out tonight?"

Turning her head to glimpse the sky, Daenerys spotted a few twinkling lights peeking out from a break in the clouds. "A few," she confirmed. "But the clouds are closing in fast."

"It feels like snow tonight," she felt him shiver. "You must see the sky atop the Wall, Daenerys."

"I plan to, but not before supper."

Once they'd reached the hall, Aemon led her toward his usual spot. Lord Commander Mormont was seated at the table's center, with another white-haired man to his right. The strange man glared daggers at Daenerys as one of the stewards brought up an extra chair for her.

Two plates of food had already been set out for her and Aemon both, as well as a pair of mugs. The ancient man had been reluctant to let go of her for even a moment, perhaps for fear he'd lose her. As they settled in, more and more men piled into the small space, filling it with an unavoidable cacophony.

"By the seven, Daenerys, what brings you north to Castle Black?"

"Well, you do, Maester."
"Me?" he asked, his milky eyes as wide as a pup's.

"You're my only family," she admitted. "Once I knew you were hidden away up here, I felt everything inside of me tugging me straight toward the Wall. Though, admittedly my husband wouldn't budge for weeks."

"Your husband—it's not Samwell, is it?"

"Would that it were!" she laughed. "No, Sam is a dear friend of mine. He stayed at Winterfell for my wedding, and in exchange, we'll be helping him secure passage to Old Town. He still wishes to become a Maester."

"Nothing would suit him more. A mind like that would be wasted on the Wall," Aemon smiled. "Might I ask who is it you're married to, Daenerys?"

"Jon Snow."

"Snow ... Lord Stark's son?"

"Yes," she said, before finally taking a swig of the thick and pungent ale, thankful the Maester couldn't see her cringe from its foul taste.

With a quivering lip, Aemon frowned. "Lord Eddard—Was it he who matched you?"

"Oh, no," she cooed, resting her fingers softly on his wrist, her mother's ring cold against his warm skin. "We fell in love. Just before Jon was to leave to join the Night's Watch, I confessed my feelings for him. And it wasn't much later that Jon took my head in his hands and begged me to marry him."

Her great uncle could hear the smile on her lips as she spoke, "He treats you well?"

"Jon Snow is the best man that I know. Aside from Lord Stark."

"When I'd heard that Eddard Stark had begged King Robert to take you in, I assumed I'd never get
the chance to meet you. Weren't you forbidden to leave Winterfell?"

"I still am," she admitted with a chuckle. "Once Sam told me of you, I knew I had to see you. Whatever the cost."

"Oh, heavens," Aemon shared in her laughter. "You must be careful, Daenerys."

"I will be," she assured him. "The king's own brother has informed me that the Usurper does not concern himself much with me or my whereabouts. Perhaps even less so, now that I've wed a bastard. It may be that others, too, believe it to be some sort of punishment inflicted on me against my will. Let them believe it, I don't care. I only care that you know the truth."

_The truth_. She bit back the urge to spill all of it to him right then and there. _Imagine how happy he'd be, _she thought, _if only he knew I have wed my brother's son — that I might carry his son inside of me._

"You remind me of someone I knew long ago," he said after a moment.

"Who?"

"Duncan. My nephew."

"Tell me about him. Please," she beamed, squeezing his wrist harder to show her eagerness for the tale.

"Well," he began, as a more pensive expression supplanted his smile, "Prince Duncan broke his betrothal for the love of a common girl. He gave up his birthright to wed her, refusing to put her aside even for the sake of the throne."

"Wow," Daenerys said, though it was more an exhalation than a proper word. "I never knew."

"Love, the death of duty..." he seemed to focus on something just behind her. Instinctively, she turned to look, and of course, saw nothing there.
"If it is, then perhaps duty is not all it's cracked up to be."

Just then, Jon appeared in the doorway, appearing downright perturbed. Daenerys' heart skipped a beat at the mere sight.

"Maester, if you'd excuse me. My husband has just walked in and he's looking awfully upset."

"Certainly, my dear. For over sixty years I've dwelt here," he laughed. "I won't be hard to find should you return."

When Daenerys rose, a hush overtook the modest dining hall. Several of the men were eyeing her as if they'd like to make her their next meal, or worse. Nevertheless, she held her head high, her gaze falling on her husband's form as she approached him. He'd already looked upset when he entered, and the reactions his wife had garnered had done nothing to help his already-sour mood.

"What is it?" she whispered.

"Come with me," he insisted, extending his hand to her—an offer she rarely refused.

Grasping his gloved fingers, she let her husband lead her out of the hall and down the rickety wooden steps, and through the muddy, snow-dusted courtyard.

"Are you going to tell me what's wrong?" she asked, her voice preemptively quivering with anxiety as they headed straight toward one of the taller towers within the castle's confines. The King's Tower, she assumed.

"I can't tell you, I have to show you."

"Is everything alright, Jon? I was really hoping to talk with Maester Aemon..."

He sighed, almost dejectedly, "Just... shut up and follow me."
Daenerys stopped right in her tracks, "Excuse me? 'Shut up', was it?"

Her sudden offense had been enough to crack his sullen demeanor, he even pursed his lips so as not to smile, "It's been a long trip, wife. You know I didn't mean it like that. However, it would be easier if you'd save your questions until after."

"After what?" she harrumphed, peeling her boots from the sticky mud and widening her gait to catch up to him.

"You'll see," he urged. "Patience."

After several tiring flights of stairs inside the tower, they'd made it to a large set of wooden double-doors. Jon pulled a ring of keys from his pocket, jiggling the thin metal inside its lock until, finally, the doors opened with a click.

"You've got to tease it a little, first," he turned to her with a wink.

Daenerys rolled her eyes, though in truth, even a silly wink from Jon was enough to send her heart aflutter.

As she walked into the room, she noticed it was split into three sections—a living space, as well as two small nooks with beds—one a single, and the other, a double. The room even had its own indoor privy, which, after weeks of traveling the open road, had been more beautiful than even her mother's crown.

"Wow, this room is incredible," she breathed, running her fingertips over the small table at the center of the room.

"I'm glad you like it."

"Do you not?"

"It doesn't matter if I do."
"How not?" she asked, raising her brow suspiciously.

He sighed, "We've too many people, we can't all fit in this room comfortably."

"Jon... I didn't come all this way to sleep separately. If you're not sleeping here, neither am I."

"Daenerys," he warned her. "You and Arya will take the larger of the two beds, and Barristan will take the small one. He's already vowed to protect the both of you. You and I both know he'll do a better job of it. Besides...

"Besides, what?"

"I won't be here to protect you the entire time. I'll be goin' north when they set out to search for Benjen and the others."

"I'm going with you," she swallowed the lump in her throat.

"No," he nearly growled. "You are not. You came to meet the Maester, so you will stay and spend time with him, and keep my troublemakin' sister company."

"Where will you sleep?" she asked, feeling the anxiety creeping into her limbs.

"Sam, Calon, and I will take Benjen's room. It's small, but we'll make do."

"Calon?"

"Our guard," Jon laughed. "You've spent weeks in his company and you hadn't learned his name?"

"Sorry. I suppose my mind's been on other things," she admitted with a shrug.
Jon sauntered over to her, pressing into her back as he wrapped himself around her, his hands instinctively wandering down to her ever-expanding belly. "My mind's been on other things, too."

"We can't," his wife insisted, though her words lacked all conviction as she swayed against his body.

"And why not?"

"I need a bath, or three."

"So do I," he breathed, already working her out of her cloak.

"What if someone comes in?"

"I've got the only key."

Deciding against putting up any more of a fight, Daenerys helped her husband undress her tired body as they kissed. Peeling leather from each of her limbs, then his, finally they stood before each other in only smallclothes and stockings.

"We're a mess," she couldn't help but giggle as Jon stripped away the remaining fabric covering his groin, before moving onto hers.

She held her legs together tightly, warning him, "You'd better not even try to kiss me there."

Jon grumbled briefly before raising himself back up to his feet, "Fine. But I expect a proper taste once we've washed. I'll hunt you down if I have to."

The sentiment, alone, was enough to elicit a shiver and a trickling between her legs.

Taking his cloak, Jon spread it over the larger of the two beds before motioning for Dany to climb atop. Just after slithering onto her back, Jon was between her legs, pulling them apart and inspecting her. "You're hardly wet," he nearly whined.
"Perhaps because you thought it wise to give me a fright before leading me into this trap..."

"Are you sure you won't let me kiss it? Just for a moment?" he asked, running his fingers along the crease of her thigh, dangerously close...

"No," she growled, batting his hand away.

Swishing whatever saliva she could inside of her mouth, she gathered it on her fingers and swiped them over her opening, as Jon's eyes intently followed her. He did the same, his fingers borrowing the extra fluid from his mouth before transferring it to the head of his cock.

"Why does it suddenly feel like we've never done this before?" he asked.

She laughed, making sure to open her legs further in invitation, "I'm ready whenever you are."

Nervously, he pushed the air from his lungs before moving on top of her. Somehow, it really had felt like their first time all over again. Dany ran her fingers over Jon's back as he massaged the tip of his head between her lips, hesitant to begin the actual penetration.

Daenerys closed her eyes, matching her breathing to the gentle sweeps of his head against her, until suddenly it had impaled her, straight through to her womb. Unable to help it, she let out a strangled cry.

"Shit, Dany—I didn't mean to-" he fumbled with an apology, trying to withdraw himself.

In return, she dug her heels into his backside, locking him inside of her. "Keep going," she urged, using her legs to guide him, hoping to help shed his reluctance. It was true it hurt to some degree, but not in a bad way—the pain from his thrusts was sharp and accentuated with a tingling she could feel all over her body. She missed it, terribly so.

Eyes fluttering closed, Daenerys lost herself in the moment, letting her body move in tandem with his, falling into an equal rhythm. She slipped into an almost dream-like state. Gone was the stench of direwolf and horses and body odor, in its place the smell of wildflowers. The sweet perfume clung to her hair—her dark hair, splayed around her head, and even over her breasts—her peculiarly large
breasts. Uncrossing her eyes, her lover came into focus. It wasn't Jon. Rather, a strapping man with dark, cropped hair and dark eyes to match. His skin, like Jon's, felt hot to the touch, hot as fire, and passion stirred within her all the same. The man's eyes, cyclonic, murky pools—a perfect storm of love and lust. Daenerys, in that moment, had been no stranger to this man, and when she met his eyes, she was sure she'd been the only woman he'd ever care to see or know ...

"Jenny..." he whispered, his dulcet voice foreign, southern, as his fingers twined and twisted around her straight, dark tresses.

"Wh-what did you call me?" she croaked.

"Dany..." Jon's voice returned, hoarse from his tireless efforts. With a final groan, he filled her to the brim as his seed suddenly burst inside of her.

The vision of the strange man bled away as she gasped. She lie there motionless beneath her husband, in a state of shock. When she looked around once more, she saw only a mess of silver-blonde waves, and black sweat-tangled hair hanging from her lover's head and tickling her face.

"What's wrong? Have I hurt you?" Jon begged in his familiar northern rasp. "You should've let me kiss you there, first..."

"No, my love, you haven't hurt me," was all she could offer with a breathless reassurance, bringing her hands up to his face to pull him into her kiss. Though, this time she didn't close her eyes, for fear her lover might again disappear.

Chapter End Notes

Oof! Sorry guys, I didn't realize how far behind I was on updates! Blame Jonerys V-Day week! I wrote two salacious Jonerys fics which you've probably seen already if you follow me. Sorry for another 'cockblock' at the end, here. I'll make it up to you soon, I swear! ;D
The next morning, Jon awoke to a whole new host of aches and pains after managing to squeeze into his uncle's double-bed with both Sam and Ghost. Calon had been given the spare cot they were offered, and set-up shop right near the fireplace, hogging most of the warmth. Though, Sam and Jon did have a direwolf at their disposal, which helped counter some of the chill in the air. Even at the coldest points, Winterfell had its own interior heating—all throughout the castle, water from the hot springs had piped through, lending extra warmth to each chamber. Castle Black, however, felt the chill of the Wall's every icy exhale, giving Jon a whole-new appreciation for the hardened men of the Night's Watch who were destined to shiver until their last day.

Finally, back inside of the King's Tower, Jon made his way up the stairs and to the set of double-doors, behind which his wife awaited his arrival this morning. Barristan would be keeping an eye on Arya while Jon escorted Daenerys back to Aemon. Luckily, his sister had made fast friends with the knight, having been forced to ride with him upon his horse for the better half of their journey. It was rare anyone should dislike Arya, however, and each time Jon attempted to apologize for the unexpected passenger, Barristan would dismiss all of it with a smile and a wave of his hand.

Mere seconds after knocking, Arya had thrown open the doors for her brother, greeting him with an already sour expression that crumpled her face.

"Arya?" he asked, suddenly hesitant to step inside the room. "Everythin' alright?"

"How do you sleep next to her?" she griped as her brother entered.

"What d'you mean?"

"She talks so much in her sleep."

No, she doesn't, he thought, perplexed. "What'd she say?"

"Something about Jenny? I couldn't understand the rest with the pillow over my head."
"Jenny? " How odd, he considered, unable to find any link, himself. "Are any of the girls at Winterfell named Jenny?"

"No. Closest is Jeyne," the girl explained, seeming rather disinterested as she picked at her nails.

Daenerys had returned from the privy, exchanging places with Barristan, who then slipped out of sight. Her face had been wet from a recent wash, the short wisps around her hairline slick and stuck to her forehead.

"Have you been havin' nightmares?"

"No..." she diverted her gaze from his as she blotted the water from her forehead with her wrist.

"Arya said you kept her up all night mumblin' about some Jenny."

This time, Daenerys dodged his question further with the turn of her head. Jon tried to follow her gaze, even physically adjusting himself so he was unavoidable in her periphery. "Who is Jenny?" he asked.

"You're one to ask," she whipped her head around, finally meeting him with a half-hearted glare.

"Excuse me? " he asked defiantly, offering a glare in return, until it finally clicked. "Is this why you asked what I called you last night?" he whispered, hoping Arya wouldn't be able to hear.

"You said Jenny."

"I most certainly did not," he huffed. "I don't even know a Jenny. I've been with you for weeks, Daenerys. Only you. Me sayin' some other woman's name doesn't even make sense."

She sighed, "You're right. I suppose I knew you hadn't, at least up until the dreams stirred it all back up."

"I wish you would've said somethin' last night before I left you. Then you might not 've kept both
Arya and Barristan up all night with silly nightmares."

"Barristan?" Arya asked, suddenly rejoining the conversation. "Barristan the Bold? "

Shit, Jon internally cursed himself.

"The Bold?" Daenerys asked in return, though Jon only nodded, confirming his sister's suspicions.

"You do realize that's Bran's hero, right? He was at Winterfell all that time and Bran never got to meet him."

