A Face is just a Mask

by GingerFrenchie

Summary

Arya has some trouble getting over the loss of her parents.

She lives with her sister Sansa, away from her childhood home and away from her problems. She seeks a way to numb the pain instead of properly deal with it and decides to find herself a hobby, but that's not as easy as it sounds.

Someday she shows up at theatre class and encounters a strange man there.

Little did she know back then that this day would be the day her life became even more complicated.
Introduction

Chapter Notes

Hey there :)

I'm just experimenting here, I hope you like it!

Here are some things you need to know before reading:

* This is settled in our world, present day
* Ned Stark was adopted by his parents (this is me struggling to not make this incest)
* A lot of characters present in the series are missing
* Arya is kind of a troubled young lady, so the relationships in this story are going to be slightly messed up, you have been warned.
* There are lots of references to the books and the series, some subtler than others, we'll see if you can spot them ;)
* And finally, English is not my first language, so I apologize for the mistakes ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So, how did it go?”, Sansa asked while Arya angrily hopped into the car.

“They kicked me out.”, she grumbled.

“Apparently comparing Kadinsky's works to a five year old's is considered disrespectful.” Arya groaned, mimicking her old art teacher's high pitched voice.

“They told me I didn't have to bother coming back.”

Sansa sighed. That was the eighth class her little sister was being dismissed from since the beginning of the scholar year.

“Arya, when I told you that you should find a hobby to think about something else, I didn't mean you had to find one every week.”, she admonished the seventeen year old.

“Well it's not easy as it sounds, it's not like I have a lifetime passion like you do with ballet.”

“Maybe if you were a little more motivated, it would be much more pleasant for you and your teachers.”
“It'd be so much easier if Syrio's fencing club hadn't closed.”, Arya growled again, looking at the landscape passing out the partly open window of the car. She let the fresh wind of the end of the day toy with the strands of her freshly cut bob. The autumnal evening air was brisk, a release compared to the stifling hotness of the days, here in Los Angeles.

It had been difficult since Robb and Mum's deaths. Six months it had been since the funeral already. It was still strange to think that they were gone. A stupid car accident, on the way to uncle Edmure's wedding. Sansa and Arya had come up with the excuse of Sansa's exams and explained Mum that they could not hop on a plane and join them in London before the end of July when she told them about the ceremony on the phone. Truth was, they were not so exited about another boring family reunion with their cousins on their mother's side (crazy people, most of them, especially aunt Lysa). Little did they know back then that this would be the last time they would speak to her.

Bran and Rickon had escaped the tragedy too. Bran because the journey was too tiresome for a boy in a wheelchair, and Rickon because he had to focus on working to get in a 'satisfying' High School, like their mother used to call it. So they had both remained home with Osha and Old Nan, the governess, in their huge mansion near Manchester.

Winterfell… Sometimes Arya missed the long corridors, the feeling of the cold tiles underneath her naked feet, the landscapes coated in snow outside the huge windows. She missed her brothers, the feeling of home. It stung each time she realized she would never experience again these peaceful Sunday mornings, with air filled with the smell of Mum's freshly baked waffles, the sound of half the family cheering whilst watching their team win at Mario Kart on the Wii, on the giant TV screen in the living room. Mum would always be with Sansa, Rickon and Robb, and Dad would always be with Bran, Jon and Arya. Every Sunday went like this when she was younger. She would wake up at an indecently late hour, down a dozen of delicious waffles drowned in maple syrup, and lay on a mountain of pillows in the living room and erratically press the buttons of the Wii remote until it was time to pack her school-bag for the next day. These days looked so far now.

She had not returned since they had moved in California with Dad, three and a half years ago. He had been transferred there because of his work, the girls had wanted to follow him. Sansa because she had always dreamed about fulfilling the American dream, be where the people are, become famous and everything like in some Disney princess song, and Arya…well, Arya was not sure. Maybe she needed fresh air back then, maybe she just wanted to travel. She had always had quite the taste for adventure. But she had never felt home here, nor anywhere else than Winterfell.

She had not found the courage to go back when their father died, only a year after settling in LA. She did not have enough strength to face this enormous and impressive house once filled with so much joy, now that sorrow had taken over it. Dad had been murdered. By a psycho who crossed his path one morning when he went to work. His death had been unexpected, the three of them had just started a new life, they still had the taste of the fresh motivation in their mouths when he went away prematurely. It happened brutally, fell heavily on the dispersed family. Like every fucking thing that had ever happened in Arya's life.
The two years between his death and that awful month of June passed too quickly. They all tried to recover, each from their own corner of the world, and still to this day, they were not fully themselves.

The girls had continued to go to class in their respective American schools, as if nothing had happened, to deal with the pain, to forget about it just the time they were in class. Arya's grades had just gotten worse and worse, she would often skip.

Going to school was utterly useless in her mind. The courses were on the internet, and Gendry, a Junior in College she had met in her fencing club, would help if she asked him. Hot Pie would even come to prepare her lunch sometimes, and Lommy had come to visit several times before he left for his exchange student thing, and Sansa came back after her day was over. That was more than enough people to speak to in one day. So she started working from home, trapping herself in her little bubble.

Only recently had Sansa forced her to go back because her grades were starting to get too low. But she hated it, she hated the looks she got from these strangers, these gloomy looks that screamed of pity. Somehow everyone knew she was an orphan now. She did not need their pity. So she went to school to please her sister, because that was the only way to show her that she was fine and that she did not need to be taken care of like a child. She spent the day alone and encircled by strangers there, and came back when the boring courses were over. Sometimes she would eat with Gendry and talk with him, but none of that was very exiting either. Gendry was nice but he always complained about something.

Mum had come to visit them in their small apartment in LA shortly after the funeral, told them to come back home, but they had insisted on staying there. The life insurance was more than enough for them to survive, and Sansa had just turned twenty one and started to work as a model for some company Arya never remembered the name of and thus could not leave California without compromising her blooming career. And Arya had given as a pretext that she wanted to pursue her studies where she had started them, when really she did not want to deal with the pain each time she would look at any room in their house and be reminded that she will not cross her father in any of them.

They had assured their mother that they were fine, that she should spend more time home with her boys while they tried building a life for themselves here. So they had continued to live in that three bedroom flat, away from their childhood, but mostly away from the grief.

This was the Stark way of coping with difficult situations. Ignore the pain, pretend that everything is well. Despite their mother's advice, neither of them had sought any help from the support groups she had suggested. People with problems need help, and they had none. Or at least that was what they liked to tell themselves.
And now they were truly on their own. At least they were together, Arya thought sometimes. True, that the sisters never got along as little girls, but times had changed, and Sansa was the closest thing she had to a best friend now. Bran and Rickon were fine too, Sansa made sure to Skype them every week to keep up with what they were up to.

Bran, who was only sixteen, had started an apprenticeship in some informatics company for technology geniuses called The Ravenous Three Eyed Comp. or something like that (no one truly understood what job exactly he was doing there but he seemed happy), and little Rickon, who was not so little any more, probably taller than Arya by now, had just entered a High School called Skagos, a relatively well classed High School. Mum would have been proud.

And Jon… Jon was somewhere in Canada on a mission, probably freezing to death. He had left home shortly after turning eighteen. He had always dreamed about being in the air army. Unlike Arya, he had always known what he wanted to do with his life.

His story had always remained a family secret. Dad had adopted Jon when he was only a newborn, a couple of months before he married Mum. It had been a hard blow for the young woman back then, she almost got the wedding cancelled when she learned about the baby. Everyone was sure he was Ned Stark’s son, that he had fathered him during one of his business travels. Others believed that because Ned Stark had been adopted himself, he felt dutiful of adopting an orphan too to repay the universe or some shit, and thus did so without consulting his wife priorly, and to this day, the mystery still lingered. Mum had never held the boy in her heart, but Jon had definitely been Arya’s closest childhood friend. He was her confident, her partner in crime. She felt sad when she remembered that it had been an eternity since she had not seen him, or even talked to him.

Not since he left home

Seven entire years, she recalled suddenly. He was always on a mission somewhere at the edge of the world when important things happened. And she could not blame him, she just felt sad that they did not remain as close as they had wished to.

“You should try theatre class. I believe you haven't been kicked out of this one yet.”, Sansa pulled her out of her reverie, eyes fixated on the road.

Arya groaned again.

“Freaking theatre? You know I hate being the centre of attention!”
“You could at least try it, I have some friends who go and-”

“Oh because your stupid friends going is supposed to convince me-”

“Listen! They say you’re not forced to take part in the play as an actor, you could help writing, or take care of the lights or whatever when the others are on stage. There are many fun things you could do without being seen. And apparently there’s a new teacher since last semester and he’s super hot.”

“I don’t care about the teacher being hot.”

“I know but that’s definitely a plus.”

For a few seconds there was only the sound of the low grumble of the car and the beats of that annoying pop music Sansa had been listening on repeat for over three months now. Arya toyed with her necklace. Jon had gifted her this necklace, for her tenth birthday, the last birthday they celebrated together before he left home, so that she would think about him even when they would be apart. It was the only memento she had of him. Not a picture, not a letter, not even a phone number, just this.

The chain was very fine, and from it dangled the first bullet he ever shot in the centre of the fake aim during his first year of training in England. He had given it to a jeweller for him to make it into something pretty, and then he had offered it to her. The artist had carved a tiny wolf’s head at the tip, and the bullet was so small and thin it looked like a needle from a far. It was a gorgeous thing, discreet but meaningful. Arya loved it, she had worn it ever since he gave it to her, and it was actually the only piece of jewellery she ever wore.

“Come on Arya, it’s either that or I’ll drag you to a shrink if you don’t find anything.”

“Fine! I’ll go to that stupid theatre class.”, she spat out.

The room was in the basement of the building, across the street where Arya's High School was. It was an open class concept thing, meaning that not only students attended it but also adults and whoever who passed by and decided to enter.
It was dark and the air was fresh, she descended the stairs and the sound of her footsteps was hushed by the heavy carpet. She was late already.