"It was for his safety, so people wouldn't recognize him. Father commanded it."

"Why?"

"Because he's Lord Commander of the Kingsguard," Jon whispered, even though Barristan had been in the privy, unlikely to have heard him, at any rate.

"So that's what the Imp meant yesterday. He recognized him," the young girl guessed before giving herself a moment to piece it together. "If that's true, then what in seven hells is he doing here?"

"Lord Stark invited him to our wedding, as he was close to my family," Daenerys explained. "My brother."

"Rhaegar? " Arya asked, turning her gaze to Jon. "Rhaegar Targaryen?" she repeated, this time adding his last name as she cocked an accusatory eyebrow.

Jon shifted uncomfortably under his sister's sudden scrutiny, "Yes. Of course Rhaegar Targaryen. Is there any other Rhaegar?"

"Arya," Daenerys pleaded with hands clasped together as if in prayer, "Can you keep a secret?"
"Oh, if only you knew," she spat, shaking her head at the both of them before rising to her feet and storming off in a huff, leaving Jon scratching his head.

He and his wife's eyes followed the girl to the open living space where she finished dressing in her leathers, before equipping a small sword belt which held Needle. She might've been small, but looked like a natural with a sword at her hip.

"Do you suppose she's upset about the Rhaegar and Lyanna rumor?" Dany whispered.

"It's possible," he admitted. "Or maybe she's upset that Bran didn't get to meet his hero. I wish I'd known..."

"Well, it's not like he'll never get the chance to. It hadn't exactly been the most convenient of times, after all. I'm sure he'd be happy to see Bran when we return."

"Assumin' Bran is still there by then."

"What?"

"Nothin'," he said, mussing his hair. Now wasn't the time to get into the territory regarding Bran and the strange adventure he planned to take beyond the Wall with the Reed kids and Hodor, of all people.

Barristan had returned then, from the privy, dressed head to toe in linen and leather.

"Are you truly Barristan the Bold? " his sister candidly asked.

"Arya! " Daenerys cried.

The man only laughed in response, "A name I haven't heard in many, many years. I suppose most tend to use it when my back is turned."

"So it's true, then? That you defeated Ser Duncan the Tall in a joust at just ten? " 
"Heavens, no, child," he chuckled before taking a seat on his bed and pulling on his boots. "At ten I did little more than get unhorsed and unmasked. Prince Duncan proclaimed me a bold boy, and so the name stuck, and lingers on some fifty years later."

Jon exchanged looks with Arya, who had seemed downright awe-struck. Duncan the Tall had been, after all, one of Old Nans' storytelling specialties. Daenerys, on the other hand, looked almost spooked as the old man continued his tale with a reminiscent smile, "It wasn't until I was about the same age as Daenerys that I was able to defeat both Duncans."

"Prince Duncan? I suppose that means Duncan Targaryen?" his wife nearly shouted the instant the knight's lips stopped moving.

He nodded as his smile further split his lips apart. "When I close my eyes, I can still see him clearly through the visor as he extended his hand to help me up—his dark hair shone like metal in the sun that day," he recalled. "Some laughed as he unmasked me, but not Prince Duncan."

"I'm sorry, dark hair?"

The old man nodded, "He favored his mother, Betha Blackwood."

"To whom was he married?"

An odd question, Jon thought, flitting his gaze between the knight and his wife, who happened to be bombarding the poor man with some awfully strange inquiries.

"Well," he said, his fingers fondling at his ever-growing white beard, "Do you remember the woods witch I'd told you about?"

"That was her? He married the woods witch?"

"No, no. But she was a friend to Jenny."
"Jenny?" she asked, her jaw hanging ajar just as Jon's likewise fell open, wondering what in the seven hells any of it meant.

"Jenny of Oldstones," he sighed. "In a way, Duncan's marriage to Jenny served as the beginning of the end."

"What do you mean the end?"

"Summerhall, Your Grace," his gaze dropped to his hands, which he began to massage, as if working out the aches of old age. "Prince Duncan was the first to defy his father, to marry for love. But each of his brothers followed in his footsteps, leaving behind a trail of broken betrothals and insulted lords. Having married for love, himself, their father Aegon let them have their way. Though, desperate to control the turmoil in the wake of his son's actions, Aegon sought to restore dragons to House Targaryen, and so, Summerhall... went up in flames."

Everyone, including Arya, had been moved to silence after he finished his tale. As the moments passed, Arya returned to dressing herself, as had Barristan, carefully equipping his unpolished, unimpressive suit of armor, and Arya, the stolen fur cloak from Bran's collection. Each face had been stricken with an expression of mourning. Daenerys, most of all.

His wife merely stared into the distance, what little distance there had been from where she sat—her eyes wet with tears that threatened to fall should she so much as blink. Moving over to her, Jon gently cradled her shoulders with his palms, "Are you alright, Dany?"

Nodding her head fervently, the tears worked themselves free of her lashes, just in time for her to catch them with either index finger.

"You look like you've seen a ghost," he whispered.

"I might have."

After having retrieved his wife, Jon met back up with Sam outside, who stood alongside his loyal companion, Ghost. The direwolf had taken a shine to Daenerys, Arya, and even Sam, dividing his attention up between the four of them over the length of their travels. And now it was Sam's turn,
again, as the wolf sat obediently by his side with a string of drool hanging from his muzzle. Jon couldn't help but laugh as Ghost stared up at a small basket his friend had been carrying—which, judging by the wolf's reaction, must've held a few food items with which Daenerys could break her fast while she aided Aemon in the rookery. After all, Jon had kept her a bit too long the previous night, and by the time they'd returned to the hall, the Maester had already retired, much to Dany's disappointment.

"You should come with me, Sam," she nudged him before grabbing the small basket of food he'd presented.

"I wouldn't want to impose," he nervously chuckled as he led the way. "Maybe after a day or two."

"But what is there to do here, otherwise?" she asked, shooting Jon an apologetic shrug at the insinuation.

"Well," Sam started, just before drawing in a lungful of frigid air. "I thought I'd get started in the library. Do some investigating. Maybe I can find something about the White Walkers... being on the Wall and all, there's bound to be something."

Jon fought the urge to interrupt and poke fun at the pair of them, quickly realizing he was outnumbered. And so, he held his tongue.

"I bet the majority here don't even know how to read," Sam said with a huff as they climbed another staircase. "There could be a wealth of yet-undiscovered information."

"Great thinking, Sam," Dany smiled. "I might question Aemon, too. If I get the chance."

"Don't push it if you don't," he reminded her as the three of them came to her destination.

Daenerys gave Sam a quick hug before moving on to wrap her arms around Jon, sneaking a gloved hand underneath his cloak as well as his tunic, before giving his backside a flirtatious pinch.

"Alright," Jon cleared his throat in an effort to disguise that she'd startled him with the sudden, brazen touch, "First thing's first. Send a scroll off to Robb before all else. We should've done so last night."
"I know," she moaned, like a child being told what to do one-too-many times.

"You're better with words than me, so I'm trustin' you."

"The raven departs as soon as I'm inside," she purred in an all-too-suggestive a manner before rapping at the door.

"Enjoy yourself, today."

"You, too, Jon. And Sam. Thank you for the food."

The boys nodded at her as the old man opened the door for Daenerys and let her inside.

Though he wanted to meet the Maester, too, Jon thought it best not to infringe on his wife's time with the old man so soon. Though he hadn't always fit in, Jon had been surrounded by several blood relatives at Winterfell, all at arm's length. Even one who had, irritatingly, sneaked along for their trip north. For now, he'd relinquish his wife for their only relative's sake—as much as he could bear to do, anyway. After all, if he wished to go ranging beyond the Wall in search of Benjen, he'd have to impress Lord Commander Mormont to some degree, to convince the man he'd be more a help than a burden. Best to get started as soon as possible, he thought.

And so, after having walked Sam to the library, Jon and Ghost wandered off together, in search of the grizzled Commander. Aside from his plan to somehow get on the man's good side, Jon ached to unearth whatever details he could about his Uncle Benjen's disappearance, hoping even to glean how likely his survival might be, so many weeks on.

Ghost had thrown his ears back as they strode along, suddenly transitioning into a defensive prowl. Oh, no, Jon wondered, What could that mean?

Stopping just short of the corner they'd approached, Ghost's lips curled as Jon listened in. It was Mormont, and the unmistakable upper-class accent of Lord Tyrion, though he couldn't quite make out what they were saying. Deciding he had nothing to fear, despite Ghost's strange reaction, he carried on and walked up to the pair of men.

Just beyond them, another older man had stood, his hackles raised, and an eyebrow propped up high on his forehead. He glared at Jon in a way that felt almost too personal, before stomping up the stairs,
right past the two men and straight toward him.

"Your uncle's gone, boy. You ought to turn around, run back to Winterfell where you belong."

The man said his piece before brushing right past Jon, leaving him no chance to retort, though even if he had, what could he possibly say? Ghost had since started growling, a rather rare sound from his normally-quiet wolf. This did nothing but confirm his suspicions that this man was trouble—a man Jon was certain he hadn't spoken a word to, and therefore, could not have offended.

"Charming man, that one," Tyrion flatly noted once he was out of earshot.

Jon shook the dumbstruck look from his face before asking, "Who is he?"

"Our Master-at-Arms, Alliser Thorne," Mormont explained. "So far as I'm concerned, he's not here to be charming. Here's here to turn this bunch of runaways and thieves into brothers of the Night's Watch."

"And how has that been coming along, Commander Mormont?" the small man asked.

"Slowly, I admit."

"I imagine his tactic works well enough," Jon spoke up. "I'd already like to show him some of my moves."

"Well, Snow," Mormont laughed, "Should you wish to spar with our men while you're here, you are welcome to it. They could probably use the challenge."

"With my wife otherwise engaged, I may just take you up on that offer, Commander," he smiled, having spotted an opening that might showcase his skills to prove him worthy of going beyond the Wall with the other rangers.

"Come inside, Snow," Tyrion said. "Let us have a drink."
M - A splash of Jonwell, just for you!

Yes, this chapter is a bit shorter. But I figured it would be better sooner and shorter rather than longer and later. More to come soon. Once Jonerys Week is over I'm going to work on updating this fic quicker! Then it'll just be up to life to take it easy on me! :D

(I know some of my loyal readers are annoyed by my participation elsewhere drawing my attention away from this fic, buuut sometimes as a fic writer, you miss getting comments/reviews, so you get swept up in fun events/one-shots to chase that same high. I assure you that anyone else who has a long fic knows just what I mean!)

Oh, and - Preemptive explanation for those who might think Alliser is coming off a bit strong, already - He has different motives for disliking Jon so prematurely in this AU, and these reasons will be explained, soon. As always, thanks for reading!)
Maester Aemon's personal keep was already Dany's favorite place at Castle Black, even without seeing the others. The fireplace was home to a large and angry blaze which threw warm, red-orange light all around the room, a nice break from the ceaseless grey. After breaking fast together, Aemon pointed her in the direction of his desk, which was a mess of books and parchment.

Once a scroll for Robb was prepared, they moved onto the rookery above. From there, he pointed out a large raven that knew the route to Winterfell well. Daenerys wondered how often Benjen and Ned had communicated, and whether or not she'd seen this very raven flying overhead on its way to Maester Luwin. However, before taking flight, the bird would need to be fed.

Soon the new recruits would be properly sworn in and sorted, and Aemon would have a steward of his own, but until then, Daenerys would aid him in whatever way she could as he carried out his daily tasks. For now, that task was making sure the ravens were tended to. Already, it was apparent that the birds were full of character, filling every spare second of silence with cawing and shrill demands for food.

"Your ravens are beautiful, Maester," she said with a smile. "They look... fat and happy."

"Fat!" Aemon laughed, carefully chopping up raw meat nearby, scooping it into a wooden pail before handing it off to her.

With a gloved hand, she threw meat to the birds by the handful, watching as they bounded from side to side within their cages.

"They certainly like you," he said.

"You can tell that sort of thing?"

"I can hear them dancing for you."

Daenerys watched his eyes wiggle from side to side as if watching them in his mind.
"I'm tempted to believe you," she admitted. "You could tell I was a woman just from my footsteps, alone."

"You'd be amazed at what develops when you strip away a sense such as sight."

"You aren't missing much today, I'm afraid," she took a quick glance around, wondering how many people bothered to paint a vivid picture of their surroundings for the Maester. "Grey as far as the eye can see—the stone, the wood, the sky and the Wall, of course..."

It was then that her eyes fell on a man pacing the covered bridge across from where she'd stood, just eyeing her. His face was puffy and his eyes were dark and sunken in—he looked like trouble, exactly the sort Sam had warned her about. She offered him little more than a glare as she continued on, tossing bits of meat to the anxious birds, but it was hard to ignore the way his leering made her hair stand on end.

"Have you had a chance yet? To take a ride to the top of it?"

"No," she confessed. "I might've today, but I admit I was more excited to see you."

She paused a moment to appreciate his smile. "Maester..." she hesitated.

"Yes, sweet child?"

"There's something I wanted to ask of you."

"Anything, Daenerys," he said with a brow furrowed in concern, even setting down his butcher's knife to offer his full attention.

"When we left for Castle Black, Maester Luwin provided me with a small supply of tinctures for nausea... and I'm afraid I'm out."

"Nausea?" he asked, frowning. "Have you taken ill? What exactly are your symptoms?"
"It's a condition I'm certain you haven't treated in... decades."

"You can't be sure of that," he smirked.

"Well," she began, happy he couldn't see her smug smile, "Aside from nausea... sometimes I feel dizziness, and a little cramping, though that's mostly in my back."

"That could be any number of things, I'm afraid..." he said, considering.

Daenerys moved to the opposite side of the table where he'd stood. Taking his frail hands in hers, she slowly guided them to her belly. Carefully, he ran his fingers along the pronounced curve, even cupping the roundness to be sure. She still hadn't been terribly large, but round enough to suggest her secret should someone bother to touch her stomach.

Though Aemon offered no words, the tears in his eyes had said more than enough.

"My children will be Targaryens," she whispered. "They will bear our name."

She wanted to spill to Aemon just how Targaryen her children would be, but stopped herself, for now. It was Jon's secret to tell, after all.

"Targaryens?"

"Jon might even take my name, someday. When it's safe to," she spilled. "And... I aspire to take back Dragonstone. I don't yet know how, but so long as I live, I will not let our legacy die. That castle belongs to whoever is in here, and I will give it to them." Dany then placed her hands over Aemon's to emphasize her vow.

*Gods, I have so much to tell you,* she wanted to say as she stared into the milky eyes that couldn't see her at all. She'd come equipped with a plethora of hope for a man who'd been alive enough to see the full extent of tragedy and betrayal befall their house. Daenerys wanted nothing more than to confess she'd married her brother's son, that the last of the Targaryens were not just two, but three, and soon to be four. If all went well, more would surely follow. *Dragonstone should be full of Targaryen babes,* she thought, *just as Winterfell is full of Starks.*
"Such an occasion calls for a drink," he said with a smile that overtook his face in a way that made him look years younger, perhaps decades.

After all the birds had eaten, the large raven flew off with a message for Winterfell. Daenerys took Aemon’s arm, and he led the way back to the hall. As they walked, she did her best to illustrate the scene, though, in truth, there hadn't been much of one. She described the wind, and the way it was made nearly visible as it carried the snow to its banks and painted the roof tiles white. Aemon laughed when she'd recounted the unsupervised men slacking off in the training yard, and the ones leaning at their posts with arms folded in protest.

"Each new round of recruits is sorrier than the last," he bemoaned.

"Not all of them," she commented, her eyes drawn to the short-haired girl in disguise, seemingly pestering an older boy sorting through and appraising the weaponry. Ser Barristan, of course, stood watch nearby. Arya had been so distracted, she hadn't even noticed Daenerys passing by.

As soon as Daenerys entered the hall with Maester Aemon, Jon rose from his seat, surprised to see his wife again so soon. Tyrion, who sat beside him, offered a queer glance and a shrug, taking another sip of ale.

Daenerys escorted Aemon to his usual seat as Tyrion continued what he'd been in the middle of explaining before they’d interrupted, "As I was saying, imagine you're a Targaryen supporter. Confident, perhaps even cocky. After all, they've been in power hundreds of years. Against all odds, you are defeated and given the option to either die or come here... to die."

Tyrion swished the ale around his mug, "You've been here almost a full day, now, Snow. Can you imagine never leaving again?"

"Actually, yes," Jon said, folding his arms for emphasis. "I was serious about givin' my life to the cause."

"Well, try again," Tyrion pressed. "Right now— death or taking the black. No wives, no children."
"Are you tellin' me Thorne had a family he left behind?"

"Who knows? Not me," he said before taking a generous gulp.

"Whatever the case may be," Jon sighed, "He's probably been servin' here since before I was born."

"Ah. But that's the thing," he said, thrusting his mug in Jon's general direction. "It's your father who helped deliver him here, albeit indirectly. And you positively reek of Stark." Tyrion then feigned a disgusted wave at Jon's 'stench'.

Unable to help it, Jon met Dany's eyes as she settled in beside Aemon's seat at the high table. Her father, both of Jon's fathers—all of the necessary ingredients for grudge and betrayal, and yet there had been no bad blood between them. So Thorne hates the Starks for helping aid Robert Baratheon, he scoffed, if only he knew the truth.

"Does he hate my uncle, too?"

"Hard to say, I did not interact much with Benjen before he... Well," Tyrion stopped himself. "As for Thorne, not only does he know you almost came here by choice only to change your mind last-minute... I think each Targaryen loyalist here was a bit troubled when Daenerys was taken prisoner at Winterfell, only to show up at the Wall wed to a Snow."

"It was her choice as much as mine," Jon growled.

"You know full well most men don't see it that way."

This time Jon couldn't help but think of Lyanna. Perhaps Thorne did judge him for disgracing the last Targaryen by inflicting his bastardy on her, however, had his mother chosen her own husband, Thorne might not have been at the Wall today, and Jon might even be a prince.

"It doesn't matter what most men think," Daenerys finally interjected. "Lord Stark rescued me. I was no prisoner. He brought me into his home and fostered me, treated me no different from his own daughters. If Jon reeks of Stark, then it's no wonder I should choose to marry him."
Something in the pure conviction of her tone set his blood alight. Of all the things he felt uncertain of, Daenerys never even made the list. Jon could feel Tyrion's eyes as they darted to and from the bastard boy to his new wife and back again, taking note of the intensity in their unbroken gaze.

"Well, you'll sure have made one person very happy with your choice in partner," he said to Daenerys, successfully breaking the spell.

"Who?"

"The King."

A moment of awkward silence passed until the Maester saw fit to break it. "Jon Snow," he said.

"Yes, Maester?" Jon scrambled to find a respectful enough posture to stretch into, even though the gesture was lost on Aemon.

"Daenerys tells me your children will bear the Targaryen name?"

"Yes," he quickly confirmed. "Yes, they will."

He caught sight of her appreciative smirk, albeit briefly, as a sudden banging noise came from behind him. All of the attention in the room shifted to the doorway at once. Just inside stood a skittish looking Samwell Tarly.

"Sam? Is somethin' wrong?" Jon asked.

"Daenerys -" he said, a bit winded. "There you are."

"What is it, Sam?" she asked, her concern clear.

"I have something to show you."
Daenerys rose from her seat at once. "Excuse me, Maester," she said, offering the old man a squeeze to the shoulder before scuttling over to her friend.

As they opened the door to leave, Jon shouted after them, "Take Ghost!"

The direwolf swiftly uncurled himself from a ball near the fireplace and strode to the doorway to escort the pair. Jon could handle himself, after all, and he felt better knowing they had protection just in case.

Just as the door closed behind them, it opened again, this time Jeor Mormont had returned, luckily having missed the discussion about his Master-at-Arms, Alliser Thorne.

"Where they off to?" he asked.

"The library, I think."

Aemon's brow furrowed with curiosity, and even Tyrion and Jeor raised their eyebrows expectantly.

"They're researchin', so far as I know. Both have a fixation with... White Walkers," Jon said, a bit too dismissively.

"Judging from your tone, you don't believe them?" Aemon asked.

Exchanging a look with Tyrion, Jon was left unsure how to answer, already feeling like he'd started out on the wrong foot with the Maester.

"Every month, we capture more wildlings," Jeor explained, barely above a whisper, as he took a seat beside Aemon. "They're fleeing south, claiming to have seen them."

"Yes," Tyrion cut in, unimpressed. "And in Lannisport they say they've seen mermaids."

"And how many of those fishermen would be willing to give their head to be taken seriously?"
Though Jeor posed the question to Tyrion, his eyes burned right into Jon. Perhaps being a Mormont sworn to House Stark, he'd known that Jon must've borne witness to Will's death first hand.

"Less than a thousand tired old men and undisciplined boys are all that stands between the realm and whatever lies beyond the Wall," Aemon added. "And still, we've barely the resources to arm and feed the men we do have, and none to spare to man the other castles."

"When next you have your sister the queen's ear, tell her the Night's Watch is dying. Tell her we need help," Jeor offered a plea of his own.

"I hate to disappoint, Commander Mormont, but if the rumors are to be believed, my sister is more like to sit beside the king's brother than her own husband."

"Lady Tyrell said Stannis was king in all but name," Jon urged. "Perhaps he'll take it more serious than even King Robert."

Tyrion offered a low chuckle, "And now they've managed to convince even a Stark to believe in the monsters his wet nurse warned him about."

"But I'm not a Stark," Jon reminded the small man with an indignant smirk.

"The Starks," Aemon's voice rang through the empty hall, "Are always right in the end. Winter is Coming."

Succumbing to the unavoidable shiver the Maester's words had induced, Jon studied the wraith-like old man—almost as pale as his thin, wispy white hair. So frail, yet entirely imposing—not hard to believe he was once a prince.

"And when it does, Lord Tyrion," he continued. "Gods have mercy on us if we are not prepared."

For a while, the Maester stared into the distance with a troubling severity. Jon's resolve in brushing off these children's tales had been steadily chipped away—too many people he trusted or that seemed trustworthy believed something lurked beyond the Wall. The problem was that Benjen was still out there, somewhere. His faith in finding his uncle alive kept him from subscribing to the possibility with any certainty. He simply couldn't.
"Snow," Jeor said, his soft voice enough to shake Jon from his trance.

"Yes, Commander Mormont?"

"Still wish to show Thorne those moves of yours?" he asked with a smirk.

Jon turned his head, faintly picking up the unmistakable clashing of swords and the grunting of dueling boys.

As he turned back to Jeor, the Lord Commander downed the rest of his ale. "I'd be curious to see what Cassel teaches you boys down at Winterfell."

Chapter End Notes

Sorry, another shorter chapter, dialogue-heavy and moving the chess pieces around! But what's coming next is not exactly my forte, so I need more time to prepare it, but didn't want to take any longer to update so I don't get bullied, haha! More action over the next few chapters I swear.
Chapter Notes

If you follow me on Tumblr or read my Gendrya fic, you probably already know I've been suffering mad writer's block lately (which couldn't have come at a worse time). Really trying to kick myself out of it but damn, it's tough! So bear with me. Hopefully the return of the long-awaited smut makes up for it... >> ...Please don't hate me!

Chapter dedicated to lilgulie5 (ktwrites). She knows why. ;D

Thanks also to Allegre for whippin' me harder than anyone on getting this chapter done. The patience on that one, I swear! :D

(And since I know I have at least two readers this might interest—The scene on top of the Wall was brought to you kindly by A Perfect Circle's new track "Eat the Elephant" (Perhaps more fitting of Season 7 Jonerys, buuut... it was weirdly ethereal and filled me with that sick feeling, just like the one you feel when you first fall in love))

Training at Castle Black had proved mostly uneventful. Just as Jon had assumed, even Arya could've beaten the recruits they were working with—the sorry lot. As a result, he became something of an exhibition. Thorne would promise the men certain rewards, albeit meager ones, if they could 'get through the bastard.' At first, they came one at a time, Jon either knocking them back or straight into the dirt. Hardly a challenge.

That is, until he remembered the few tips he'd learned from Loras—and thought maybe a change in weaponry might help. Though the longest practice sword they'd had to offer was a hand-and-a-half, rather than a two-hander, Jon tried his luck with it, nevertheless.

Thorne then made him take on two men at once—then three, then four. Yet, nothing the grizzled Master-at-Arms could come up with proved challenging for Jon. He could see this was quickly becoming a point of contention for Thorne, who'd finally granted his tired recruits a short break.

Suddenly, Ghost came from nowhere, agilely leaping from the raised walkways and straight into a snowbank not far from Jon. Several of the boys in the yard stepped back, still unaccustomed to the presence of a direwolf.

Daenerys had returned with Sam, falling in line beside Maester Aemon, who'd been stationed above the yard, spectating alongside Jeor and Tyrion. She and Sam were laughing together, both carrying small stacks of books, until Sam managed to let one escape his grasp, falling to the planks below. Daenerys raised her hand as if to say 'allow me', as she bent to retrieve it. Jon simply watched her,
captivated, until she granted him a wide smile and a wave to match.

Just as he waved back to his wife, he heard a voice behind him.

"What a waste," it said. "Bet he don't even know what to do with an ass like that."

As he turned, his suspicion concerning the identity of the voice had been confirmed—the portly man with ratty hair and sunken eyes, exactly the type of man he’d pictured when he thought back to Tyrion’s insistence on shearing his sister's braids. For a moment Jon considered confronting him verbally. But it was of no use. He knew what he'd heard, and his gut assured him this man was bad news. It was time to show him a taste of what would happen if he so much as uttered another word about his wife. No, Jon thought. If he so much as looked at her.

Opening his palms, Jon's sword clattered to the ground, echoing off the stone walls of the training yard. I don't need it, he assured himself as he balled his fists at his sides. The offending man turned his gaze from Daenerys to Jon, hoping to determine what exactly had caused the ruckus.

Jon felt his lip twitch as it curled, baring his teeth as if in warning. Without any further thought, he lunged, hurling him to the ground with all his weight as they skidded along the mud. It was clear Jon had knocked the wind from the man's lungs, though he saw only red as he clutched his collar, banging him into the ground and further disorienting him. The low thrum of Ghost's growl only egged him on.

One after the other, Jon's fists came hurtling into the man's jaw, each with its own animalistic grunt to match, his head whipping side to side like a tattered doll. Every throw he had delivered with as much force as he could muster, driving his victim halfway into the hardened mud before he was finished. His heart hammered in his ears as they rang, drowning out the echo of Ghost's bark throughout the yard. The delinquent hadn't even managed one hit in on Jon before several pairs of arms were pulling him off the useless excuse for a man.

It was the Jon realized how winded he'd become, gasping for air in his involuntary retreat. Jon wiped the spattering of mud from his face, and with it, streaks of still-warm blood. He checked his knuckles, and though the skin was chafed, the blood was not his own. Once on his feet, he looked down at his victim, his face already swollen, his lip broken open and gushing. Good, he thought, fighting the urge to spit.

His gaze then fell on Thorne, who stood motionless and smug, as if Jon's actions had only confirmed his bias. It was then he remembered his wife had seen the whole spectacle, as his eyes reluctantly drifted to her. Daenerys had been watching alongside Sam and Aemon, all three of which had
donned troubled expressions. Only after Aemon began to lead Daenerys away had Thorne budged, stomping his way to where Jeor had stood alongside Tyrion Lannister.

The group who'd pulled Jon from the battered man had since disbanded, leaving him alone in the training yard, feeling—and likely looking—like an idiot. He dropped his head, deliberately shielding his scowl under a dark veil of sweat-tangled curls. Jon kept his shoulders squared, and his fists in tight balls, despite his throbbing knuckles.

Jeor remained silent as the muddied, bloodied man was hauled off, likely to get cleaned and perhaps even stitched up. The imposing Lord Commander merely eyed Jon while holding an even expression he couldn't quite decipher, leaving him to wonder whether he'd made some terrible misstep, yet unable to regret a single moment of it.

Thorne's composure had finally fissured, "I don't want that rabid dog loose around my men again."

Rather unexpectedly, the Lord Commander broke into a hearty laughter. "It's clear they could use to learn a thing or two from the Stark boy."


"If he wants to train, let him train."

Thorne's scowl looked almost maniacal as he approached, striking shoulders with Jon. Luckily, Jon had kept his pose as rigid as a statue, and so, he hadn't budged an inch in the collision.

"Well, Lord Snow," the man said sarcastically, "it appears that so long as my men remain more useless than you, you get to prowl around my training yard like the stray mongrel you are."

Thorne inched closer, his hateful glare burning. "But don't get me wrong, boy. You try those tricks on one of my men again, it'll be you against me," he threatened, sure to keep his voice low. "And I don't care which whore spread her legs for your lord father, you're no better than the rest of these worthless sons of bitches."

Jon gritted his teeth so hard he feared they might chip. Had it not been for the safety of his family to consider, he might've exhausted what little remained of his energy to bring Thorne to the ground just as he'd done with the good for nothing degenerate. After all, it was better if everyone assumed his
mother was some *whore*, as much as the insinuation only further stoked his rage.

"*Go on!* Get yourselves cleaned up," Thorne yelled. "*I can only stomach so much in a day.*"

Jon retrieved his bastard sword from the mud before returning it to the black-haired kid standing guard over the weaponry. Out of seemingly nowhere, Arya had come bursting forth. "*Jon!* You *sure* showed him!"