She pushed the double door open, her eyes met with the swarming of the busy people, mostly tall and pretty girls whose giggles were super annoying. People whispered at the group tables to not disturb the rehearsal going on on the small training stage.

*Romeo and Juliet*

*Ugh, how original*

She recognized some of Sansa's friends who had come at the apartment once or twice. She hated Sansa's friends. They were all loud and mega social-media driven, and they only ever talked about two subjects: boys and make-up. She turned her head and wished they did not recognize her so she would not have to speak to them. She looked around but she did not see anything that looked like a teacher.

*Apparently that new super awesome teacher is late for his own lesson*

She sighed, exasperated. God, these comedians were awful. And the décor looked like a three year old had painted it.

*And what is that serving as a gown for Juliet? A floor-cloth?*

She crossed her arms on her chest, considered the other people around her. Some of them were sat at a table reading other Shakespeare works. They all looked like these super rich pedantic kids she always wanted to slap in the face because they always talked to her like she was some kind of ignorant savage. Another group was planning some sort of weird choreography. They all looked super concentrated like this was some difficult mathematics test but really the guy was only telling the extras where to put themselves during the representation. Others were waiting, just like her. And that annoying group in which Sansa's friends were was cackling about someone looking super hot with this red hair.

*That won't do*, she frowned before sighing a second time.

She turned her heels to leave and looked at her phone. 3:17 pm, she could still catch the bus. She would be so much better home with a huge cup of soda. And she could go out for a run with Nym, and then take a long bath before Sansa would come back from dance class. Yes, that sounded much
Hmpf!, the air escaped her lungs as she collided harshly against someone on their way in.

She froze when she looked up and her eyes got caught in bronze irises.

“A man apologizes.”

“I-I'm sorry.,” she mumbled after asking herself what was this weird way of speaking. She could feel the warmth of his body close to hers, and it made her feel odd but she did not want to step back.

“A girl is about to leave?”, he spoke, and his deep voice made something in her vibrate. He had a strange accent, she had never heard it before. She blinked twice before her ideas went clear again.

“A g-” Why the hell does he speak like that?

“Yeah, the teacher's late.”

His eyes lingered on her for a bit, and she shifted awkwardly and took her eyes away when she realized that she was staring at him.

Damn it-

Now he is hot

But not your regular kind of hot. He had an aura, a presence that filled the room instantly. He had an exotic tinge to his looks, something she could not quite place but that made everything about him sly and almost infuriatingly charming. He looked like the impersonation of an alluring riddle.

“I am the teacher.,” he said before smirking. He had this kind of arrogance to him that made her want to scoff at him to see if he would get offended like all of these too self-assured guys.

She frowned a bit when she noticed the blood red, shoulder length hair. Even more odd, he had a single streak of white in it. His skin was golden and smooth, and his lower lip was plump, which provoked the woman in her when he smirked. And the mysteriousness in his sleepy hooded eyes
looked almost indecently-\textit{damn it}, she was staring again.

\textit{Wait, what did he say?}

\textit{Oh shit}

\textit{He's the teacher}

\textit{You can't have a crush on that teacher like everyone else in this school Arya Stark!}

Only then did she notice the light wrinkles at the corners of his almond shaped eyes, only increasing his charisma.

She was almost disappointed in how mainstream her tastes were when she had always considered herself the odd one.

“A class has been waiting, a man apologizes for that too.”

“Oh, he continued, directing her towards the room with his eyes, that arrogant expression still fixated on that annoyingly attractive face.

\textit{Well, he might be good-looking but he sounds like a pretentious asshole}

And why is this stupid way of speaking so… indescribable?

Arya could not figure out if she wanted to hear more of that third-person speech or if she wanted him to shut up, for each time he spoke his voice made her tremble inside.

“A man would be glad to teach another student, newcomers are quite rare.”

“Well, that's no wonder if the teacher is always late.”, she hoped to anger him, so she could find a reason to hate him.
But the way he looked at her now only indicated his own amusement, which made her lose that sparkle of boldness.

“A man could show you that he does not always come late, if a girl would be so gracious to come back after that.”, he purred, an entertained din to his voice.

At that he turned his head towards the expectant people, and started his course.

Well I guess it's too late to leave now, she thought before finding a place at one of the tables (the one with the less people, of course.)

“Please excuse a man for the lateness, he promises it will not happen again.”, he addressed to the class, whose full attention was on him only now, but his eyes quickly fixated on hers before he continued.

“Today's lesson will be about the selflessness of the comedian.”

Arya did not expect to be so caught in that. She could not figure out if what he was saying truly interested her or if his looks just made up for it.

Shit

Concentration, Arya Stark

That's nothing like you

She tried to focus, but the group of annoying girls started gushing behind her.

“You ask him!” “No, you do, I've asked a question last time!”

She rolled her eyes and clenched her teeth to hold herself from saying something that would be considered mean. She decided not to get noticed more than she already had. So she plunged herself back in what he was saying, and tried to ignore the fact that she would still listen if he said total bullshit because that strange accent was like candy to her ears.

“…When a comedian walks on stage, he is no longer himself. He puts on a mask, the mask of his character. His words convey the character's thoughts, not his. But so must his eyes, the way he stands, the way he says these words, the way he executes peculiar movements- A question, yes?”
Ugh, who the hell did not understand that

“Excuse me sir, but-but-”, it was one of Sansa's friends, obviously.

“You still haven't told us your name, and we'd like to know…”, she giggled. Her voice was honeyed and twangy, and she sounded as fake as she looked underneath that heavy coat of make-up.

That has nothing to do with what he was saying you stupid

Arya was not usually so tense. She herself could not figure out why every single person was so unbearable today.

But the teacher chortled.

“We can actually bond that to the lesson. A man can have many names. On stage, he could be a mighty business man from the seventies called Robert, or a beggar in the middle ages named Alexander. If he would put more efforts into his costume, he could even be an Italian opera singer called Isabella, or a waitress called Sara who works to pay medicine school. A comedian has many names. He could tell you one, but how would you know it is truly his? A man was once called Adrian, and Arthur and Paul…So, does the name a teacher was given the first day of his life matter more than the others he was given throughout his existence?”

Well, I guess one could say he just snubbed you

She did not answer, she lowered her head and for some reason Arya felt triumphant.

She did wonder what his name was though. She wondered if he had a name that sounded as foreign as he looked. Something that would roll off the tongue and leave a taste almost as exotic and warm as his golden skin, and make you shiver with-damn it, why am I thinking about this? I don't care what his name is!

The class was only scarcely done when the girls behind started stirring and whimpering like some aroused hens. Arya figured she'd get out quickly before someone would end with her fist in the middle of their face. But somehow that teacher was in front of her and blocking her way before she even made it to the door. The warmth close to her again made her cheeks redden, and she had to force herself to stare at the ground to not get lost in the feeling.
“Can the students put some order in this classroom, please?”, he asked the giggling girls who would not stop following him around like he was some kind of preacher of the good word.

Everyone obeyed, and Arya sighed in annoyance. She was about to complain about not being the one who caused the mess but he spoke before.

“Not you.”, he purred quietly, just for her to hear.

“Come.”

She hesitated, but she followed him through the double door after glancing back at the swarming in the underground room. He did not bestow her a single look as they quietly made their way up the stairs, so she took these few instants to gawk at the way his muscles moved and contracted underneath the tight-fitting cream shirt, and she cursed before forcing herself to look away when she wondered if he was as lean as she imagined.

The whole building was quite old and musty looking, there were very few windows and nothing else to light up the corridor. It looked strangely empty for a Thursday afternoon, they did not cross anyone. He stopped only when they were in the part of the construction reserved to the teacher. He held the door for her and waved a hand for her to enter the small dark room filled with lockers.

*Argh,* why did his stupid chivalry make her smile like a foolish little girl?! And why was she following him in that dusty old room anyway? She looked at an answer in his eyes, but they only told her to continue, and as if under some strange spell, she blindly trusted him and walked into the room. *Isn't that the way all girls get killed in horror movies?*

“A man apologizes, the electricity comes and goes as it wishes here.”, he purred again, much closer to her ear than she thought he was, his deep voice surprising her, and he toyed with the light switch to prove his point.

He left the door partly open to let in some dim light, but that helped very little. She almost gasped when she felt him brush against her as he made his way in the small room, the heat coming from him so sizzling she unconsciously held her breath, and wild thoughts started to pop up in Arya's head. In only one swift move the door would be locked and she would be trapped in the dark room with this mysterious sexy man, completely at the mercy of each of his desires, and maybe if he asked with that strangely alluring accent she'd let him do whatever he wanted-*damn it,* she cut her maddened flow of thoughts. Maybe staying home alone for so long had not been that great of an idea if she started daydreaming about savagely making out with each good looking stranger who would grant her the tiniest bit of attention.
The sound of the metal locker door squeaking pulled her out of her confusing fantasies. He picked up a sheet of rumpled paper from the locker that was probably his, and held it out to her.

“Here is the real schedule for the theatre class, if a girl is interested in coming back.”, despite the darkness, she knew he was smirking, and she wondered if he ever put on another expression.

“What?”

“This lesson was an open class, but if a girl is interested in doing more than just an initiation, she must come to these classes. They will be much more advanced than what a girl has heard today-”

“Why the hell did I bother coming then?!”, she boiled up.

“Why didn’t you put the real schedule directly on the board?!”

“The number of students is much more restricted, and the way the course goes is very different, these classes require a certain level-”, he remained calm, which made Arya wonder if it was a good thing or if she would rather start a nasty fight with him.

“And how do you know I have that level?”, she asked, still frowning. She didn't like how he always spoke in riddles. Or maybe she loved it. She didn't know, but it definitely confused her.

“A man doesn't, that is why a girl is invited to come.”, he slightly bowed his head at that.

“A man should know a girl hates attention, she definitely does not plan to go on stage.”, she spat out dryly, as if she was defending herself from something.