Stopping just short of jumping into his arms, likely to uphold the illusion of her newfound identity—she offered only a subtle, apologetic shrug. Unable to help himself, he mussed her unevenly shorn hair, merely shaking his head at her.

"*What'd he say to you, anyway?*" the boy beside her asked after exchanging a curious glance with Arya. He had a thick accent Jon couldn't quite place, and eyes so blue they looked positively *alien* against the otherwise dull surroundings.

"*Nothin' that bears repeating,*" he assured them before turning around to face a group of curious boys, each of whom he'd knocked into the mud only moments before his outburst.

"*How'd you do that?*" one of them asked.

The rail-thin boy with a lopsided mouth gave his friends a once-over before hesitantly asking on their behalf, "*And d'you mind showin' us next time?*"

Hours later, Jon paced near the cage to the winch elevator, nervously running his hands through his *finally* clean and mostly-untangled mane. Patiently, he waited for his wife, as they'd agreed to finally watch the sunset together, just as Maester Aemon had urged. Though Arya put up a fight to join them, she agreed to stay behind so long as Jon took her the *very* next time they made the vertical trip. Already, he'd dreaded his promise knowing his sister's knack for misbehavior. Keeping her out of trouble took the combined efforts of his *entire* traveling party, after all.

As he waited, his mind drifted back through the day's events, unable to shake the memory of that filthy miscreant and the way he openly spoke of Daenerys' body. It made his skin crawl. After spending most of the day with the boys who'd watched him dole out punishment with awe, he'd
finally learned his victim's name—*Rast*. Jon had also learned from Tyrion Lannister that Rast was, in fact, one of the captured rapists the dwarf had had the misfortune of traveling north with. It was then that Jon decided he needed to send an even stronger message. *Tonight*, he vowed, already scheming up a plan to hint at what would happen if ever he uttered a *single* word about his wife, again.

Just then, Daenerys had finally appeared, arm in arm with Ser Barristan. Jon realized just from the look of her hair that she'd likewise bathed. It was back to its natural state—a cascade of soft, silver, springy waves. Strangely she'd had on a dress underneath her cloak—a heavy, modest woolen dress fit for winter. Because the neckline was higher than she'd usually wear, the curve of her breasts had been just *barely* discernible. Nevertheless, his blood withdrew from his limbs in preparation for more salacious endeavors, leaving him a tingling, quivering mess. *Not yet*, he reminded himself, instinctively clasping his hands in front of his groin as Ser Barristan let go of her arm, much the same way Ned had done on their wedding day. Jon sighed.

After the couple had mirrored a pair of mischievous grins, they wrapped their cloaks tightly around themselves as the wind picked up speed. They took a few moments to appreciate the massive scale of the elevator as their gazes fixed toward the sky. Jon gave Dany's hand one last squeeze.

The metal wailed as Jon tugged the door free, allowing his wife to board first before securing the lock tightly behind them. One of the Night's Watchmen began the arduous task of twisting the lever, but not before shaking his head at them dismissively. And just like that, they began their ascent.

Jon kept a respectful distance from his wife, at least until they were out of sight of the men shoveling below. Soon, the snow-capped towers had shrunk the higher they climbed, reminding him of the small snow castles Sansa would build in the godswood each winter. Remembering that sometimes Daenerys would join his sister, he sneaked a peek of her to see if, perhaps, she'd been struck with the same memory. However, her eyes were clenched shut and she looked downright sick. After all, the air had grown notably thinner, the height causing his ears to pop.

Even at ground level, the gale force winds felt as if they were in the midst of a storm, but the higher they climbed the length of the wall, the gusts verged on *abusive*, so much that Jon could feel his skin ripple from each new attack. The cacophony had been inescapable, stripping away the words from both Jon and Dany the near instant they tried to speak. Though he’d asked if she was okay, he guessed she hadn't heard him, nor had he heard her response. All he could really hear, aside from the wind, was the metallic ringing of the chains.

Moving behind her, Jon wrapped his arms around his wife, lending her the extra warmth from his cloak as she shivered. Holding her tightly, he dipped his head into the hollow of her neck. "Don't be scared," he said, aiming for her ear. "I've got you."
"What if we fall?" her voice shook as she asked.

"We won't," he reassured her, "They use this cage every day, Dany."

"At least we'd go together..."

"Don't say that," he scolded with a squeeze like a vice grip. "I can't bear the thought of it."

Though the height at which they climbed had been instinctually offputting, what scared him more was that his mind lingered on the morbid idea of a world without Daenerys, whether or not he was in it. The mere thought made him feel hollow, in a way nothing else had, save for perhaps discovering his mother's identity, only to learn she'd been dead for nearly all of his life. Next, Jon had been hit with a sudden realization—that he might've been the only man at the Wall with such an emotional vulnerability, upright and walking around on two legs, no less. The thought unnerved him greatly, and for several moments, he held his wife possessively, as she melted into him. Jon, enjoying her warmth, the shape of her body; and Dany, enjoying the safety of his embrace.

Finally, the elevator had reached the top. Reluctantly, Jon let go of Daenerys and turned, unlatching the door. Taking her hand, he escorted her through the gate and down the steps carefully, as the walkway was, in fact, made of ice, luckily with a dusting of snow enough for good traction.

The pair passed the first man stationed at his post, doubled over from the cold, huddled up against a small fire. The wind had come cutting through the small overlook his back was turned to, sending Dany's hair straight up like sails on a ship. Quickly she spun away, clapping her hands to her neck to hold her hair in place. Jon couldn't help but laugh.

"C'mon," he said, waiting to reclaim one of her hands.

Soon, they rounded the corner to the even snowier footpath that looked downright deserted no matter whether they faced east or west.

"Where are we headed?" Dany raised her voice over the wind.

"I'm not sure," he admitted, squinting to shield his eyes from the snow as the gusts continually kicked it up. Dany followed closely behind him as they navigated their way down the torchlit walkway, hoping for a good viewpoint from which to view the sunset.
After passing under a few broken and wind-worn beams, the pair had finally found an alcove suited to their needs. Cautiously, they inched toward the edge, staring down into what looked like a painted landscape.

The forest was obscured with ghostly white mists, befitting of its name—the haunted forest. The woodland was a delicate mix of pine and snow, a pristine looking thicket—no sign of man as far as the eye could see. Beyond the treeline, the land crested like waves, small hills to begin with, with jagged looking mountains further in the distance, all but touching the heavy canopy of clouds.

"Wow," Dany breathed, though he could just barely hear her as she tightly gripped his arm, peering out from behind his shoulder like a frightened child.

Suddenly he felt a pang of guilt, having always imagined his first time atop the wall standing next to his Uncle Benjen, peering beyond at the very place he'd come to disappear. Jon expelled all of the air from his lungs until they felt hollow and achy, slipping into a helplessness, as if his absence at the Wall had somehow sealed his uncle's fate.

"What's wrong?" Dany asked, but before he could answer, he heard soft footsteps crunching in the snow just behind them.

Jon turned his head, glimpsing the unmistakable silhouette of Tyrion Lannister just beyond his wife's windswept mane. The dwarf had passed right over the clearing they'd found, paying them no mind.

"Who was that?" she asked, giving Jon enough time to shake himself out of his momentary lapse into guilt and self-loathing. He'd worry about Benjen later, on the dreaded day he'd have to leave Dany behind at Castle Black while he joined the ranging missions in an effort to find the missing party. There was little he could do until then. And for now, he and Dany had each other, and just enough privacy...

The moment he turned to face her, he felt an unavoidable grin split his mouth in two, merely at the sight. With eyes like polished amethysts, skin and hair as white as the moon—Daenerys looked every bit a princess amidst the snow and ice, bathed in a spectrum of warm crepuscular rays as they cut through the clouds. Jon sighed as his eyes dragged over her, still unsure how any of this could've manifested as his reality.

Each step he took toward her, she'd take one back, until she collided with the carved wall of ice behind them. Even then, he pushed her further into it, admiring her rosy cheeks and nose, stricken...
pink from the cold, and the way they matched her full, pink lips... *Gods, she's so beautiful,* he thought, *and she's all mine.*

"Don't worry about it," he breathed against her skin, his mouth dangling above hers like a carrot in front of a mule. Dany went so far as to lift herself up on her tiptoes to reach him, eyes closed and expectant...

Instead, Jon tucked his cloak behind her shoulders, as Dany’s eyes fluttered open. Before she could complain, he snaked a gloved hand up her neck, unable to help massaging her skin as he bent her head to the desired angle. Just as he caught her lips with his, Dany whimpered like a pup, finding his free hand underneath the cloak and urging him to explore her.

Abandoning her neck, his hand disappeared beneath the cloak again to join the other, both making a quick stop at her waist before slipping further. Jon kissed her more fervently as his hands followed the curve of her bottom until his fingertips slipped between her legs. He took two terribly indecent handfuls of her ass, clear enough to state his intentions. Dany broke from his mouth with a gasp as he pawed at her backside, rough and possessive.

"No wonder you're so cold," he teased before she could get a word in, as he began yanking up her skirts. "You should really stick to trousers at the Wall, Dany."

"*Foresight,*" she whimpered as his fingers brushed over the glaring wet spot between her thighs, one after the other.

"I'm *serious,* Dany," he scolded her, his fingers still dexterously exploring her through the leather and the thin fabric of her breeches. Eyelids fluttering as she tried to force them shut, she nodded along, likely only because it was expected of her in this situation. Wondering whether or not a word of what he'd said had sunk in, he began lightly pinching at her most sensitive spots.

"Alright," she groaned, wriggling as he playfully tugged at her, "No more skirts."

Taking a quick look around to make sure the coast was clear, Jon palmed her lower belly before letting his fingers slip below her waistband, and then inside of her. The more he'd worked on her, the more his sore knuckles protested their use. Even so, he pushed on. He'd waited all day to touch her.

"Let me take you in my mouth," she groaned as she grinded onto his fingers, deftly moving her hips in a manner that, combined with her words, made his cock jump in just the way she liked.
However, Jon made his reservations clear, "If I took it out, the cold would take it right off."

"My mouth is warm," she urged with a rather compelling desperation, one that made Jon wish they were back in their own bed at Winterfell, so that he could take her in any fashion he pleased.

"Just enjoy yourself," he hummed at her ear before burrowing back into her neck. As usual, Jon listened to her breathing to guide his fingers' movements, which proved difficult as he strained to hear her over the wind's whistling. Unable to get the right tactile sense of her anatomy with gloved fingers, he clumsily thumbed her clit in small circles while two stiff middle fingers massaged her from the inside—the heat of her making his fingers clammy inside their covering.

"Jon," she whimpered as she gripped his arms, "I need you inside of me."

"I am inside of you," he reminded her with a chuckle, enjoying the way she rode his fingers, finding it nearly impossible to deny the temptation of her whiny demands.

Her lip quivered as she confessed, "I need more."

After wriggling a third finger inside of her, she cried out, her body halted in its movements as she adjusted. Even Jon had trouble attempting to maneuver three fingers inside her cramped channel, but he didn't know how else to give her more. Before he could ask if it'd been too much for her, he heard more whistling. This time, it wasn't the wind.

Quickly, Jon unsheathed his fingers, careful to tighten the strings of her breeches in his departure. In a rush, Dany accidentally knocked her head against the ice as she struggled to straighten her skirts. The couple giggled as she rubbed the tender spot on her head. Jon then peeled his cloak from her, both shuddering from the fresh bite of the cold.

Just then, a small figure rounded the corner, still expertly whistling an upbeat tune. The dwarf walked right past the pair, thankfully drawing no attention to the suspicious circumstances which led them to break apart. After walking straight to the edge, Tyrion heaved a sigh as he took in the sight of the mysterious lands beyond the Wall.

This time, Jon made sure to appreciate the otherworldly view as the sun reclaimed its light, stripping the yellow streaks from the mountaintops as it withdrew, leaving the landscape looking lifeless, ominous. The clouds were grey and purple, thick and threatening snowfall as they whipped by, and
toward the dying sun on the horizon. Finally, he'd understood Bran's fixation with spying Winterfell from its highest points—experiencing a feeling of godlike omnipresence being so far above the world.

"When I was just a boy," Tyrion began, his back still turned to the couple. "I begged my uncle for a dragon as a nameday gift."

First exchanging a knowing look, Jon almost pleaded Daenerys, with only his eyes, to give the Lannister a chance. Though he hadn't spent much time with Tyrion, admittedly, Jon couldn't help but trust his gut reaction—that the man had been much more complex, more kind than most gave him credit for.

"It didn't even have to be a big dragon. It could be small," he said wistfully, "Like me."

Jon sneaked another peek of his wife, whose gaze had fallen to her feet. What he wouldn't give to get a glimpse inside her head at that moment—hoping that stony resolve to hate anything Lannister was just a facade she felt an obligation to uphold. Afterall, Tyrion was different. While Jon may be young, he'd seen enough to know exactly how the world worked—people liked to sort others into rigid categories they could spend a lifetime trying to escape, to no avail. 'Imp' haunted the man before them just as 'bastard' had haunted Jon—a stain neither has chosen nor could they control. Tyrion had been right—Never forget what you are. The rest of the world will not.

The small man shook his head, letting the wind comb through his hair as he held his arms aloft. His cape rippled in the wind as he began again, "On blustery days I'd do exactly this—stand atop the highest point I could find overlooking the harbor, and I'd pretend I was on the back of my small dragon. That together, we'd travel the world, just like Lomas Longstrider."

Just then, Tyrion had shattered his own sentiment—shaking Jon from the childlike reverie completely as he took his cock out, emptying it over the side of the wall.

Dany's eyes had doubled in size at the sight, perhaps not expecting someone as outwardly regal as a Lannister to partake in something so crass in front of others. Jon did his best to bite back his laughter—at both Tyrion's actions and his wife's surprise. Miming a chug of ale behind the dwarf's back for Dany's benefit, Jon wagered a guess at the true culprit responsible for the strange behavior.

Finally, Tyrion turned. "Well," he said, wiping his hands on his trousers, "Gods know I'd best get back down to ground level before I answer that uncanny impulse to jump."
He stopped just between the pair, turning to Jon. "Snow," he nodded.

"My lord," Jon bowed his head.

"Lady Daenerys," Tyrion nodded a second farewell, careful to make only fleeting eye contact.

Dany's eyes narrowed as she looked down at him. Jon cleared his throat.

"My lord," she finally said, begrudgingly and half-sarcastic, as Tyrion continued whistling the strangely jolly tune as he left them behind.

Jon stood there listening for a few moments, until he was sure Tyrion was out of earshot before confronting his wife. "Still? You're still holdin' a grudge against him?"

"I wouldn't call it a grudge," she said, folding her arms. "I'd call it good sense."

Rolling his eyes, Jon tucked his arms beneath his cloak, matching her annoyed stance. "He was tryin' to connect with you, you know. Probably the only other person as bewitched by dragons as you."

Dany sneered, heaving her shoulders in further annoyance, "He thinks just because he's a Lannister he can do whatever he pleases."

"Don't think too hard on it," Jon pleaded. "He probably just really had to go. I'm sure all the men do that up here."

"In front of a lady, though?"

"Suddenly a lady, now, are you? With tender sensibilities, too?"

"Shut up," she barked, pushing him away from her before carefully inching her way toward the overlook. Grinning, Jon stalked after her, scooping her into his arms after sneaking up behind her.
"Jon!" she shrieked, losing her footing. Fortunately, his grip on her had been far better than even her own balance.

"I told you—I've got you," he assured her, wrapping his cloak around her as he held her tightly.

Together they gazed into the lands beyond the Wall, their breath misting against the darkened shades of sunset. Above them, violet bled into indigo like wet paint, and indigo flowed into a twilight blue. The cracks between the clouds revealed a twinkling sky strewn with freshly budding stars. In the distance, the fading light revealed something that had previously gone unseen.

"What's that? In the distance?"

Jon squinted in the direction Dany had pointed, "A village, maybe?"

"In the woods?" she asked, tilting her head like Ghost.

"Why not?"

"It's on fire..."

Narrowing his eyes further, Jon could hardly tell, himself, but wagered a guess nonetheless. "It's most likely a chimney. If it were a runaway fire, the smoke would be much worse, probably. Thick and black."

She must've taken his words to heart, posing no further questions. Jon allowed Daenerys another moment to take in the sight before making his move. Still holding her tightly, he began taking backward steps toward the wall he'd previously had her pinned against.

"I'd like to finish what we started," he purred.

"Would you?" she narrowed her eyes suspiciously. "The Imp's interruption did serve an important purpose, just now..."
"Oh?"

"You see, the cold didn't claim his cock," she challenged.

The thought of Dany seeing another man's cock made Jon grimace, even a man she seemingly loathed. "Lookin' at his cock, were you?" he asked, rightfully earning him another shove.

"Maybe if you showed me yours, I wouldn't have to."

"Alright, alright," he groaned. "I yield."

"Yield? Does that mean you'll finally fuck me?"

Jon bit his lip, feeling his chapped cheeks flush with warmth at the comment that still seemed like something plucked straight from his dream, no matter how many times he'd actually... fucked her.

"Where, exactly?" he asked, inspecting their surroundings, his uncomfortably snug trousers begging for a better fit, knowing the only option to be taking her up on the lewd offer.

"Against the wall?" she suggested, patting the ice behind her.

"Upright?"

"Why not?"

"Hmm," he hummed, considering the required coordination. Just as he brought his gloved hand up to stroke his chin, he'd caught a whiff of her scent, clinging to the leather. Closing his eyes, he ran his fingers across his lips and inhaled, feeling his appetite for her sprout like a seed, taking root all over his body before effectively luring the wolf from its cage.

The moment he opened his eyes again, he was met with a familiar devilish grin—one whose absence he'd only truly felt upon seeing its return. Dany's arms fell limply to her sides as he approached her, close enough to graze her lips with his, as if the action had been enough to cause that grin to jump
from her mouth and straight to his. She looked positively wounded as he retreated only a few inches, denying her a kiss, yet again.

"Are you especially attached to this pair of breeches, Dany?"

She only shook her head no as he fisted the fabric of her skirts in his palms. Dropping to his knees, he sent her skirts over his head, the same way he'd done at Winterfell. He pressed his forehead to her round belly, his hands sweeping over her legs, past her knees and up between her thighs. He inhaled deeply, his mouth and nose mere inches from the wet spot, which had grown almost twice in size since he'd last checked. The fabric almost squeaked against his leather-bound fingers as he fought to find the right grip...

He'd heard her muffled voice beyond, calling, "Jon?"

Luckily he'd found his grip just in time, concentrating his strength only on the permeated bits of fabric as he tore at the seam, ripping a hole right through the center of her breeches.

"Jon!" this time she gasped his name, rightfully bracing herself as he worked to carry out the previous threat he'd left her with—that he'd get a proper taste of her, yet.

Wearing her breeches like a mask, his nose and tongue poked through the hole in search of her. He bathed his tongue in her slippery wetness, groaning in satisfaction as if it'd been his first meal after months of famine. Though he'd intended to start slow, he lapped at her like a starved animal, squeezing at her hips and thighs with enough strength to bruise her, yet he couldn't stop himself. Even her incoherent pleas or the way she tried to push his head away hadn't been enough to slow him down, to stop him from coating his lips with her—his whole mouth, even his chin, his nose...

Only when the air had become too stifling beneath her skirts, could he break away. He feverishly unlaced his trousers with one hand as he partially escaped the woolen dress with the other, drawing it back over his head.

Dany's eyes were cloaked with heavy lids, her face and neck flushed with fever. He wanted so badly to kiss her, but he couldn't wait any longer to be inside of her. Blindly, Jon worked to align his groin with hers, bending his knees to compensate for the height difference. Finally, he'd found her entrance, grunting as he pushed his way inside, the heat of her cunt searing him not unlike the way the frigid wind had seared his sopping face. Likewise, Dany yowled like a fox caught in a trap at his swift intrusion.
Cupping her bottom once safely tucked inside, he lifted her up and pressed her into the wall—internally cursing his weak, cold-burned knees. Though he couldn't move terribly well, or as fast as she liked—his thrusts were slow and even as he adjusted to the strange position. Dany locked her legs around his waist, squeezing her thighs together to continually lift herself off of him. She'd finally claimed the kisses he'd owed her once they fell into a reliable rhythm. They sloppily tongued each other's mouths as he plunged inside of her again and again.

She'd waited so long for this, he knew, and already he could feel everything in his body tightening at once. Tearing his mouth from hers, he sought refuge at her neck, distracting himself by gnawing at her soapy skin as the full weight of her body came continually crashing down onto him—testing the limits of both his will and his strength. The vice-like grip of her legs was as sweetly suffocating as the velvety warmth clinched around his cock, mercilessly tugging at him. Before he knew it, his knees locked as the small tremors took hold, causing him to jerk painfully against her walls as he inundated her womb.

Dany's hands were back in his tangled curls, yanking his head from her collarbone. Still clamped around his waist and holding him captive inside of her, she swiped a finger across his chapped lips, before showing him he'd drawn blood.

Jon's eyes widened with horror upon realizing he'd managed to hurt her. Bending his aching knees just enough to let his wife back onto her feet, his seed spilling from her as he withdrew. Once they'd both found footing, Jon quickly tucked himself back into his trousers before sweeping the hair from her neck for a better look at the damage.

Already the marks he'd left were turning a deep pink, the indentation of his teeth still visible below a few droplets of blood that'd broken the surface of her skin. His instinct was to lean in, to lick and suck them away before even apologizing.

"I—I didn't mean to, Dany," he uttered as he licked the blood from his lips, his guilt clearly woven through his every word. "I don't know what came over me."

"Oh, yes you do," she laughed. "The very same thing that came over you earlier."

Jon only groaned, further wading into his shame.

"You're the proper one, you know," she said in the voice she'd always used to soothe his worries. "Always minding your manners around the others. Trying your best not to make them jealous you're the only one with a woman here."
Dany examined his face, rubbing away the crease between his furrowed brow with her thumb before she continued. "Stop that," she insisted. "When I'm forced to sleep in that damned bed without you again, I can touch my neck, or my bruised thighs, and delight in the pain as I recall the way you took me atop the Wall tonight."

Jon couldn't help but grin as he visualized Dany between her sheets, touching the marks he'd left on her and relishing in the memory.

"We should get back," she sighed.

"Yes," he agreed, helping to straighten her skirt and her cloak. "We should."

Together, they both took one last look at the haunted forest below—this time, it was somehow even less inviting. Black shadows obscured most of the foreboding landscape, strange mists still floating over the trees—the snow as white as sun-bleached bones. Jon thought of Benjen again, knowing he was somewhere out there.

Daenerys heaved another sigh, knowing that soon enough, her husband would venture into the same woods they'd been staring down into, "You'd better come back to me, Jon Snow."

"Of course," he said breathlessly, grabbing onto her waist and pulling her closer. "Nothin' beyond this Wall—be it man, beast or monster—could keep me from comin' back to you. Not ever."

Jon took her head in his hands, unable to resist padding his vow with a kiss. It could convey so much more than his words—his passion, his desperation; his unadulterated love for her. There they remained, lips and arms locked together despite the arctic climate chipping away at their resolve.

Together they stood, alone and far atop the world. The frozen winds were predacious and unforgiving—yet in her arms, he felt warm.

. . .

Ghost had lain awake with Jon as Calon and Sam drifted to sleep, as if he knew he'd be accompanying him somewhere, soon. Patiently they waited, for an hour or more to be sure, before
quietly rising and sneaking out of the door. Together they wandered through the creaking walkways, as light-footed as either could manage.

When they reached their destination, the door had been unlocked, which hadn't been terribly surprising as men came and went all night relieving each other from their nightly patrol shifts and guard duty. Jon wondered for a moment how necessary any of it truly was. Castle Black wasn't a place thieves could just happen upon, and if for some reason they had, they were more like to join the Watch rather than burgle its castle.

Jon stood in the dim light of the quarters, coiling rope around either hand as he spotted Rast—his arms spread like wings to either side of his head as he slept—looking even more helpless in his slumber. Smirking at the sight of his stitched fat lip, Jon made his approach, nodding to Ghost, who hopped up onto his bed, swiftly turning to face their victim. Jon exhaled, his heart pounding away as he quickly drew the rope over Rast's jaw, muffling him.

As his eyes opened, Ghost inched closer, quietly snarling, his snout wrinkled as he bared fangs. The light from the fireplace made his red eyes look like burning coals, perfectly projecting Jon's anger as if the wolf had felt every last ounce of it, himself. Rast's gaze never left the beast as Jon calmly spoke, "Not a single word about her, ever again."

Just as he lifted the makeshift muzzle from the man's broken mouth, Ghost snapped, sending a stream of saliva all over Rast's mangled face. Even so, he didn't dare flinch as Jon slowly backed away, making it safely to the door before Ghost leapt after him in a single, swift motion. They left the barracks without having woken a single soul, not even Calon or Sam, as they returned to Benjen's room, together.

Chapter End Notes

Oh! Allow me to address some worries. Here's a bit of a spoiler (but not really): Jon is *not* going to get captured by wildlings, as some have guessed. I have zero interest in re-writing something already from canon. That'd be boring for me, and boring for you. And, while I cannot promise Jon and Dany will *never* be separated, I *can* assure it will never be more than a couple of chapters.

As always, thanks for reading!
A gentle brush of warm skin against his cheek lured Jon from his slumber. Above him was the pale outline of his wife, the bleariness of his eyes making her appear almost translucent, like a ghost.

After a few blinks, her image came into focus. Her violet eyes were glassy and threaded with bright red veins to match her flush. She's been crying, Jon realized, drawing his hand up to cradle her jaw. It was then he realized the room had been strangely empty. He and Dany were entirely alone.

"What's wrong?" he croaked, feeling an uneasy lump climbing this throat.

Daenerys briefly pursed her lips into a hard line as she searched for the right words.

"When Sam woke this morning, the door to your room was open," she explained with a sniffle. "And Ghost... was gone."

Jon nodded instinctively, hardly able to digest the news. His hand wobbled as it fell from his wife's cheek. It felt as though his whole body had been in a sudden free-fall.

Dany placed a hand to his chest to steady him, "We've all been out looking, even the men of the Watch have been helping."

"How long?"

"A couple of hours."
"Why didn't anyone wake me?" he demanded.

"Sam knows Ghost is partial to me, and we'd hoped to have already found him, leaving you none the wiser," she softly said. "He must be somewhere within the castle walls, the gates haven't been opened."

As she spoke, Jon couldn't help his mind from wandering to the previous night, and the little excursion he'd taken his wolf on.

"Fuck," he mumbled, "It's Rast."

"Rast?"

"That filthy fuckin' rapist pig."

"The one you fought with?"

With a growl, Jon ripped the furs from his body, his anger flaring white-hot. "I'll kill him."

Smoothing his sleep-strewn curls in an attempt to calm him, Dany softened her voice like a mother might with her child, "Before you go murdering anyone, remember that Ghost could easily defend himself against, well, anyone here."

When Jon attempted to raise himself to his feet, Dany tugged him back down to the bed.

"We need to go," he hissed.

"I thought we might try something, first."

"What? "
"Remember that night you discovered Arya had sneaked along on our trip?"

"Yes..."

"Maybe you could warg into him again? You could see where he's gone off to, couldn't you?"

"I don't know, Dany," he admitted with a sigh. "I'm not sure how I did it."

"It's worth a shot. Like I said, everyone is out there looking for him, now. You possess a special skill that they don't have."

Following her hands as they guided him back down to the bed, Jon settled in as Dany slid beside him. Before he knew it, her hand was at his thigh, grazing the coarse fabric of his trousers. Jon quickly clamped his fingers around her wrist to stop her. "I can't. Not right now."

"But that's how it happened the last time..."

"I know," he sighed. "But I can't."

Instead, Daenerys dragged a palm over his eyes to close them. Her hands floated to his temple, fingertips sweeping delicate circles on either side.

Nothing.

Though Jon tried his best to relax as Dany began weaving her fingers through his hair and across his scalp, his panic festered. He couldn't feel Ghost whatsoever. Even when kenneled, Jon had shared a natural connection with his wolf—so much so that he could usually sense when he was nearby. Right now he could sense absolutely nothing.

"Shh," Dany said. Recognizing his alarm, she deepened her massage to soothe him.

The window began to rattle in its frame as a throaty, sonorous horn bellowed throughout the castle. Jon and Daenerys exchanged a panicked look as they listened, hearing no further commotion after its
Just as one of her hands slipped into his, Jon's sight went hazy. Suddenly the dark, stone room had disappeared, in its place a wall of white, engulfing his vision.

His jaw was stretched uncomfortably wide and felt weighed down, the taste of something foul and frozen lingered on his tongue. His head bobbed as he trotted along, passing underneath a wooden gate as it lifted above him. A dark tunnel swallowed his vision again, and suddenly, he was back in the cold, dark room with his wife's warm body beside him, that pretty face hovering just inches from his.

"You've found him!"

Disoriented, Jon swung his legs over the bedside as Dany swiftly leapt to her feet. When he rose, she helped him dress piece by piece, from boots to tunic to heavy fur cloak.

Leading his wife by the hand, Jon sped over the rickety raised walkways and toward the courtyard. There in the center stood Ghost, tall and proud, his tail swishing side to side upon catching sight of Jon.

"What's he got there?" Dany softly asked.