Only after a few seconds did she realize that she had picked up his weird way of speaking, and that definitely felt like he had just snaked underneath her skin to fully invade her very mind, which made her loose her angry expression.

“A pity, a girl is lovely.”Was that an appropriate thing to say? Damn, Arya didn't care, but the way he said that definitely made inappropriate pictures flash in her mind.

“Ah, but a man is sure a girl has many talents. Writing or directing, a lovely girl will surely find something.”, he continued as if nothing happened, as if he was not putting some strange enticing
spell on her with his sleepy eyes gleaming in the dark.

_How the hell did he just call me?_

What was about this man that was so infuriating? She could not place it but she couldn't bear the way it made her feel, like she was about to explode at any moment and he was just toying with the dynamite in her. Why was it that she so wanted to slap him but kiss him at the same time?

_Wait, what the hell is he doing._

He started getting closer to her, and she did not find anything sharp to throw at him before all her thoughts blurred. He only stopped when she was pinned against the wall and his torso scented with ginger and cloves was a small inch away from her face, radiating with heat and she was strangling herself before she remembered she had to breathe. She held the sheet of paper so tight with her shaking, sweaty hands that she had to pay extra attention to not rip it. She felt tiny underneath him, and she felt her knees weaken when a cyclone of questions launched in her mind.

What was he thinking? Would he hug her? Would he kiss her? Well, she definitely wanted to kiss him but—wait _what the hell_?! She didn't even know his name! She held her face up and tried to make eye contact to figure the situation out, she didn't find the voice to ask or even say anything. But he didn't look at her and started toying with the electricity board above her head, and before she realized what was happening he was far from her again and the lights were back on.

Her eyes met with the most devilish grin she ever saw. She must have been quite a sight, her eyes wide and her face as red as his hair. She closed her mouth (which she did not remember opening) and could not figure out a single word, the mingled anger and confusion made her tremble before she managed to speak again.

“Hum,… thanks—Bye then.”, she mumbled staring at her stupid, almost torn piece of paper before sliding out of that freaking room.

_What the hell was that_?!
She was still shocked by whatever she had just experienced so she took a few seconds before answering.

“It was fine. I guess I'll go back a few times to see if I really like it.”, she finally outed, knowing that her sister would not start the car until she would not be satisfied.

She chuckled, turned the keys and put on her designer sunglasses.

“And? How is that teacher?”

“He's an asshole.”, that got out of nowhere.

“Oh, really? That's not what I've heard, what did he do? Did he force you to recite verses on stage or what?”

Arya stared at the moving road and looked for an answer. Why did she say that?

“No, he…I don't know. There's something about him that annoys me.”, she truly did not know.

“You better not use that as an excuse to get fired from this class too, we're starting to run out of options-”

Figuring out a way to make meaningful sentences out of the messy words in her head was truly difficult.

“I won't, he's good as a teacher, it's just when…when he's not doing his lesson that he's annoying. And I'm not forced to listen to him when he's not lecturing.”

“Oh, okay then- I bet you won't have a lot of chances to have him just for yourself anyway, from what I've heard-”
“YES, he is quite good looking and he gets the attention of all the other girls. Is that what you wanted to hear?”, she spat out almost furiously.

Sansa laughed, and Arya sighed, confused when she realized how sharply she had just said that. It was very unlike her to get carried away for something so silly.

“Calm down, if you don't want to talk to him then it's a good thing, isn't it?”, Sansa continued with the cheerful mood. Sometimes, Arya was really thankful for her sister's kind nature, she needed her to soften her harsh features and help her to not always boil up.

“Yeah, it is.”, Arya chilled out, only half-way convinced by her answer.

She quickly kicked her way out of her snickers when she passed the door, and threw herself on the carpet of the small living room to give Nymeria her daily amount of petting and kissing, like she always did when she came back from school. Her dog was perhaps the only person she had ever been so tactile with.

“You don't greet me first?”

The voice came from behind her. She immediately ceased with all her movements (which surprised the husky) and her eyes went wide as she wondered if she had heard right.

She did not have the time to see his face, somehow the next second she was off the ground and she squeezed him as tight as she could.

“Jon…”, she managed in a whisper.

She wondered why her eyes watered, she did her best to hold the tears. She would not cry. Arya never cried. Crying was just not her way of showing emotions.

What she could not help however, was the drop of expression when he settled her on the ground again and her eyes finally met with his manly features.
“Surprise!”. Sansa said in a sing song from across the room, but she didn't hear.

Her eyes did not leave him. He was so different. He was not the Jon she knew. His eyes were
darker, his hair was longer, he was taller and bulkier, and he had a freaking beard.

He looked nothing like the eighteen year old boy who left Winterfell so many years ago. For half a
second her mind ventured to associate him with the word handsome. But Arya shook her head to
regain her senses. Yes, she had definitely been lonely for too long.

“How long has it been?”, he continued, smiling at her.

“Way too long.”, her eyes still did not leave him. His were on hers too, obviously admiring what had
changed and what had not.

“You haven't grown much.”, he teased, and she punched him in the chest before hugging him again.
His embrace felt warm and familiar. Arya did not usually like cuddling, but with some people she
did.

“I thought I wouldn't see you until my graduation.”

She detached herself from him for the second time, and something in her strongly stirred when she
felt the urge to kiss him. They used to kiss when they were children. On the cheeks, on the forehead,
sometimes he would even kiss her hand like a gentleman to mock her because of her unladylike
behaviour. A kiss would have felt natural. A quick peck, an (almost) chaste thing, just to see if his
lips were as smooth as they looked, if his three-days-beard would tickle her chin.

*Hell, what is wrong with me today? My libido has been through the roof all day long*

The evening was spent catching up. Jon told the girls about his travels, about his trainings, and each
time he started recounting about another adventure Arya felt the blood rush through her.

“How long are you staying?”, Arya asked despite the sudden fear.

She did not want to think about him leaving again. This evening had been like she had discovered a
new Jon, and she was happy to realize that despite the years apart and the fact that they had both changed a lot, they did not lose their complicity and their similar sense of humour. This Jon was much more self-assured than the boy who had left Winterfell seven years ago, he was a man, a real man, and every time he laughed when he told about his friends in the military or when she explained one of the few funny adventures that had happened to her since her arrival here, Arya felt something in her jolt, as if her heart had been pleading to hear that cheerful melody for years and was finally being indulged. She felt herself blush every time she made him laugh or each time his sparkling eyes met hers, she was so red that her cheeks burned, but she pretended that that was because of the beer.

“At least a year, I'm moving in the third room of this flat and I have to fraternize with the US forces.”

Arya sprang from the table and threw herself at him again. An entire year with Jon around? That was the most amazing thing she had ever heard. Her cheeks ached from how large her smile was but she could not help it. Since Sansa was quite busy with her modelling thing lately, it would be just the two of them in the apartment most of the time, just like when they were children fooling around their home when the parents weren't here.

They could have these peaceful evenings of dining off cookies and cereal in the kitchen again like they used to do during the holidays when she was in elementary school, they could go out for a jog with Nymeria and Ghost, his trained army dog, at whichever hour of the day they would like and just run on the beach like they used to do in the snow during winters in Winterfell. Or they could just lay around on the couch and watch these old movies while cuddling all day long, although that would make them look a lot like a couple, Arya realized.

“That's going to be a fun year.”, Sansa smiled.

“Yeah, and this way I could help you a bit with the bills.”, Jon added.

“What? No, no way! We're paying the bills with Dad's life insurance, you don't need to pay anything!”

“I do, I'm not gonna stay here without paying anything San!”, he continued smiling.

“But, we've discussed about this before, all five of us are contributing for this apartment and Winterfell thanks to the insurances, you're already paying your part.”

“Sansa, I didn't get anything from the insurance when Dad died.”, he said, his tone suddenly formal.
“What?”, the two girls hissed confused, and the cheerful taste in the air died.

Arya lowered her eyes, she felt the seriousness of the conversation brusquely weigh her shoulders down.

“I…something about the adoption papers wasn't in order, and your mother actually—well that's nothing you should worry about—”

“What the hell did Mum do?”, Arya was suddenly angry again. If she had understood right, Jon had not only been despoiled his part of the life insurance, but also his whole heritage as Ned Stark's son.

“She…I don't know if I should be telling you—”

“What, you're afraid that she'll come haunt you in your sleep?”, Arya threw ironically.

“Arya!”, Sansa shrieked dumbfounded.

Jon gave her a look, he had not forgot how harsh she had always been.

“Don't 'Arya' me! She had no right to disinherit Jon!”

“Actually, she did…she had a paternity test made and…used that to support the fact that the adoption had not been done totally in the rules, and somehow I don't have access to anything concerning the family any more, even my name was totally erased from all the papers concerning Winterfell…”

The news was dropped like a bomb.

“We'll take care of that with the lawyers when I find some time. But still, I refuse that you pay anything, even more so if you don't have access to any of the money you had a right to.”, Sansa said with an assured and bossy tone, but Jon did not want to hear any of that.
“I will pay. Look, I don't care about that inheritance, I don't need it. I've built myself, and I want to help you now that I can. There's no trying to convince me.”, he answered, and his authoritarian voice made something in Arya shake.

There was silence. One second, two.

“So…you're not Dad's son?”, Arya ventured with a small voice.

Silence again, he sighed and put a sad smile on.

“No, according to the lab there's no kinship.”, he marked a pause, his expression was blank.

“It felt strange when I learned it, it still does. It's like that news changed everything and nothing at the same time.”

But it did change everything.

After that he said the travel had tired him and wished the girls a good night, and when he gave her a kiss on the cheek, Arya felt something in her bloom. Something had shifted. She paid no attention to it, she did not want to consider it, she tried to ignore the feeling of release when she thought that they shared no blood. She knew that this kind of thoughts would lead her to nothing good. But a little voice in her head told her that she always knew, and she cut her flow of thoughts. These were dangerous waters to swim in.

Chapter End Notes

Well, thanks for reading!