Squinting, Jon tried to determine what it was. He made his way down the steps before kneeling and gesturing for his wolf to join him.

"To me, Ghost," Jon cautiously ordered. "Bring it here."

As the direwolf approached him, Jon's eyes widened in horror at the sight of it. Ghost dropped a mangled, frozen hand at his paws—torn off just below the wrist.

"Gods be good!" Sam shouted, having joined the crowd.

Along with Sam, the onlookers drew closer to catch a glimpse of the stray limb for themselves. Jon took a moment to identify those around him, noting that Rast hadn't been anywhere in sight. The
men stood in a stunned circle, wordless, as each seemed to speculate on where the hand had come from, and to whom it belonged.

The heavy and unmistakable footsteps of the Lord Commander signaled his approach. Tyrion Lannister shuffled beside him, struggling to match his gait. "What's the meaning of all this commotion?" Mormont's voice boomed.

Just as Jon rose to his feet, preparing an answer, a scruffy looking boy stepped forward, his voice slurred as he spoke. "The wolf," he answered. "We thought it'd be a rider when the gates opened. He'd come back from beyond the Wall."

"You let your wolf free beyond the Wall?" Mormont's face scrunched in disapproval as he turned to Jon.

"I'm not sure how he got out," Jon insisted. But I have my suspicions.

"A troubling find," the Lord Commander nodded solemnly, bringing his hand to his chin to stroke his beard in contemplation.

Tyrion retrieved the hand from the mud to inspect it, attempting to bend the fingers, even bringing it to his nose to take a whiff.

"Snow."

"Yes, Lord Commander?"

"Do you suppose you and your wolf could lead some of our men back to wherever he found this hand?"

Before he could answer, Dany flew in between the men, grabbing hold of Jon's gloved hands, "You're going to go out there? Beyond the Wall?"

Jon lowered his voice before answering her. "You always knew that was my intention, Dany. That could be Benjen's hand. I have to know."
The circle of men around them had begun staring, now. Jon dropped her hands, "Ghost was gone only a few hours. It shouldn't take us long."

Dany sighed, disappointed, though she nodded along in agreement.

"Spend the day with Maester Aemon as you planned. I'll be back before you know it, I swear it."

When she replied, her eyes darted between his, her voice had strained with worry, "You'd better come back to me, Jon Snow."

Daenerys shadowed her uncle as he performed his daily tasks, helping where she could, and keeping him company where she could not. Afterward, they had taken a late lunch together in his personal quarters. The food hadn't settled easily in her stomach that afternoon, as it had been tied in worried knots for her husband, for Ghost, and even for Benjen, as they rode out into the haunted forest.

In light of Ghost's discovery, Daenerys thought the best use of her time would be to divulge the details she'd heard from the wildling Osha. Aemon listened contentedly as she recounted the tale of the woman's capture, and how they became unlikely friends. She spoke of Osha's many concerns regarding what lurked beyond the Wall, the way she'd hoped to end up as far south as Dorne to escape what she'd seen. Inevitably, these stories led into tales of the Reed kids and Jojen's many eerie predictions, right down to precognition that Bran would lose a leg, and how the boys were certain they'd be traveling north, the very place Osha had vehemently warned against.

"It sounds like the Reed boy possesses greensight," Aemon declared after Dany's stories ran dry.

"The problem is that he's so intent on being mysterious that you never know what to believe or not. On the one hand, we've seen his predictions come true before our eyes. On the other hand, sometimes he said things that are blatantly untrue."

"Such as?"

"He once told us there were dragons at Winterfell."
"Dragons?" Aemon straightened up at the claim.

"Two, in fact, getting the children's hopes up, no doubt. At first, I thought he'd meant me and Jon, his way of telling us he knew."

The old man's smile fell as Daenerys spoke, his forehead wrinkling.

"That is," she continued, "Until he clarified, one dragon resided in the godswood, and one in the bowels of the castle, heating the springs with its fire."

"I've heard that story, too," he admitted, so softly Dany feared she might've been putting the man to sleep with her blathering.

Suddenly, Daenerys had been struck with the realization of something she'd failed to mention to her uncle. How could I have forgotten?

"Aemon," she croaked, reaching for his hands to hold them. "Forgive me for not having mentioned this sooner, but on the eve of my wedding, we'd received a gift from a mysterious visitor to the castle."

His eyes met hers, almost as if he could see her face. Nervously, she continued, "Three petrified dragon's eggs. For the Last Dragon, he said."

"You've three dragon eggs?" he beamed, squeezing her hands in his.

"I brought them with me, they're in the King's Tower as we speak. You must come to see them, inspect them."

The man's mouth hung agape at the news. "Oh, Daenerys," he cried. "I'd love nothing more."

Just as she moved to help her uncle to his feet, a series of loud knocks rattled his wooden door. Daenerys frowned.
"Allow me," she said, gently placing his hands back in his lap before crossing the room.

When she opened the door, she was greeted with the pleasing sight of her husband's face, cold-stricken and red-nosed, his hair mussed up with small flecks of ice that glinted like diamonds. After actively working to tear her eyes away from him, she'd noticed Ghost, as well as the Lord Commander, himself.

Jon averted his gaze, donning half a grimace as Mormont pushed his way inside the maester's room, announcing their findings, "The wolf led us to a couple of rangers from the missing party."

Aemon nodded solemnly as Dany rushed to his side to help him up. "Was the First Ranger among them?" he asked.

"No."

Daenerys sighed in relief upon hearing Benjen had not been counted among the dead. Her eyes flicked to Jon, who'd since stepped inside the room. He didn't look relieved.

"I'd like you to examine the bodies," Mormont said. "Perhaps with the girl's help, you might determine a cause of death."

"Of course."

Several of the brothers helped the first body onto Aemon's examination table in the nook just past his living quarters.

"Would you stay?" Daenerys meekly asked Jon as the men moved about, feeling unnerved at the sight of the bodies, particularly after recounting Osha's tales mere minutes before they'd shown up.

Without hesitation, Jon gave a nod, unfastening the straps of his cloak to remove it. "I'm burnin' up," he whispered, awkwardly handing it off to Dany. After she draped it over one of Aemon's chairs, they stood together, out of the way, as the men finished staging the first body for the maester.
Once the brothers cleared out, Daenerys was finally able to help her uncle to his feet. Together, they walked to his examination table, following Jon's lead.

"They said this one's name is Othor," he explained.

"Othor," Aemon nodded solemnly, allowing a brief twitch of grief to play across his features before reapplying his maester's mask of indifference. "And there's no apparent cause of death?"

"Truth be told, it just looks like they've frozen," Jon frowned. "I'm not sure how necessary an examination is."

"You'd be surprised, Jon Snow," he said, before turning to Daenerys. "Tell me, child. What do you see?"

"Well," she hesitated, letting her eyes fall on the corpse before her. "He's pale, almost white. Though, his nose, lips, and forehead are black."

"And his eyes?"

Dany's gaze snapped to Jon's. What was Aemon expecting to hear? she wondered.

"Brown. They're brown," she said after a moment.

Aemon hobbled to a display of tools laid upon a large table, retrieving a small blade. Upon returning to the dead body, he sliced through the leather bindings that held his tunic together. Even the fabric was nearly frozen stiff as he tried to pry it apart, his wrinkled hands shaking.

"Allow me," Jon said with a tight grimace, his good manners compelling him to assist.

Together, they cut through the rest of his layers, exposing the man's pale chest, webbed with darkened veins and riddled with peculiar-looking stab wounds, blackened around the edges, showing no sign of ever having bled. The young couple sighed in unison at the sight.
"What is it you see?"

This time, Daenerys let Jon speak. "Appears to be several puncture wounds, but there isn't any blood. They look almost... almost..."

"Cauterized," she finished.

Aemon's brow creased in confusion. "Perhaps he did freeze to death."

"So he was dead prior to receiving these wounds?" she asked.

"It would seem so."

"Who would stab a dead man?" Jon scoffed.

A shiver shook Dany's spine as her mind wandered back to the woman who was petrified of the trio of dead bodies in the wolfswood. Osha would know, Daenerys told herself, wishing the wildling had been at Castle Black so that she could ask her.

Aemon took great care to re-dress Othor's body, managing to safely secure the broken straps. Jon left to inform the brothers stationed outside that the maester was ready for the second body. This time, Jon lent his help to the men as Daenerys stepped toward the window. Outside, night had nearly fallen, the great shadow of the wall falling over Castle Black like a blanket. Above them, she could hear the uneasy cawing of the crows in the rookery. She rubbed her arms for warmth.

Daenerys gasped in horror when she turned to face the second body, whose left arm was mangled, the tip of a bone sticking from the stump of his wrist. He was even paler in color, with long white hair to match. To Dany, he looked almost Targaryen, save for his brown eyes.

She watched as Aemon's hand drifted over the man's face, his fingertips sweeping from his brow to his cheeks and chin. "Jafer Flowers," he determined, perhaps even sadder for this loss.

Assisting the maester, again, Jon helped in cutting through Jafer's many layers the same way they'd done to Othor. Underneath, they'd discovered the same strange set of bloodless and black-rimmed...
wounds, finding no further hints or clues that might serve as helpful. Aemon and Jon took turns scrubbing their hands in the basin after re-dressing the corpse. The examinations yielding more questions than answers.

It’d been a couple of hours since Jon had left to report their findings—or lack thereof—to the Lord Commander, and to inquire as to the status of the pyre for the pair of doomed men. They would burn, Daenerys had been told, as was the wildling way. Though Othor's body had long since been removed, she and Aemon took supper in his quarters less than twenty feet away from Jafer, who had yet to be retrieved by the brothers.

Daenerys didn't have much of an appetite—at least not with the pungent smell of Aemon’s beer in the air, and a dead man in her periphery—still, she choked down the steaming bowl of turnips and mutton, knowing she and her baby would regret it later if not. Sitting in silence, the only sounds came from the quiet chewing and the crackling of the logs in the fireplace. It had been hypnotizing as the flames flicked and danced—almost taking on the shape of a face. A kind face, she realized, in a light, fur-trimmed cowl.

_I must be imagining things_, Daenerys thought, scrunching her eyes. Finally, the flame-licked face in the fireplace looked forward. Dark hair fell from the cowl as light, smoke-colored eyes met hers. _It can't be_, she told herself, as the face in the flames squinted, too, twisting in shock at the shared recognition. _Benjen Stark_?

A loud knock broke her concentration, and no matter how hard she squinted, he had vanished.

"Daenerys, would you mind?" Aemon asked.

"Of course."

Recognizing the knock as Jon’s, she swung the door open to greet him. "We saved some stew for you," she gestured toward the table for Jon to take a seat, closing the door behind Ghost as he quietly entered, curling into a ball on the rug near the fire.

"Thank you," he said. "I already ate with Sam, I'm afraid."
"He finally took a break from his studies?" Aemon smiled.

"Oh, no," Jon moaned. "I had to fetch him his dinner. At this rate, I'll have to fetch him a cot, too. Maybe help move his things into the library, since he never leaves it."

"Has he found something useful, then?" Dany asked as the maester chuckled along with Jon.

"He jabbered on a mile a minute, there's no way I could've kept up," Jon admitted. "I'm sure he'll tell you all about it in the mornin', whatever it is he's onto."

As she stared into her husband's eyes, he motioned toward her half-full bowl of stew, encouraging her to eat. Reluctantly, she tore a lukewarm, soggy turnip in two before shoveling it into her mouth. The reward of Jon's smile made the bitterness worth it.

"There's something I've been meaning to ask you," Aemon said.

"Mmm? " she managed, her mouth full of stew.

"Have you ever had a dragon dream, Daenerys?"

She scanned her memories for a moment as she swallowed. After wiping the sauce away from her lips with her wrist, she replied, "I had a dream once, or... maybe it was more of a vision."

Both Jon and Aemon turned to face her, awaiting more details.

"I was awake at the time. I closed my eyes and thought of Dragonstone, and my mind painted it before my eyes in stunning detail—black stone towers that rose into the sky, the salty sea air and the sound of waves crashing in every direction. Above us were three enormous winged beasts."

"Us?"

"You and I."
"You never told me that," Jon breathed, barely above a whisper.

Daenerys offered a weak shrug as she turned to her uncle. Aemon's expression was kind as always, but largely unreadable as he began, "I dream of them, still, as did my brothers. I hear the crack of their wings, I see the shadows as they fly against a bleeding red star."

Jon's gaze burned hotly into her skin. "We saw that same star," he confessed. "There was a wildling servant at Winterfell who told my brother that star meant only one thing—dragons."

The old man's chin quivered as he considered Jon's words. "Have you dreamt of them, too?" he asked after a moment.

"Me?" Jon asked, almost caught off guard. "I... uh. Well..."

As Jon stammered, Ghost had leapt to his feet, lunging for the door. The wolf spun in anxious circles, crying and growling.

"Ghost? What's wrong?" Jon asked as his companion twirled, clawing at the wood. "Is someone out there?"

As if he'd understood Jon's question, Ghost turned to face him expectantly, waiting for Jon to follow him outside.

"I'll be just a minute," he assured them, tightening his sword belt as he made his way to the door. "Stay in this room until I come back, just in case."

Dany's stomach dropped as she watched him leave. She'd hardly heard Ghost make a peep before, let alone such a fuss. Her nerves churned the stew in her belly, leaving her feeling sick with worry. Aemon reached for her hand across the table, his soft touch instantly comforting her.

"I'm sorry we couldn't inspect those dragon eggs this evening," Aemon said, as Ghost's barks grew more distant.
"We've plenty of time to see them, yet."

"Have you tried to hatch them?"

"I'm not sure they can hatch, but I've tried nonetheless. The man who gifted them to me said time had turned them to stone."

"How have you tried?" Aemon pushed.

"In the fireplace at first," she admitted. "When that didn't work, I tried to put one in the hot springs in the godswood."

To her surprise, her uncle frowned. "I don't think heat or fire alone will do the trick."

"What is it you're suggest-

Behind her, there was a sudden clinking of metal tools as they hit the floor, stopping her words cold. Turning her head as slowly as she could manage, she spotted the dark silhouette of a man. A man who certainly should not have been upright.

What followed was a low, inhuman growl as he stepped forward, the heavy thud of his boots resounding throughout the room. Dany’s heart had begun to beat so erratically she could feel it pounding in every vein as the dead man approached. Finally, he lifted his gaze from the floor—unearthly blue eyes pierced right through her, chilling her to the bone.

Perhaps aware of what had transpired, Aemon had since risen to his feet just in time for Jafer to lunge forward, grasping the old man’s neck with his right hand—his only hand.

As he struggled in the dead man's grip, Aemon gurgled for air—the pitiful sounds filling Dany with both terror and rage. Taking a dull dinner knife, Dany used all of her weight to thrust it into the wight's back. Zero reaction.