If you liked this, you should check out my other works! :)
Sun and Snow

Chapter Notes

Hello lovely person :)  
There we go, second chapter!  
Hope you enjoy ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The clock rang.

Damn it

Could it be so late already?

Her hand snaked from underneath the warm covers and managed to hit the button to stop that annoying bell. She struggled to open her eyes, the red numbers on the clock were blurred for a few seconds before she managed to read them.

8:30 AM

Fuck!, class started at 8.

Why the hell did it not-

Wait- no, it was Saturday, she eased. Why was she waking up so early on a Saturday morning again?

Oh shit

That bloody theatre class

Urgh!, she groaned before pulling the blanket back over her head.

Maybe she could skip it. Who goes to class so early on a week-end anyway? And surely she would
skip again in the future, so she should get them all used to her missing from time to time. But somehow the image of that infuriating teacher's face dragged her out of the bed, and she was fully dressed, rollers in hand and ready to leave before she could even realize.

She had not had any time to think about that annoying guy with Jon moving in. And the last incident still troubled her, she did not want to think about it because she feared she might over-interpret it. But still, each time she recalled it she realized how weird it was. He could have pushed her aside. Or she could have moved. So why did they get so close? She brushed the thought away again. Weirdo.

She took a deep breath before entering the room. Because it was underground, it was not as hot as outside, the air felt fresh and breathable. That sensation vanished when she entered.

*He said there would be less people,* she fumed as her eyes struggled to keep up with the unceasing fuss of the horde moving inside. The low ceiling made it look like it was even more crowded. There were chairs this time, all turned to the small training stage, the tables were pushed to the sides of the room.

*What were you expecting Arya Stark? A date, maybe? Of course there's people, it's a class!* A little voice in her head mocked her. She tried to calm herself down, losing patience so early in the morning would be a bad way to start the week-end.

But her efforts were vain. She thought she would explode when she heard the same cackling than the other day.

"I'm not gonna push, I'll look like an idiot!" "But don't you want to know?"

They were less than last time. Surely the three girls forgot to inform their dear friends about this not so secret course to have more chances to get the teacher's attention.

*God, they're ridiculous*

She found a seat, and looked at the time on her phone. 8:56 AM. Still four minutes. She'd ream him out if he was late. She was a bit more exited about that than she anticipated actually, she almost wanted him to come in late, that'd be a reason to go talk to him-*wait-* why was she thinking the same way than these girls she so wanted to insult?!

He eventually entered the dark room and the giggles evolved into whispers.
His eyes lingered on her, and he slightly bowed his head as he made his way to the stage, a minuscule move only she caught.

*Satisfied bastard.*

“Today’s course will be a bit different. We will start with an exercise about character development.”

Writing. Arya sighed in release. She liked that. She did not excel at it, but she definitely liked it better than acting or reciting some stupid verses from Romeo and Juliet.

“A man’s students shall create a character. Real, fictional, whoever they would like. They will write about the personality of their character. Are they kind? Hot-headed? Self-centred? It is for you to decide. They will put their character in a situation. For the following hour, their character will be walking through a park and observe people. They may be alone or accompanied, that is for the students to decide. Careful, the constraint is that your character’s behaviour has to be plausible. A perfectionist mother of three called Linda Smith would not curse for no reason, for example. Careful, plausible does not mean stereotypical. Understood?”

They all nodded, and the sound of ruffling paper being pulled out of backpacks suddenly filled the room.

Arya sighed again. She was alright at writing but not so good at creating.

*Urgh*—she looked away, embarrassed when he caught her staring at him.

He had his hair tied in a man bun and he was wearing a freaking sleeveless shirt that revealed how muscled his arms were. Arya cursed in her head. These arms could have belonged in some man’s perfume ad. But god, the face they belonged to was so punchable.

He was helping the three stupid girls now, they all talked to him with sultry gooey voices and this ridiculous Californian accent, their questions sounded more like moans than actual intelligible words. All they lacked was the string of saliva hanging from their open mouths to complete the picture. And he fucking played their game! He answered their stupid questions, smiled at their coy looks—*I don’t care*
She forced herself to look at the blank piece of paper in front of her.

*Character. Now, Arya Stark. Stop being an idiot.*

She knew. She'd write about a tease. She'd write about *him*. Or rather, she'd get inspired by him.

Of course, she'd have to find him a name.

Pate. Her guy's name was Pate. And Pate was a freaking tease, he liked to smirk to girls jogging in the park, girls he knew found him attractive.

Not make this stereotypical. Alright. Pate won't screw any of these girls. *We'll see later if you are a stereotype, mister teacher.*

Pate had no interest in these girls. Pate just liked to experiment with his charm. Just to see. But this one day at the park, Pate doesn't want to experiment any more when he sees a girl who really catches his attention. She seems not to care about him. Pate observes her, she smiles at her phone. It looks like the girl is texting her boyfriend here on the bench. Pate is quite self-centred, but Pate has honour. He won't flirt with a girl who has a boyfriend. But he'll definitely introduce himself. Pate has honour but is also has an incredible sense of giving zero craps when his instinct tells him to do something.

Pate goes and talks to the girl. He makes sure to apply everything he has learned the ladies like to catch her attention. He promised himself he would not flirt, but his willpower seems to vanish.

A vibrating sound pulled Arya out of the conversation between Pate and this girl.

San *cherry blossom emoji* *sparkly heart emoji* appeared on the screen in her backpack. (Author's Note: Ao3 doesn't seem to like emojis so let's imagine them ;)

*Sansa's been toying with my contact names again,* Arya thought as she clicked her tongue. She never used emojis but her sister always did. She surveyed around her. The teacher was busy explaining the annoying girls that they shouldn't all write about the same character.
I can't pick you up today :-( Jon will ;) Enjoy the ride because that's the last time you'll get on a bike >:(

Arya grinned. Right, Jon had told them about his motorbike. A Harley Davidson he bought himself a year ago. She had never been allowed to hop on any two wheeled engine before. Dad or Mum or San had always been in the way. They had all been frightened since Bran and his friend's scooter crash that cost him his legs when he was thirteen. But Bran had always seemed to be the less traumatized of them all, six months after the accident he told Arya he'd drive again if he could. And she had always thought she'd like a bike way better than a car. No feeling of being trapped, make one with the wind and the road… She'd definitely buy one as soon as she wouldn't need anyone's permission, that was one of the very few plans she had for the future. She didn't know what kind of job she wanted to do or where she wanted to live in the world but that, she knew.

But she quickly put her phone back in her bag. She saw the teacher approach her spot from the corner of her eye but did not turn her head and pretended to busy herself with the exercise. She was quite far away from the others, she realized only now.

“Lovely girl.”, he greeted her.

Sexy man, almost slipped out of her mouth to greet him back.

Somehow that stupid pet name he gave her did not annoy her as much as she would have expected. If Arya had wanted to be true to herself, she could have agreed with the fact that she liked being called so. But even in her mind, she refused to admit it. Because she did not understand why she liked it so much. It was close to catcall, really. But somehow the way his accent wrapped around the syllables, the way his lower fuller lip moved when he spoke it made it sound like an alluring melody. And he had given no one else such a nickname. She had paid close attention.

She remembered that she hated him.

He looked above her shoulder and started to read her work. She felt her cheeks redden. There was always something quite personal about having someone read what you write. And the heat emanating from his body, largely invading her personal space helped very little to tame the wild thoughts that started to pop up in her head. Oh-how she wanted to scratch that pretty face and leave a nasty scar, feel his skin under her nails, and then lick the blood off his so tempting cheek-

“Good.”, he was amused, she heard by the din of his voice.
Her Pate suddenly looked like a very bold character to write. And she had based him on him, but also on her. Damn it- was it fear she was feeling? Fear for what he'd think of her? She just hoped he would not take her for some kind of sex-crazed addict who writes to quench her thirst. Because that was totally the way she was feeling right now.

“But a girl could push this further? How would Pate sit? With legs crossed? Would he straighten his back? When he talks to this girl, how would he stand? Would he cross his arms on his chest? Would he put his hands in his pockets? These little details make a great difference in how real your character is, lovely girl.”

Damn, his voice. She wished the world would still for an instant, that everything would freeze, just the time she would need to press her lips against his. She needed to know what he tasted like. His face was close to hers, she'd only need two seconds.

God, you're weird, a voice in her head brought her back to reality.

Yes, it was weird to lust after a man so much older than her, but it was definitely more normal than lusting after Jon who was more of a brother than anything else.

“He'd sit with his legs crossed the manly way, with a sure look on his face and his arms across the bench. And when he'd go talk to her, he would keep the sly and self assure smile. His hands would be in the back pockets of his pants and his shoulders would be relaxed, he'd approach her from the side to not overwhelm her because she is sitting-”

Arya strangled herself. She was describing exactly how he was bending over right next to her. She cursed because she knew how red she was. She hoped he did not notice.

He smirked. Damn it, he did notice.

“Very well.”, he did not change his posture, she remarked that.

Does that mean he is consciously flirting with me?

Don't over interpret, Arya Stark, the voice admonished.
“A man wants to know the rest of the story, does a girl enjoy him?”

*Okay now if that's not flirting-*

“I-I haven’t decided yet-”, she hated how unsure her voice became. Damn it, with his stupid weird way of speaking, it sounded like she had not decided yet if she liked him.

She looked at his amused eyes, and the urge to kiss him was here again.


“Hey”

It was still strange to hear Jon's voice and have him around each time she came back from school. But now she was thankful. He was an excellent way to get that stupid theatre teacher and his stupid riddles off her mind.

She climbed onto the bike, put the helmet on and wrapped her arms around him. Ah- this would be a short ride, but she would enjoy every second of it.

They made it home way too quickly, and when she got off the Harley that stupid teacher's face was still stuck in her head. God, was he going to ruin every moment of her life from now on?!?

*But would it feel the same to have my body pressed against his back like I just did with Jo-For God's sake Arya Stark what the hell is happening to you?!,* she admonished herself as her eyes met with Jon’s smile when they made it up the stairs to their second floor apartment.