Dany scrambled for another utensil, this time a fork, stabbing it straight into his cheek with a taunting wail. Finally, he'd let go of Aemon, who fell to the ground, wheezing and gasping.
The wight turned to Dany, expressionless, as he tore the fork from his cheek, letting it clatter to the ground. Slowly, she backed away, searching her mind for another method.

_Every time I close my eyes all's I see is their eyes turnin' blue._

Her inner voice had been momentarily replaced by Osha's thickly accented words.

_We need to burn them, m'lady._

It was a long shot, but it was all she had.

Daenerys grabbed Aemon's flagon, dousing the wight with beer. Completely unfazed, he charged at her all the same. She dodged his attack, striking him hard enough with Aemon's chair to send him stumbling backward, buying her a bit of time. She turned, hunching over and into the fireplace, readying her next move.

This time, when the dead man came after her, she welcomed the embrace, holding a burning log in her arms between them. When he grabbed her, his tunic ignited, as did hers. Daenerys fell with him to the ground, his body flailing as the flames spread. She stayed on top of him, loudly crying out in relief as she struggled to set fire to as much of the wight as she could.

The door burst open with a loud crack. She could hear Jon screaming, but she couldn't see him through the smoke. A pair of arms had pulled her from the wight, while another had draped a cloak around her, snuffing out the flames. Her vision had blurred again as Jon crushed her in a near-suffocating hug.

After a moment, he loosened his grip on her enough so that she could see Jeor Mormont tending to Aemon and checking the marks left around his neck.

"Are you all right?" Jon asked with a rasp.

"I think so."
Unwrapping her from his cloak, Jon took stock of the damage. Likewise, Daenerys looked down at her charred tunic. The fire had perforated the leather, but her skin had remained unblemished. It was then she noticed the grievous burn on Jon's right hand as he inspected her.

She gasped, "Your hand..."

The skin of his palm looked melted, and angry red in color.

"Oh, Jon," she softly cried, hot tears pricking her eyes at the sight of it.

"I'm alive, and more importantly, you're alive. I'll be all right," he assured her with a smile.

Just then, Aemon placed his hand on Jon's shoulder, wheezing, "I'll tend to your wound."

"Are you sure, Maester? I know the other one got to you, too. It can wait."

"It so happens that the pain in your wife's voice hurts me more than any risen dead man could," he smiled.

Daenerys and Jon chuckled together as she wiped the tears from her eyes.

They followed Aemon to the basin where the maester very carefully cleaned the wound, Jon wincing in pain but never making a peep. Daenerys fetched clean bandages as Aemon patted his palm dry. After applying an ointment, he carefully wrapped Jon's hand in thick linen bandages, giving him instruction on how often to return to have them changed.

Somewhere beyond the examination room, a few brothers had retrieved the lifeless, burned corpse and ushered it away, and hopefully to a proper pyre until there was nothing left of him. Once they were gone, Aemon thanked Daenerys for her help, before insisting on hearing a detailed account of what had happened. He was shocked to learn that she'd harbored no abrasions or burns after her resourceful tactic against the wight, going so far as to inspect the damage to her tunic, confirming for himself that she was utterly free of burns, as well as inspecting her belly until he was satisfied the baby inside it was likewise unharmed.
"How is it possible?" he asked, aghast. Jon turned to her, as well, just as anxious for an explanation.

"I'm... not sure. I've had a sort of resistance to heat as long as I can remember."

Jon's forehead rumpled in consideration, as if wordlessly asking, You have?

Aemon brought a hand up to stroke his chin. "The Last Dragon," he whispered after a moment.

"What?" Jon asked, slipping further into his confusion.

"It's rather late, I'm afraid," the old man said. "On a routine day, I'd have retired hours ago."

"I understand," Daenerys frowned.

"Would you return in the morning, Daenerys? We've much to discuss."

"Absolutely. First thing."

After leaving Aemon's quarters, Jon took his wife by the arm to escort her to the King's Tower alongside Ghost. The sconces along the walls flickered ominously as they made their way over the snow-dusted walkways. The wind carried fat, wet flakes that melted into their hair and Ghost's fur. Jon recounted his own harrowing tale of saving the Lord Commander from the second wight—how useless steel was in stopping it, and the stroke of luck that Mormont should exit his quarters holding a lamp just in time for Jon to toss it, igniting the dead man just as Dany had.

Though the night felt warmer than most, the tale made her shiver all the same. She quickly snuffed whatever urge she'd had to gloat that she'd been right to believe Osha, all long. Against the distant the blaze of the pyre, the Wall wept and glowed orange. Instinctively, Jon gripped her tighter. The fire made her think of Benjen Stark, and the unnerving vision she'd seen in the flames.

Daenerys sighed, "Jon?"

"Mmm? "
"Your uncle is alive out there, and you're going to find him."

"How can you be so sure?"

_Because we locked eyes through the fireplace_, she thought, stopping herself just short of laughter, deciding against such an absurd admittance. "Intuition, I suppose."

Jon heaved a sigh of his own, "I hope you're right."

Finally, they'd made it up the spiral steps and stood a few paces from the door. She could hear Barristan's muffled voice on the other side of it, and Arya softly chuckling in response.

"I can leave Ghost with you, tonight." On cue, the wolf took a seat and tilted his head, as if awaiting her invitation.

"No," she smiled, taking Jon's wounded hand in hers, careful to avoid his burn. "I'd prefer it if he stayed with you, in case any other monsters come to life in the night."

Daenerys brought his fingers to her lips, placing a kiss to all four, as well as his thumb.

"You're so attentive," he breathed. "I can't wait to give you a whole mess of children to fuss over."

"And I can't wait to make them," Dany purred.

Eyes glued to her mouth, a playful snarl curled his lip as he leaned in. Clutching either side of his cloak for support, Dany raised herself up to meet him halfway, the heat of his breath enough to cruelly stir her blood. His warm, pouty lips did little to quench her thirst for him, alone, rather, making her squirm. She pined for the heat of his body against hers, especially after too many nights without his touch. With his good hand, Jon pulled her closer as they kissed. Dany's hands moved under his cloak of their own volition, stopping just short of reaching his backside as the door swung open.
"I thought I heard you two." Arya peeked out long enough to gather what the couple had been doing, even though they'd broken apart at the interruption.

"Gross," she groaned, disappearing back behind the door as it clicked closed.

They shared a chuckle at her abrupt appearance and subsequent disappearance.

"Apologize to her for me," Jon begged.

After nodding, Dany gave his burned palm a gentle kiss over the moleskin of his glove, wanting nothing more than to drag him inside and have her way with him.

"Sleep well," he said as Daenerys finished peeling herself from his arms.

Spying him from a crack in the door, Jon flashed Daenerys one last winsome, toothy smile as he reluctantly rounded the corner, slipping out of sight. She closed and locked the door behind him, sighing as she melted against it, already scheming up plans to catch him alone.
Chapter Notes

Since I assume not all of my readers follow my modern AU, I will repeat the explanation for my recent absence verbatim here:

Go easy on me, guys. I'm very out of practice and I've had a terrible month. For those of you who follow me on Tumblr, you know exactly why. For those of you who don't know, well. Our very own Allegre, one of my dearest friends, was critically injured in an accident at the very beginning of July. It's been a loooong and stressful month, to say the least. Completely devoid of creativity. But she pulled through, because she's a fucking superhero. And now I owe her some good readin'

And so, this chapter is dedicated to my heroine, my muse, my Lucasta—Allegra.

Shout-out to CallMeDewitt for reminding me about my other muses, Mike & Ben, who helped me crank out the smut this chapter (lol)

Lastly, big thanks to EVERYONE who left me kind comments on this fic during my impromptu hiatus. I appreciate it more than you know. I'm still getting back in the swing of things and playing a lot of catch up so bear with me!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Despite finding himself pushed to the very edge of the bed, Jon woke with a sigh of relief. Between he and Sam lie a snoring Ghost, his thick white coat keeping the icy drafts at bay. Since Ghost had had such an eventful day, Jon decided to let the wolf sleep in alongside his friend. And so, he slipped quietly from the bed, painfully tugging on layer after layer of cumbersome leather and fur with his bandaged hand before heading out.

The morning was dark, grey and dreary, as if night stubbornly clung to the sky. Jon took his time wandering through the castle grounds, taking those moments of solitude to think of anything but the distressing events of the night before, unable to come to grips with the fact that some dead never get the chance to rest.

Instead, he imagined what his life might be like had he yielded it to the Night's Watch some three months ago. While the day was cold, as usual, it wasn't the chill in the air that sent a shiver down his spine, then. After all, the night that Daenerys had confessed her feelings for him had been the very
same night he all but begged his Uncle Benjen to take him when he left for Castle Black.

_The Wall isn't going anywhere_, Benjen had said. _You don't understand what you'd be giving up._

So lost in his thoughts, Jon had managed to, quite literally, run into his sister.

"Arry!"

The girl's eyes widened as she recovered from their collision, "Jon!"

"Why are you alone?"

"I'm _not_ alone," she said, gesturing toward her tall, raven-haired friend—the same boy she'd been trailing like pup the last several days.

"I meant where is Arstan?"

"Breaking his fast with the Maester."

"And why aren't you with him?"

"I was busy looking for _you_."

"Why me?"

"Because Daenerys isn't feeling well. She said she needs your help."

Turning on his heel, Jon started toward the dining hall to find Aemon.
"Where are you going?" she called.

"Fetchin' the maester."

"No," she protested. "Dany doesn't need a maester. She said she needs you."

The boy at her side let a chuckle slip, quickly met with a glare from Jon. "Go on, then," Jon raised his voice, his frustration with his sister flaring. "Go find Arstan and stay by his side. I'll check on Daenerys. The next time I see you, you had better not be alone."

Arya tugged the boy's arm before scuttling off toward the dining hall, turning back to shout as she rounded a corner. "I'm not alone!"

Shaking his head, Jon swiftly stomped his way up the King's Tower to assist his wife. The more his irritation with his sister waned, the more his stomach tied itself in knots. Upon reaching her door, Jon pounded his left fist into the wood, worried now.

"Daenerys, let me in."

"It's open," he heard her small voice call. Already, his mind started spinning lectures for her. She was in there alone with the door unlocked—those seeing Ser Barristan breaking fast without her might put two and two together. Shaking the thoughts him his head, he reminded himself, It doesn't matter. I'm here, now.

Once inside, Jon noticed a hump shifting beneath a mess of blankets on the girls' bed.

"Daenerys?"

More shifting occurred, yet no answer came. His stomach gave another helpless flip as he approached her. Drawing back several blankets, he revealed a pink-flushed face, lashes fluttering a bit as if she were dreaming. However, he knew his wife well enough to know she was faking it, for whatever reason. Jon pressed the back side of his good hand to her forehead to check her temperature. She did feel a bit warm.
"Are you all right? Tell me what's wrong," he pleaded, brushing the hair from her face.

From underneath the blanket came an outstretched arm. Even with eyes clenched shut, Daenerys skillfully unfastened Jon's cloak. He hardly had time to process what she'd done before it fell to the floor with a thump. His gaze drifted from the discarded garment back to his wife, just in time to see the same hand reaching for him a second time. Dany discreetly opened one of her eyes to spy him as she grabbed a fist full of his leather doublet, yanking him down into bed with her.

Unsurprisingly, Jon toppled over her, trying his best to dodge her belly in his descent, to keep his muddied boots from touching the bedding. As he floundered beside her, she broke into a fit of laughter before leaning in to place a kiss to his lips. Disgruntled, now, Jon dodged her when she came in for a second helping.

"What in seven hells was that about?"

As if in sync with his question, Daenerys shed the remaining blanketed layers in one swift motion, revealing she'd had on absolutely nothing beneath them. Jon's eyes doubled in size, instantly gaping at her naked body.

"Now I've got you alone and all to myself," she threatened.

A beautiful threat it was. Daenerys smiled, hooking a leg over his side before pulling her body on top of his. As his mouth was claimed again in a hurried kiss, he internally cursed all the leather that only served to bar his skin from hers. His unbandaged hand took advantage of her nakedness, helping to ward off any sign of gooseflesh as her familiar heat rose to the surface, hot to the touch. While Daenerys clung to him, crushing his mouth with hers, Jon found an erotic sort of thrill in that while he was still dressed head to toe, she didn't have a single stitch on her body.

Cruelly, she broke from his mouth, pulling him back to the plane of reality.

"Did you lock the door?"

"Uh..."

Unfortunately, the response had been the best he could manage on such short notice—at least with a head drained of blood as it all went rushing elsewhere. Luckily, a furrowed brow had expressed
enough doubt to lift Dany to her feet to solve that very issue.

Quickly, Jon propped himself up on his elbows to watch her sprint to the door, admiring the way her bottom bounced each time a foot collided with the hard floor. As she fought with the stubborn lock, Jon marveled at her body, something he hadn't gotten to see much of since before they left Winterfell. Naturally, his eyes fell on her belly—he'd felt it plenty, but seeing its prominent curve filled him with a satisfaction like he'd never felt before.

"Are you done yet?"

After finally twisting the lock into submission, Dany turned to him, incredulous, her loose hair falling around her shoulders. Jon ran a tongue over his bottom lip as she moved her long tresses out of the way of her breasts, pushing her chest forward. "Here I thought you might enjoy the view."

"Such a tease," he accused her, running his left hand over the stiff leather at his groin.

The simple motion lured her back to the bed. She reached first for his bulge, keeping a tight grip on it as she climbed atop once more. Daenerys wasted no time before tugging free the laces of his doublet, her breasts swaying in tandem with her efforts. Jon watched them, waiting to be wrenched free of his bothersome garments before latching on to her left nipple. He stayed there long enough to tease it taut with teeth and tongue before letting his fingers take over. As his lips moved onto her right breast, Dany maneuvered him free of his trousers while he worked.

So busy with the task at hand, Jon only briefly felt her wetness before she was fully seated on his cock and sighing in relief—a deliciously cramped fit for the both of them. Daenerys took a handful of his curls, peeling him away from her before dragging her palms down his neck and over his chest, pushing him backward. The want pooling in her eyes, alone, had been enough to make his cock twitch inside of her—an involuntary act that only strengthened her intent to use him as she saw fit.

After collapsing onto his chest, a veil of silver fell around their heads. The heat of her skin finally flush against his had sent his head swirling, a feeling he only just realized he'd been taking for granted. Dany began bucking her hips so hard a steady kiss proved impossible. Instead, a small, rigid tongue flitted just inside his mouth when she could reach it; wet, pillowy lips dragged over his chin when she couldn't. Digging his fingers into her right hip, he tried to match her pace—his efforts a series of clumsy, discordant movements with the aid of only one hand. Dany didn't seem to mind, though. Each time he took another invasive plunge inside of her, she rewarded him with an array of satisfied sobs.