“I'm going to the beach this afternoon, wanna come with?”, he said after settling on the couch.

Arya hated the beach. Boiling heat, sand burning your feet and getting everywhere, nothing to do really other than just lay around and let the sun hit you on the head, and she would always come back looking like a lobster because she hated the feeling of sunscreen sticking to her skin.
But the exited gleam in his eyes, the almost boyish expression on his face made her change her mind. Her eyes lingered, fell on his strong hands that held the mug so delicately, and she saw a vein slightly pop out. Maybe if these hands would spread the sunscreen she'd enjoy it more—she shook her head to regain her senses. What the hell was wrong with her lately? He was Jon! The same Jon who used to play hide and seek with her, the same Jon who'd help her with her homework at an indecently late hour in the night when she remembered she had an exam the next morning, the same Jon she used to make fun of when he got his first girlfriend.

But when her eyes met his again, her thoughts evaporated. No, this Jon was so different. She could not hop into his bed and wake him up in the middle of the night if she wanted to talk, she could not hold his gaze any more without shying away and blushing after a few seconds, and if he were to bring home some stranger and call her his girlfriend, she was not sure if she would laugh as much as she did when he introduced her to Val eight years ago.

"Yeah, sure.", she was thrilled about spending an afternoon outside with him, she could hardly help herself from smiling like an idiot.

_There's something wrong with me_, the thought kicked in as he planted a kiss on her forehead. Not because a kiss on the forehead was an inappropriate thing to do, but because the fluttery feeling in her stomach when his lips made contact with her skin, that was an inappropriate thing to feel.

Arya had never cared about what was appropriate and what was not, she had always done what she wanted, like dress as a boy when she was a child, or curse and not always behave 'like a girl should'. But feeling this way for Jon felt like crossing a boundary.

Jon was like a brother. He had always been, even when his parentage was still uncertain. They had promised themselves that distance and time would not rip them apart. But after seven years, he was another Jon and she was another Arya. And it scared her to see how much she enjoyed that new Jon. Maybe a little too much.

But she brushed these thoughts away. Maybe it was just a phase, the time to re-adapt after so much time apart.

"Shit—I don't think I own any bathing suit."

She did, but it was an old thing she had taken with her from Winterfell, something Mum had forced her to buy and put in her suitcase. It was still brand new, she must have only used it once or twice the few times she went to the beach with Sansa after they moved in. But it was black swim shorts paired with a top that looked more like an un-shaped piece of fabric than an actual suit, and it would surely
fit a nine year old boy better than her. Maybe she had not grown much but she still had grown a little, her hips had widened and a B-cup had managed to form out of nowhere, when she thought she’d remain flat her entire life.

“Fuck, I hate shopping.”, she cursed.

“You can burrow one from me, surely I have something a little too small I bought on sale laying somewhere that'll suit you.”, Sansa intervened.

“I won't be able to come with you though, I have an important shoot this afternoon for a new brand.”

Urgh- why did she accept that tiny bikini?

She knew the second Sansa put it in her hands that there was too little fabric, even to cover her.

And now she looked like she was caught in a freaking fishnet with all these strings. But she still thanked the universe and her marvellous instinct at that moment, because by some kind of incredible luck she had shaved not so long ago, and she never shaved usually. She did not know why it was suddenly important, she never cared about what people would think about her hairs, but she was strangely glad to be on point.

She squirmed uncomfortably, pretended to arrange her hair to hide the fact that the bottom part of the suit (that was dangerously close to a thong) had just snaked between her butt-cheeks. God, she hated that feeling, she felt more exposed than if she was actually naked. And why were all of these guys staring?! She felt like a freaking piece of meat on sale displayed in a supermarket. San assured her that she didn't look ridiculous! She covered herself by crossing her arms on her chest, and then decided she'd wrap a towel around herself the time Jon finished to prepare himself. She hated how unsure it made her look, but she needed to save what little modesty she had left.

“Come on Arya, what are you waiting for?”, it was Jon's cheerful voice, trying to convince her to jump in the water with him after he got out of that small beach cabin people changed in.

Actually, she was waiting for that strange feeling she got when he removed his shirt and revealed his perfect six-packs to go away. It never did. She took a deep breath and laughed to cover the nervousness. Wait-why was she nervous? She was with Jon!
Oh right, because that was the most skin she had ever shown him. She did notice the change in his look when she removed the towel.

*You better not have lied to me about not looking ridiculous San*

Arya could not help but smile like a fool when she thought about this afternoon again in her bed that night.

Somehow she changed when Jon was around. She was more patient, softer. She liked herself better. Even if she was not truly herself, she felt like it was the best version of her.

She had been more tactile than usual, and he had been more touchy than she remembered he was. And she didn't know he was so good at massaging before he proposed to help her spread sunscreen on her back. God, she could still feel his hands on her! So soft and knowing, following exactly the path she formed for them in her mind. Perfect.

She could still feel the fever of the heat and the sun and the salt, her flesh had absorbed the cheerfulness in the hot air and was still engorged with it. She hugged her pillow tight, she did not expect that afternoon to go so well, not with how awkwardly she had behaved around him lately. But it went without an obstacle. Even the sun had been clement and did not burn her skin too much. His laugh still echoed in her head, that so charming laugh, so honest and familiar. Oh, she had missed him so much. And she would miss him twice more now that she had discovered this new facet of him.

She noticed the way other girls had stared at him on the beach. But his eyes had only remained on her, and she had worn a triumphant smile for so long that her cheeks ached now.

And his hands were still ghosting around her, they felt so good on her back, they would feel even better in other places, and images of that started to pop in her head and seem very-*what are you doing Arya Stark?* That reasonable voice intervened again. True, what was she thinking? It was Jon's hands she was currently dreaming about! What was wrong with her?

But for a fraction of a second, and she promised herself it would only be for the five following minutes, Arya did not care.
She would allow herself one instant. One. *One.*

She closed her eyes, felt her cheeks burn.

*Just five minutes. Just five little minutes, after that I'll never think about him this way again.*

*After that I'll be normal again, I'll start going out and meet people for me.*

*After these five minutes.*

She took a deep breath in. It still felt like crossing a line.

But it was so tempting. The warning voice was suddenly far, she could not hear her reasonable self admonish her any more.

Five minutes of break. Five minutes of freedom. Five minutes without *You're weird* or *There's something wrong with you*

She tried to relax. She buried her face in the pillow, and let her hand wander underneath her tank top, and imagined it was his soft hand discovering the roundness of her breast. It was very rare for Arya to touch herself. She had tried before, she just seemed to lack some imagination about who she should fantasize about to turn herself on, and she definitely had not enough patience to learn how to touch herself, she had never managed to feel the slightest bit of pleasure, every try left her feeling weird and confused. She had tried to watch porn, you know, to get some ideas, because she felt like there was something she was not quite catching about this whole concept, but she ended up totally grossed out after wandering on the site for a little too long.

But she decided that for once, she would take the time to try properly. She waited for her heart to stop racing. She hushed the voice in her head. Five minutes. That would be all. She'd be normal after that, she promised herself again.

She imagined Jon's soft lips kissing her neck, his gentle hands still fondling her breast, made him a little more savage than he was maybe. She imagined his bare skin brushing against hers, and after a second attempt at slowing the beat of her heart, another hand slipped underneath the band of her panties to meet with a slick heat. Her hands had wandered down there before, but with the vivid image of that hand being his, something caught a strong hold of her guts and made her tremble.
Maybe it was wrong to do that-she quickly shut the voice again. Five minutes, she reminded herself. She needed these five minutes.

She started moving her finger. Here, that small bundle that made her nerves jolt was probably her clitoris. She had heard that women like stimulation there usually. Or was it her clitoris? Why did it almost feel like it burned when her finger touched it? And was it normal for her muscles to contract all at once? She continued, just to see, circular motions, tiny motions and then bigger, to see what made her feel the best, with still that almost real image of Jon's face so close to hers. Her fingers were not so delicate, but she tried to make the motions as smooth as possible, because that's how he would do it, she mused. Her breath accelerated, a foreign heat started to spread in her, a slight veil of sweat coated her skin. Was that normal? And God, why was she feeling so weird?! She was not entirely sure if she liked that dizziness.

A careless move, and she flickered that sweet spot that made her arch her back. That felt oddly satisfying, she had to breathe through her mouth. She did it again, but this time the theatre teacher's face flashed. Sly smile, sparkles in the eyes. Shit- why was he thinking about him now?! Of all situations- her fingers flickered again by their own will. Damn it, was her body betraying her? And why was she imagining that stupid teacher's body pressed against her now?! And God, NO she did not want to know if he'd be rough or gentle- why was that voice in her head asking that?!

Damn it- she tried to imagine Jon's smooth lips again, his dark eyes and his soft fingers. But something felt bitter in her mouth, and she took her hand away and cleaned it on the sheets in disgust. She cursed, hot tears welled up in her eyes. What was wrong with her? Why was she masturbating while fantasizing about her brother?

Arya cried herself to sleep that night.
"Come on Arya, what are you waiting for?"

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! <3

*Obviously* the picture does not belong to me, but you're welcome :°

Don't forget to tell me what you think in the comments! Thanks for the kudos and for your support, check out my other works if you liked this one :D
She continued to go to theatre class three times a week. In front of her sister she pretended that she only went to please her, but in truth she liked the kind of conversations they had there. Sometimes she took part in. Not always, because the way that infuriating teacher answered her questions always made her boil up. After almost a month, she could still not figure out if she loved that man or if she hated him. A little voice in her head told her that she should not care, but she could not help it. Her eyes were fixated on him only for an hour straight every time, and she was just drinking his words like they were the sweetest nectar. There was always that annoying voice in her head repeating that she should concentrate more on the words than on the lips that uttered them. Sometimes she listened, sometimes it was too hard.

She had admonished herself many times for growing so obsessed. She had never been one to care so much about looks or about guys. And she was not this kind of cliché girl who mess around with their sexy teachers, she did not want to become one. That'd be pathetic. But not going any more seemed a bit extreme too. And there was something about him that wasn't just looks, there was also his way of speaking, the way he moved, the way he never smiled but merely smirked that made him not just a pretty picture but a whole strangely alluring mystery. And most of all, he was not Jon. She felt almost clean lusting after him. Yeah, that was exactly it. This class was sanitizing her mind.

So she decided to allow herself one hour of eye candying three times a week and swore to herself that she would never try to catch his attention like these stupid chicks did. And most of all, she promised herself that no one would ever know about this stupid crush. She had an image to maintain after all, she was Arya Stark. So it became her dirty little secret, her improbable fantasy. Well, her second.

She would always come a few minutes early to get a seat far from these annoying girls, who were always on the front line. By sitting in the gloom at the back she also hoped he would not catch her staring. Her technique seemed to work. She would also leave early, a few minutes before he would say goodbye to his students, because she simply could not stand the way these same girls screamed for his attention each time he was done lecturing and she could not hear any more the stupid questions they always asked him. She thought she had gone unnoticed.
But there was this one time he tricked her.

As usual, she arrived a few minutes before the beginning of the lesson. Last time they had stopped when they were in the middle of a lesson about body language. But strangely, this time she did not have to fight for a seat at the back. No one was there except her in the cold and dark room. She looked at her phone frowning.

Saturday, 8:57 AM. No, right day, right time.

Why the hell is no one there?

“A lovely girl is looking for something?”, the warm wind brushed against her skin.

She gasped in surprise and turned around so quickly it made her feel dizzy. His face was only an inch away from her ear. She hadn't heard or seen him come so close.

She blinked twice and blushed before she could form sensed words again.

“Yeah—where is everyone?”

“Ah, this, a man does not know exactly. Home, he guesses, most of them at least.”, his smirk made her want to slap him. He seemed so amused and satisfied with himself, she felt the anger spark in her.

“What?”, she frowned in confusion.

“You mean…there's no class?”

He looked at her like she was some mummer's play he was enjoying. She felt like punching herself for being so slow.

“Why didn't you say anything?!”, she let the anger take over. She was not some kind of simpleton serving for his entertainment!
“A man did, but a girl always leaves before he gets a chance to say goodbye.”, he continued with the same voice full of amusement.

God, she hated him. She hated this conversation. She hated this day. She was not the one who was being made fun of usually, and there was a reason to that. He'd pay for making a fool out of her.

But wait...did that mean he noticed her sneaking out? That surely meant his eyes were on her too at some point, right?

She clenched her teeth.

You're always busy with these stupid girls anyway, don't make me believe you would've taken the time to say goodbye

“And so what is a man doing here on his own?” she wanted to sound as angry as she was inside but she only sounded confused, and he chuckled. A rich chuckle that filled the room and made her chest vibrate.

“A man is not on his own, he is with a most lovely girl.”

She eased. That was the strange effect this stupid pet name had on her.

Should he be really calling me that?
I mean, not that I mind, it's just, it sounds quite...flirty, for a teacher addressing to a student

God, what am I thinking?
He's at least twenty years older than me!
I must look like his daughter or something, that's surely why he addresses to me like that without seemingly having any problem with it

Ah, but the way he looked at her right now was very far from the way a father should look at his daughter. She noted that down in a corner of her mind.
“A man has noticed you have been growing an interest for his class.”

Was that her chance to flirt?

“And for the teacher it seems-No, she scratched that idea immediately. Way too wanton-like.

What was she thinking anyway? He was probably a married man, a dusty old thing with a wife and a bunch of children at home. And if he was not, he had a full army of aroused teenage students worshipping him and way better-looking than her already to pick out from if he wanted to screw someone behind that scruffy curtain from time to time. And her life was not some American movie in which all the girls belong to some kind of super model with all men at my feet -race and can seduce a man only by looking through their lids and licking their full lips.

Actually, Arya Stark was quite far from that race. She was small and too skinny to have properly named curves, her skin was white and pale (she looked like a ghost in the streets of Los Angeles) and her eyes were too big for her small head. Her hair was short and a dull shade of brown, and she always had some pimple showing in the middle of the face because she couldn't be bothered by any beauty product her sister had so desperately tried to smudge on her so many times before.

And she had no idea how to flirt. Like, literally, she had zero game. She had never had a boyfriend before, never cared about having one.

Of course, her eyes had lingered on some guys here and there, but they all had treated her like another bro in the team, which she had been more than fine with. And since she hadn't talked to anyone except Sansa and Gendry in the past three years, that left little options for a boyfriend.

“I like it more than I thought I would.”

Like, really, should she try to flirt?

A teacher was not really an excellent training field to experiment with her potential, he was surely more experimented than her and would probably make fun of her wobbly way to-damn it Arya Stark! He's a teacher for God's sake, what is it that you don't understand? He could be your father!

Ah, her father, if only he could see her now, struggling to figure out if she should try or not to flirt with her freaking theatre teacher who was a freaking whole quarter of a century older than her and who had probably no intention of flirting back with a little girl. The grand and mighty Eddard Stark of Winterfell was probably strangling himself in disbelief if he was watching his daughter from
where he was.

“Good. Today's lesson will be about acting.”

Lesson?

Wait-

At her confused look he waved his hand towards the stage, and her eyes grew wide.

Like, a private course?

“No-No, I'm not-”

“A girl's excuse of hating attention is no longer valid.”

He remembered that? Wait- that's not my point!

“You can't do that!”, she hissed, suddenly boiling again.

“Do what?”, he asked raising a brow as a dare. He was still calm. He was too calm. She wanted to piss him off, like, really, anger him and make him flare, the same way he was doing to her.

“Trick me into-whatever this is!”

“Ah, but a girl is free to go if she wants.”, he continued, still sure of himself.

She pondered for a few seconds, but it felt as if her feet were stuck in the heavy carpet, and she could not move from an inch.

“Oh she could stay here-”, he purred, his voice a deep and low growl emphasizing his ridiculously
arousing accent. He strode lazily towards her, like he was a lion licking its maw at the sight of a wounded lamb. To anyone else he would have looked like a menacing predator, like these wicked murderers in the movies, she was sure of that. So why the hell was it arousing her so?

“And take a chance when it is so graciously offered.”, he said, only stopping when she could feel the heat emanate from him and had to lift her chin in order to not break eye contact. Only then did she realize that his eyes had a hint of blue in them, and that they were shimmering like the ocean under the moon. But most of all, she realized she liked the way he looked at her. That made her feel… important, like she had a real choice when obviously the lust controlling her that he was so easily manipulating would take the decision for her.

He raised his brows, asked for an answer with no words, still that stupid smirk fixated on his lips like this was the only way he ever learned to smile.

Okay, now she decided that she would definitely flirt next time she saw an occasion. She didn't care any more about how old he was or if this was against any rules. Whatever this was could not continue, because it felt like he was making fun of her and nothing angered her more.

Despite the loud and unceasing voice in her head reminding her over and over that she looked ridiculous because of how red her cheeks were, she managed the slightest nod and bit her lower lip. He noticed that. She saw in his eyes that he noticed it, and nothing ever felt as satisfying than seeing the way it destabilized him.

Arya dragged herself on the stage, looked at the empty dark room from the raised platform. After a few seconds of silence she was exasperated again.

“Now what?”, she asked, crossing her arms on her chest, defensive.

Why was she always so tense when he was around? She had no reason to be, he was not aggressive, he was always calm and poised.

“When a girl is on stage, she must first become no one, in order to fully embrace her character's personality later on.”

She unfolded her arms and stood relaxed, and wiped the angry expression off her face.

“Good.”, Damn it- that accent, this voice, just why? Why did he need to be so handsome yet so infuriating at the same time? Could he not pick? That would make everything so much easier if she
could decide if she hated him or if she adored him!

“But a girl has to de-possess herself from the personality that is showing through her accoutrements.”

She scoffed.

“I'm not stripping.”

He strode towards her, beast-like, sure. She felt her cheeks redden and a heat spread in her when she genuinely wondered if she would strip for this man should he ask her with that voice similar to a growl—God Arya Stark! Of course you're not going to strip for him, he's your darn teacher!

“Hm, not today…”, God, was that flirt or rejection?! Why couldn't she read it on his face?!

“But the bullet a girl wears seems to catch a lot of the attention.”, he was behind her now, and somehow she felt the thrill rising in her stomach. But she nervously toyed with her necklace. He was the first, actually, to notice that it was indeed a bullet. The way it had been carved made quite difficult to identify.

“I-I never remove it.”

“Right, you never remove it, lovely girl. Your character however might consider it like any other piece of jewellery they own.”, there was something quite enticing too about having him behind her, hearing his deep voice and feeling the heat of his body yet not seeing his face. But she could guess the smirk, she could guess it exactly. She had not spent the last month staring at him for no result.

She pulled the fine chain over her head and put it in her pocket, out of sight. She felt strangely naked. Maybe she did strip for this man, in a way.

“Good.”, she could almost see the satisfied expression on his face. Damn it, why was she obeying him so meekly?

“Now, onto the character. We will make it easy for the first lesson. A girl shall be another girl.”, he marked a pause.

Urgh-, he did enjoy installing suspense. Where did he think he was, in a movie, maybe? It's just a
“The girl Pate has met in the park.”

Arya clenched her teeth, felt her heart beat slightly faster. They had continued working on their characters this past month. She had continued basing Pate off him. And she had based the girl off… herself. Of course, she had made it as subtle as possible. And the conversation Pate had with the girl had not led him where he wanted. Except during the last lesson. She had scratched the end of her story and rewrote it so that the girl eventually flirted back. She was not entirely done with it yet but he had read it.

“And a man shall be Pate.”, she inhaled, bit her lip. Of course a man shall be Pate.

And this would not be just a theatre lesson.

This would be fucking teasing.

She did not dare to look at him because the satisfied and cocky expression on his face would have made her jolt. Why the hell did he have so much effect on her? He knew nothing about her!