So caught up in wringing Daenerys free of every last groan her tired lungs had to offer, he failed to
realize how much pressure had built inside of him. There was no time left to warn her before the first pulse of his orgasm struck, his cock jerking inside of her in just the way she liked. Dany lifted herself up enough to spy his scrunched face, swirling her hips until she knew he had finished, and a few times more, for good measure.

They lie locked together afterward, simply staring into each other's eyes. "I'm sorry, Dany," Jon huffed after a moment. "Let's finish you off."

After leaning in for a quick kiss, Dany was on her feet and scampering toward the privy, likely to clean herself up before putting Jon to work. She had made it about halfway before a knock rattled the door.

"Seven hells!" he heard her curse, flinching and covering her nudity out of instinct. "Who's there?"

"Maester Aemon."

"Just a moment!"

Daenerys retraced her steps to grab a tall stack of clothing from the wardrobe. She motioned for Jon to answer the door before sprinting, stark-naked, to the privy and locking herself inside. After hastily dressing, Jon picked his cloak up off of the ground, re-fastening the straps. Feeling almost feverishly hot back in his many layers, the pain in his right hand seared him anew.

After doing a piss-poor job of lacing himself back up left-handed, Jon unlocked and opened the door. Aemon had looked in good spirits, not even the least bit winded after climbing the tower.

"Maester."

"Jon," the old man greeted him.

"I'm afraid Daenerys had to use the privy."

"Oh, that's quite alright," he smiled, moving forward, straight toward the chairs at the center of the room. "I'm a bit early, after all."
"Allow me," Jon said, pulling one out and helping guide the maester to his seat before taking the chair beside him. "What brings you this mornin'?"

"Why, the dragon eggs, of course," he smiled. "Easier to bring myself up this tower than lug those heavy things down to my quarters, I suspect."

"Heavy things?"

Aemon laughed, "I imagine they're not unlike like the egg I had myself, as a boy."

"You had a dragon egg?"

"That I did. As did my brothers."

"What happened to it?"

"I suppose it was just another thing lost at Summerhall."

"I'm sorry to hear that," Jon said, running a hand through his sweaty mess of a mane, regretting his inability to find any combination of more suitable condolences. The education they'd received from Maester Luwin had conveniently left out much of the recent Targaryen history for what he always assumed was Dany's protection, but in retrospect, it was likely for his, as well.

"Jon," Aemon said, shaking the boy from his wandering thoughts. "The Lord Commander would have a word with you this morning."

"With me? What for?"

Suddenly appearing without warning, Daenerys cleared her throat. Aside from flushed cheeks, she looked every bit the lady she sure hadn't been only moments ago. Silver hair had been swept up into loose twists at either temple, quite reminiscent of Margaery Tyrell's, and she donned a poorly stitched knee-length riding dress over a pair of trousers. Good girl, Jon thought.
"Daenerys," the man smiled, his clouded eyes unmoving. "Are you feeling well this morning?"

"Quite well," she said, offering Jon a secret smirk.

After his wife stepped forward, it was then that Jon realized both men had taken up the only available seats. He shot straight up, pulling his chair out further before offering it to her. Squeezing his hand in thanks, Daenerys smoothed the stiff fabric of her dress before taking a seat.

"I'll leave you two to it," Jon said.

"Where are you going?"

"Commander Mormont would like a word with me."

Daenerys frowned. "Come back after?"

"I'll try my best," he replied, stepping forward to place a kiss on Dany's forehead. "Maester," he nodded to the blind man, who nodded in reply.

Upon reaching the door, he gave his wife one last smile before mouthing another apology for leaving his job unfinished.

Daenerys felt her heart slump in her chest as she watched him leave. Again. While seeing Aemon always filled her with contentment, she wanted Jon to get to know the man, as well.

Resisting the urge to sigh, she turned to her uncle. To her surprise, Aemon had produced a leatherbound book.

"What have you got there?"

"A gift," he grinned, thrusting the book forward.
Daenerys grasped it gently, inspecting the cover first. Engraved had been a title in a language she couldn't identify. Flipping through the pages, she found yet more unfamiliar words.

"I can't read this."

"Not yet, perhaps. I will help you."

"I'd like that," she decided, smoothing a fingertip over the letters, noticing the way many of the vowels were accentuated with flat lines above them.

"High Valyrian," her uncle clarified. But she already knew.

"Is it hard to learn?"

"Perhaps for an average child," he said. "Though you are anything but."

. . .

Though he'd been there the night before, Jon felt a cold sweat as he approached the Lord Commander's quarters. Jon had suspected his early morning invitation might have to do with the events the previous night—something he wasn't too keen on reliving so soon.

"Jon Snow," Mormont greeted him upon answering the door, pushing his back against it so the boy could enter. "I take it Aemon found you?"

"Aye."

Inside, the fireplace barely made a dent in the stubborn chill that hung in the air. And though the Lord Commander had yet to equip his cloak this morning, the cold didn't seem to faze him. It was clear he was preoccupied with whatever had been plaguing his mind as he slumped into his seat in front of the fire. Jon waited for Mormont to begin, listening to the echoes that had been carried from the training yard—the sound of men shouting and swords clanging as they dueled.
"Has he said when you'd have your hand back?"

"Soon, my lord. A week or more."

"Then I don't suppose you'll be tormenting Thorne with that pesky expertise of yours."

"Not today," he smirked.

"I suppose it matters little."

"Why's that?"

"I've ordered Thorne to take the hand your wolf found and present it at court. He leaves for King's Landing today."

A flicker of a smile tugged the corners of Jon's mouth, then. *Good riddance.*

"Not so fast," Mormont said, folding his hands upon the table. "Now, you and I both know I wouldn't be sitting here if it wasn't for you and that beast of yours."

"It was the least I could do, my lord."

The old man shook his head, letting a chuckle slip. "You may not have your father's name, but you have his honor."

Jon pursed his lips together to hide a scowl. Just when he thought he'd made progress on it, Mormont had reopened the wound. Silently, Jon wondered whether he'd ever grow used to being Eddard Stark's *nephew*, rather than his son, or whether it would always remain a sore spot.

"There have been yet more reports of blue-eyed corpses outside of Eastwatch. I didn't know what to make of any of it until a bloody blue-eyed *dead man* tried to kill me."
Unsure how to respond, Jon remained silent, peering out from his veil of curls to watch the old man process his thoughts. His eyes were distant, solemn.

"The Night's Watch will not sit idly by and wait for the snows," he finally continued. "I mean to get to the bottom of these reports. Alive or dead, we will find Benjen Stark."

Even seeing the bodies of Benjen's fellow rangers—first dead and then undead, Jon could hardly entertain the thought his uncle might've met the same fate. Upon lifting his head, he was met with Mormont's intent gaze.

"I want you and your wolf with us when we ride out tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" he gulped.

"A skeleton crew will be left behind to run the castle while we're away."

This was it—the offer Jon had been waiting for since arriving at Castle Black—a chance to help search for his uncle. The reality of leaving Daenerys and Arya behind made him feel ill, but it was something he knew all this time he'd have to do. And the day had finally come. She'll have Aemon, he reassured himself. And Barristan, too. The girls will be safe.

"I'll do it."

... 

"Rytsas!" Daenerys shouted as Jon unlocked the door to find her and Aemon still planted exactly where he'd left them.

"What?"

"Rytsas!"
"I'm... not sure what that means, Daenerys."

"It means hello."

"What?"

"Hello. In High Valyrian."

"I was gone ten minutes and now you're speakin' another language?"

Daenerys rose from her seat, swaying her hips in a way Jon was thankful Aemon couldn't see. Slinging her arms over his shoulders, she purred, "Avy jorāelan."

"Avy jorr-" Aemon repeated, taking care to roll the pair of r's on his tongue, "-āelan."

After intently listening to his correction, she turned back to Jon before making a second attempt. "Avy jorrāelan."

"I... don't know what that means."

"It means I love you."

"I love you, too," he flushed, giving his wife a quick peck on the cheek before unfastening her arms from his neck. While Aemon might not have been able to see them, it still felt like an inappropriate show of affection.

"Now you're back, will you help me with the-," she stopped mid-sentence to turn to the maester, "Zaldrīzes drōma?"

"Good!" Aemon clapped.
"Common tongue, Daenerys. Please."

"Dragon eggs," she frowned. "Help me with the dragon eggs."

"Sure," he said, following her over to the wooden chest she kept at the foot of her and Arya's bed.

"Kessa."

"What?"

"It means yes."

"All right," he groaned. "You're the one with the lessons, not me."

"For now," she teased.

After shaking his head at her, the pair tucked their fingers underneath the corners of the chest. Carefully, they lifted and walked it to the maester, setting it down beside him. After hoisting the lid, Daenerys squatted on the floor. Next to her, Jon followed suit and took a knee.

"Which one would you like to hold?" she asked, palming the dark egg, her favorite egg. "Black, green, or cream?"

"Far be it from me to fuss over which impossible relic to inspect."

Laughing along with her uncle, Daenerys lifted the onyx-and-ruby-colored egg, just grazing Aemon's fingers so he could find it. The maester took it from her, cradling its bottom much like the way one might hold a babe. For several moments, Jon studied Aemon's face as he made sense of the egg—running shaky fingers all along the ridges of its scales, lightly bouncing it to measure its weight.

"I don't mean to get your hopes up, child," he finally said, "But I'm not so sure these are petrified as you were told."
"So they can be hatched?"

"In theory."

"Sorry, Maester," Jon cut in, "But how can you be sure they haven't turned to stone?"

"It has been a lifetime, I admit, and at the time, I was just a boy. But the weight of this egg feels similar to the ones my brothers and I were given as children, as does its scales."

Daenerys elbowed Jon excitedly, her wide eyes a dead giveaway that she had already begun conceiving new schemes to hatch the eggs. Jon didn't know what to make of it, but he knew better than to bet on the sudden reemergence of legendary beasts.

"I need to talk to you," he whispered.

"About what?"

Jon rose, reaching for Dany's hand to help her to her feet. "Lord Commander Mormont has invited me and Ghost beyond the Wall to help search for Benjen."

"But your hand-"

"He suggested Maester Aemon teach Sam to dress my wounds. That Sam join us."

"You're taking Sam, too?"

He nodded solemnly. "And we're leavin' tomorrow."
"Tomorrow? " she asked, sounding as if her lungs had completely deflated from just one word.

"At first light."

"How long?"

"A fortnight or so, maybe longer."

Daenerys sighed, sinking into his chest. Enveloping her in his arms, Jon nuzzled into her hair, still a bit damp from their early morning whim. He wasn't ready to say goodbye to Daenerys, but he certainly wasn't ready to say goodbye to Benjen, either.

. . .

After a restless night, Daenerys woke just as the sun began to peek in through the frosted windows. She pulled the snoring girl beside her into her arms, hoping the embrace might ward off the last of the dead men that had lingered in her mind—remnants of the few times she managed to slip into a dream state. Inside her stomach sat a ball of dread that felt as large and heavy as one of her dragon eggs. The thought of being apart from Jon made her feel ill.

From the other room, she could hear the soft falls of boots, signaling Barristan had been up and about. Daenerys spied him from the doorway, where he came to rest at the table before reaching for her new book and flipping through its pages.

Her curiosity had been enough to pull her from the warm bed. After slipping into her boots and pulling a cloak over her gown to keep warm, she took a seat beside him.

"Rytsas, Daenerys."

She couldn't help but chuckle, "You speak Valyrian?"

"A little."
"...How?"

"It was not uncommon for children of noble houses to be taught a bit of High Valyrian, though I suppose it fell out of fashion after the Rebellion."

"You learned it as a child?"

"Poorly," he admitted, setting the book down. "Most of what I learned came later, being surrounded by your family at court. I picked up enough to carry a conversation. Your mother quite liked to speak it."

Daenerys beamed at the thought. "Maester Aemon is going to teach me. Would you practice with me, then?"

"It would be my honor, Princess. Though I admit I am a little rusty."

Arya awoke to the sound their laughter, her irritation quickly waning upon realizing they'd all be making their way down to the gates shortly, to see Jon and Sam off. It was a sad morning, but Daenerys found solace in that almost all of the able-bodied men would be accompanying her husband on the trip north. She wondered what Castle Black might be like with the bare minimum left behind to run it, unsure yet whether it was something to dread or look forward to.

After everyone was dressed, the trio made their way downstairs. Outside, the men of the Night's Watch emptied the armory of its weapons—making sure every man, both seasoned and callow, had been armed. Jon and Sam were waiting for them beside a pair of horses she didn't recognize.

"Where's your horse?"

"I'm leavin' 'im with you."

"Why?"
"If anythin' happens to m-

"Don't you dare," she interrupted. "Don't dare finish whatever it was you were about to say, or else..."

"Or else what?"

"Or else you'll be in an unimaginable world of suffering for defying your wife's order."

"I wouldn't dare."

"You'd better come back to me, Jon Snow," she reminded him.

"Always," he said, wrapping both his arms and his cloak around her, almost crushing her from the force of his embrace. "I promise."

Underneath the shield of his cloak, Daenerys let her hands wander south to pinch at his backside—finding satisfaction in both groping his shapely bottom and making him squirm. "You still owe me."

"I haven't forgotten," he said, before pressing a pair of warm lips to her forehead.

Once he finally let go of her, Sam swooped in for a goodbye hug of his own as Jon mussed Arya's hair, careful not to get too affectionate and risk ruining her clever disguise. *This is it*, Daenerys thought with a heavy heart. *He's really leaving."

Awkwardly, Jon climbed onto his horse using his left hand. Daenerys noticed that attached to his sword belt was a hand-and-a-half sword, a bit larger than he was used to. Hopefully, he wouldn't have to use it. Finally, her gaze drifted to Jon's, and the pair held eye contact as the gate was slowly lifted.

"Move out!"

Jeor Mormont led the men through the dark tunnel before them, many of which carried torches to
light their way. Jon hesitated long enough to mouth something that looked an awful lot like *avy jorräelan*.

Eyes welling with tears, now, Daenerys waved goodbye to him. She watched intently as Ghost ran ahead, swerving through the many mounted men. The small army bled into the darkness, even Jon. She stayed behind until the gate finally descended, acting as a physical bar between her and the man she loved. Already, the separation felt like too much to bear.

**Chapter End Notes**

I believe I said this before, but, I have no interest in writing long periods of separation between Jon and Dany. In some cases, this will involve a jump forward in time. This time, I predict just one Jon-less chapter from Dany's POV, until he's back. This chapter was almost a chore to write because I'm so excited for what happens when Dany is left alone. Hopefully it'll be as exciting to read as it is in my head! And just to reiterate—because I don't think it's much of a spoiler to say Jon is *not* getting kidnapped by the wildlings. I left out the bits about the wildling reports for a reason. Oh and before you ask—No, Jon doesn't have Longclaw (yet).

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