“Allright.”, she breathed, trying to control her cheeks. Why must her face always betray her in moments like these and show the world her emotions?! She sighed, showed him that she was annoyed but he only seemed amused.

“I don't know if I remember all the lines.”, she groaned, still a little bit hopeful that he would let it go and choose another exercise.

“A man is sure you will do great.”, No, definitely settled, she rolled her eyes, and he clicked his tongue.

How the hell did he see that?!

She looked for anything to sit on, ended up on some old box. Well, at least since she had based the girl off herself she did not need to worry about her unconscious body language, which they had
studied during the last course. But she suddenly became aware of it, how her knees squeezed together, how she toyed with her fingers in proxy of her necklace, how her lips curved the slightest bit when she willed her face to relax, and her freaking cheeks which did not cease reddening.

It felt very strange suddenly pretending to be someone else, but she tried to act it as normal.

She took out her phone, but before smiling at the black screen like an idiot she searched for his eyes. They told her to continue.

*What the hell am I doing?*

She put on a fake, happy expression, as if she had just received a message from an imaginary boyfriend.

When her eyes met him again, she regretted making Pate as similar as he truly was.

*Urgh- does he ever let go of this stupid grin?*

They acted the scene exactly. She wondered how she knew the lines so well without learning them, but what felt the weirdest was that he knew them perfectly too. And it was odd to hear him speak normally with still these sleepy eyes and this sly smile on his face. It was like he was himself but a stranger had taken control of his voice.

She could not detach her eyes from him. God, these lips, these eyes…

Maybe he would not notice that her interest was not entirely acted, she hoped. And he did not look entirely like someone else either when their eyes locked, so she figured it was fine to let Arya Stark show through a bit.

Then came the line when the girl flirted back. She admonished herself in her mind for over-thinking when he approached her and she felt the heat emanate from his body again.

God, now they were to the part she had not finished writing. What should she do? Improvise? And he kept striding towards her like a beast about to devour a prey and she didn't know where to hide-
No, she would not be a prey. Improvisation it shall be.

“Maybe we should meet again sometime.”, he seemed satisfied with how she dealt with the situation which gave her the courage to go on. But he kept on approaching and she was slowly getting pinned against the wall which made her thoughts fuse and her mind go crazy.

Wait what is-

Play it cool, it’s acting

She remembered to continue but her fingers trembled now and her lungs did not provide her enough air any more. She took a deep breath in and tried to look composed again.

“Does a man want my numb-” Shit-he chuckled and her eyes went wide.

“Does he?”, he purred.

“Hum, I-I mean, does-hum-do y-”, her cheeks were aflame again, she bit her lip to cease embarrassing herself.

Shit shit shit

Why do you always screw everything up Arya?! Look at him now, look at that satisfied, stupid grin! And-wait why does he keep on getting closer?

“Maybe the man wants something else…”

Damn it, was he meaning Pate or himself? And what did he mean?! And how did he manage to turn her so crazy?!

And… wait-

Was he leaning in for… a kiss?
Questions started swarming in her head. That was pushing the game a bit far, wasn’t it? God, should she push him away? He was her teacher! Was he even allowed to do that?! And why the hell did she feel the urge to plunge forward and devour this plump lower lip?! He was a freaking stranger, she knew nothing about him, she didn’t even know his name! And he was still approaching, God what should she do?! His warmth felt suddenly sizzling, her eyes travelled so fast from his eyes to his lips that she was having trouble keeping up with her own sight. She squeezed her knees together, and she needed to concentrate to remind herself to breathe. These lips would feel so darn good against her own, they looked soft and plush, and why the hell was she feeling this way towards an old guy she barely knew?! And there was no time to ponder like that! Now he was so close she could feel the hot wind gently brush against her nose and his face was just getting closer and closer and fuck-

Okay, she would kiss him.

But she leaned forward a fraction of a second too late. For an instant she felt like falling into emptiness and there was nothing to catch her. What the- she cursed in her head, and her expression dropped when she was pulled back to reality and her eyes met that demonic grin on his infuriating face, now too fucking far from hers for their lips to meet.

What the hell-

And she suddenly felt like hitting him. What did just happen?!

She felt the anger jolt in her. What the fuck was that?! And why was he smiling like a demon who had just crawled back from hell to turn her life into a nightmare?!

You fucking-argh goddamn it, she clenched her teeth. Even in her thoughts she did not manage to make full sentences, she was still wondering if all of this was real. And urgh-she was so ridiculously red, like a freaking little girl caught messing around.

“Maybe your name first…”, even further from her face his voice still managed to make her tremble inside. Had he even noticed that she had leaned forward? Oh God if he did…-

That’s the most embarrassed I’ve ever been

“A-Are we still playing?”, she mumbled after an instant, still disoriented and mortified.
His grin grew wider, and her hands itched to slap him. *Is he actually making fun of me?!*

“We never stop playing.”

His tone was so steady and composed, she wanted to insult him, but she did not find anything to throw at him.

She must have been quite a sight, utter confusion written on her face, her eyes wide and full of turmoil, her cheeks aflame with embarrassment.

*What the hell does that mean?!!*

*Should I tell him my name? Should I make one up? Damn it! Why is everything so complicated when he's around?!!*

“Arya Stark.,” she managed, unable to think any more.

She half-way expected him (or dreaded him) to make fun of her.

But he freaking bowed his head, seemingly contented.

“A man has the honour of being Jaqen H'ghar.”, he said, holding out his hand. She couldn't force her eyes off him. She was utterly confused.

And when she took his hand in hers, something sparked, in his eyes or in her, Arya could truly not recall. And she didn't know if it was awe or if it was loathe.

“A lovely girl could keep that to herself?”, he purred.

What, *his name*? He did not want anyone else to know it? She wondered why for a fraction of a second but nodded.
This Saturday morning, Arya came back from theatre class cursing herself in her head for becoming a freaking movie cliché.

Jaqen H'ghar's phone number was scribbled on a piece of paper in her pocket.

"I'm not stripping."

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading!

Let me know what you think! Who do you ship??

Have a wonderful day! <33

(I do not own the pic)
“Wait-what do you mean *they're all staying*?”, Arya asked, a bit dizzy already from the few beers she had drunk.

The party had been going on for a few hours now. *Ugh*—luckily Sansa only celebrated her birthday once a year. All these people swarming around in the apartment made it look tiny and stifling and that made Arya sick. And there were some still coming in, bringing in more alcohol and more suspicious substances.

Most of Sansa's friends were models or fashion gurus, and as soon as they passed the door they all morphed into some weird party animals whose only purpose was to drink to the point of puking and dance to the point of breaking their ankles in these ridiculously high shoes. She was the youngest of the bunch, and she truly did look like a child in the middle of all of these tall and curvy women with long, straightened hair. Plus, they all wore these super tight and short dresses, platform shoes and a shit load of sparkles when she was in simple Jean shorts, Converse shoes and a (supposedly fashionable) silk tank top San had forced her into because “*You mustn't look like a stain on the pictures*”.

“I won't send them home after all of this is liquidated, I'm not crazy enough to let them kill themselves on the road back.”, she said pointing at the mountain of drinks on the kitchen's counter top that would serve as a bar for the evening.

“Now help me bring these in the living room before they all starve please.”, she continued, showing the trays of pizza freshly out of the oven.

“And where do you intend on putting them all?”, she asked in a low voice while looking around. There was easily more than thirty people and more kept coming in.

“Some of them brought sleeping-bags, we have a couch, my room and Jon's.”

“And where the hell is Jon supposed to sleep?!”, Arya flared. She really did not want any of these dorks to stay the night, she wanted them all gone already. Sansa looked very annoyed, she was already stressed out by the party and her efforts to make everything perfect like the neat-freak that she was, and Arya really felt like a pain in her ass right now.
“With you!”, Arya’s expression dropped, which made Sansa even more annoyed.

“We’ve talked about this in the car this morning, you said you were Ok, why do bother me with that now?!”, she said, hurrying back in the kitchen to get the next batch of pizza out of the oven.

What the-

Wait, wait wait… No, no I would remember if you had said-

Oh shit-Arya indeed remembered saying Ok to something this morning, but it was right after theatre class, and she had not even listened to her sister’s question when she hopped into the car. She thought it had been the usual “How was it?”, and her thoughts were all on the stupid piece of paper in her pocket back then.

So… I’m spending the night in bed with Jon.

She looked at him, starting to prepare the drinks. He was the official bartender of the night.


It was not perfect at all. She did her best not to freak out. Although she didn't know if she wanted to freak out right now or just smile like an idiot through the entire evening. So she grabbed a drink and tried to think about something else.

Don't get carried away. What are you expecting anyway?

She gawked at her jacket, hanged in the entrance. The theatre teacher's phone number was still in there, scribbled on a little torn piece of paper, and that stupid tiny piece of paper had been troubling her all day long. What the hell was she supposed to do with it? What the hell was she supposed to send him? “Sup’”?!

Argh, she hated that man. She never understood what he was expecting of her. She usually never cared about people's expectations, yet when it came to him, she felt this fear of deceiving him stirring in her guts each time his eyes were on her. And that had never happened with a stranger before. What the hell was he doing to her?

But what she hated above all was this feeling of always being miles behind him. That was unbearable.
At least she knew his name now. Before sending anything she would definitely check on google if he was not some child molester or something.

*Urgh-And what the hell would I send?*

*Maybe just a nude, we'll see what happens next-

“Arya! Come help me with that!”, seeing Sansa overwhelmed cheered her up. She who loved to do everything perfectly was spinning erratically in the small kitchen, trying to clean up what little area of counter top she could reach under the piles of dirty dishes.

“What's that?”, she asked pointing at a purple drink with blackberries and ice-cubes in it.

“A Blackbird.”, Jon nodded.

“It used to be our team's name in the military, we would always drink this on week-ends.”

“I see you got the trick on how to prepare them now.”, she said, looking at the ten glasses of cocktail sitting on the tray.

“Oh yes- that's for the girls over there, would you mind bringing it to them? There's still a lot to clean up here.”

“Sure.”, she smiled before looking into his gleaming eyes. Had he drunk already? She wouldn't mind seeing him drunk, people are always different when there is some alcohol running through their veins. She wondered how he would be as she walked over to the group where Sansa and her friends were.

“I-mean, you should really come once, just to see, he's tall and he looks lean a-f. Also he has amazing hair. Like, I'm jealous. Some say he dyes it for it to be red but I think.”, when she understood who they were talking about, Arya turned her heels to walk away, but her sister was quicker.

“Arya! Good Lord, we've been waiting for these all evening long.”, San said, taking the glasses off
the tray and passing them over to the other girls.

“Hey! You go to theatre class too, am I wrong?”, one of them with long, curly hair asked, and Arya rolled her eyes at her second failed attempt to escape this group and this conversation.

But she settled on being polite. It was San's birthday after all, she could make some effort and be nice to her friends. She nodded, and she even surprised herself when she lowered her eyes after that. Was she being… shy? Why was she so unlike her usual self suddenly? All she wanted to do was leave these people and go hide somewhere and not hear one more word about this teacher from anyone's mouth.

“Yeah—finally something you like, it seems.”, Sansa added joyfully, before taking a long sip at the purple drink. Arya knew her sister sensed her unease and she was thankful at her attempts to get the younger one to be part of the conversation, but the only thing Arya wanted to do was to tell them all to shut up about this darn man because they knew nothing about the teasing bastard he truly was. And she did not want him to invade her thoughts any more than he already had. Moreover, she would much prefer being with Jon right now, so she could survey these drunk girls orbiting around him instead. Her prayers were unheard. She heard Jon's rich laughter from far behind and these girls kept on annoying her. So she took another drink from the tray.

“Ah! The teacher's face does a lot, doesn't it? I mean, I wish I had a picture of him to show you Sanny, he's easily in my top five most handsome men who will find themselves in my bed.”, she giggled girlishly at that, and Arya's clenched fist almost flew to her face. By some incredible amount of luck she was able to restrain herself. She should surely thank that third glass of strong cocktail that made her slower than usual.

_In her bed? _After the few seconds of anger she breathed in to calm herself down and scoffed inwardly.

Somehow thinking about that stupid piece of paper in her jacket pocket with his number scribbled on it now cooled her and made her suddenly proud, no matter what his intents behind that were.

These girls may brag about getting his attention and they might annoy her during the lessons by always looking at him like a salivating dog would look at a piece of fresh meat, only she knew his name and was the closest to his bed with that number in her possession—she felt the alcohol make her sway, and washing away whatever admonishment she would have spat at herself for that mental note.

“Such a pity that there was no lesson this morning, well, at least I got time to go shopping to find an outfit for this party—”
Arya's eyes widened and her smile died, and the feeling of wanting to hide increased exponentially.

She bit her lip and stared at her feet, suddenly wanting fly away very far from all of this and the thoughts boiled up in her. She did not want her eyes to meet with Sansa's because she knew that would only increase her embarrassment. *Quick, quick, make up a lie, why did we go this morning?*

Another strike of incredible luck. Sansa did not pick up. *Maybe she's too drunk already?*

*Shit*

Her eyes were on her, and she gave her a look. That knowing look, and Arya could feel her own face blushing beyond control, not because of the alcohol this time.

Of course her sister did pick up. She always noticed everything. Fortunately not in front of everybody, but Arya was only half-way relieved.

*A discussion will be needed,* she downed her glass.

“What?”, she groaned.

Sansa's smile grew even more amused as she closed the door of the small balcony. Luckily the air was fresh and helped with her dizziness, and the obscurity hid her blushing face.

“What do you mean *what?* I dropped you off this morning and I watched you get in, may I know with whom you met if there was no class?”

*Urgh*-the alcohol did not make her less annoying.

Arya cursed again for she felt her cheeks redden. She bit down her lower lip and looked away the time she needed to come up with an answer. Why the hell could she not figure out a believable lie?! She was good at lying usually!

“Arya?”, the joyful sparkle was in her eyes.

“Do you sleep with that teacher?” she asked whispering.
“No!”, she spat.

“He…he gave me a private course.”, she threw, deciding she'd tell the truth when she still could not find anything else believable enough to tell her sister. And she sighed, for she perfectly knew what “a private course with that man everyone praises for his appearance” sounded like.

Sansa gave her that same knowing look, and smirked. *Damn it-* Arya had never seen Sansa smirk!

“Stop it!”, Arya was suddenly very angry.

“He likes you.”

“No! He only gave me his-” *Shit*, it was hard to control what slipped out of her mouth with so much alcohol rushing through her.

“…No!”, she mumbled, shaking her head to regain her senses. *Watch your words for fuck's sake!*

“What? He gave you what?”

Arya stared for a second, he mind went fully blank and she felt like slapping herself for waking herself up again. *Fuck*. She definitely did not want Sansa to know about her stupid crush. *Play it cool.*

“A private course that's all.”, she lied. And God, she lied terribly.

“He gave you his number!”, she squealed.

*Fuck-how did she always know?!*

“You sent anything yet?”

She clenched her teeth and cursed repeatedly for her cheeks would not stop reddening. Why was she so red? And why was she embarrassed?! Surely he did not have anything in mind, maybe he just
wanted to help her with her acting, he was being nice, that's all! A lot of teachers give their students their number to help them, right? God, even in her mind she sounded ridiculous. But she did not plan anything with him, there was no reason she should be so embarrassed! It was just a freaking phone number!

“No. And I'm not planning on it.”, she grumbled.

“Oh come on—”

“And what the hell would happen next? A date?! He's a freaking teacher San! He's at least twenty years older than me!”, she flared.

“Don't get so mad! It's just a phone number! And a little date doesn't imply anything! Wouldn't you like it?”, her voice was still soft and joyful. God! Did she understand nothing?!

And...would she like a date with him? This was a very bad moment to ponder about it. But for a fraction of a second she did consider it. I mean, who wouldn't like a date with him-

No-No! Her inner self intervened again.  
He's an asshole! He's infuriating and he always seems to make fun of her and she hates him!

But Arya hesitated a second too much.

“Give me your phone.”

“No!”

Shit-Sansa was way more sober than she was, and before Arya realized, her sister's hand had slipped in her jacket's pocket and pulled out her phone. Along with the number.

Damn it-her head swayed. Why did she take that stupid jacket outside? It's not even that cold, and it would have prevented-

“Oh- this will be so perfect.”

Arya clenched her teeth and said nothing.
“Give it back.,” she stretched her hand.

“You don't have the code anyw-”

Fuck-Sansa giggled as she showed the unlocked screen-digital imprint.

Of course, this used to be her phone stupid Arya, she suddenly remembered. God, why was she so freaking slow?!

She jumped at her and tried to get back the phone, but San held it above her head and she was too small.

“Stop! Please San, no! I don't even-”, she pleaded as she saw her tapping.

“Sent!”

Arya's eyes grew wide and her face paled, and the next second the phone was back in her hand and she was reading the message.

No no no no no

“Ever heard of that coffee place called Harren's Hall? I heard it's really good. Mind coming sometime?”

Fuck fuck fuck

Arya was still pale and unmoving, it took her too long to realize.

No no no

“See, I didn't even put emojis so it's believable that it was you.,” Sansa smiled like this was some game, as if nothing had happened, and Arya's thoughts were still messy as she kept on blankly staring at the screen gone black now.
“You'll thank me later.”, she said before planting a kiss on her little sister's hair and walking back to her party, seemingly delighted.

_Fuck fuck fuck_, the reasonable Arya kept saying in her mind. The other said _Really? That's all?_

Two hours since the phone incident it had been, and she still got no answer. Well, it was almost three in the morning, he probably didn't see her text. But still, she could not help but be eaten up by fear. The questions as well as the possibilities kept boiling in her head. Maybe he did see her text already, and just ignored it? Or maybe she would wake up in a few hours to a long message about how inappropriate she was being? Goddamn it, the questions would not stop fusing and they were ruining her evening.

And what the hell would happen if she actually got an answer? What if he would accept to go on a date with her? She could not date him! He was a freaking teacher! And he was some implausible fantasy! Her life was not a fucking movie, people don't end up with their crushes in real life! And he was not even a real crush, he was an image she used to lust about someone else than her freaking brother! She was fucked up already, there was no need to include actual people in her insanity, she was good on her own.

But whatever his answer would be, she knew the next confrontation with him would be tremendously awkward. Like, really, really awkward. Maybe she should pretend to be sick for the next course. How would she handle it? God, and how would she handle a freaking date?! _God- No, don't get too carried away. He'll probably tell you off anyway, be realistic. No one's going on a date._

Yes, that sounded more plausible. He would tell her off, any teacher would. Maybe she should send another message right now, and explain him what happened, just so she could continue to go to theatre class. Or just tell him that she was drunk. Or that it was a dare. Or that she meant it to someone else. Yes. That was good. That was excellent. She pulled out her phone and-No more battery.

She breathed.

Fine. She would wait for an answer and cope with it. It would have been pathetic anyway. He would have caught the stupid excuse. That had been a stupid idea. _Alcohol always makes you have stupid ideas._ She plugged her phone and hid it in one of the drawers of the kitchen and walked away from it before she would have another excellent idea like that.

She drowned the fear in more alcohol. Maybe it was not reasonable, but everyone around her was more waisted so there was no reason she should be the reasonable one. Jon had been making drinks
non-stop, and when he had a small pause, a noisy group of annoying chicks were around him, and Arya could not stand that either. That only meant more alcohol each time she heard him laugh.

Fuck—he had changed so much. Well, eight years was quite a long time, but she had in no way expected to meet with…that. How could that young green boy with a cute baby face have evolved into a fucking half prince charming half bad boy hybrid? And how could she, his freaking little sister who almost worshipped him as a child, feel that way towards him? True, that these eight years had made them strangers, but they had still been raised as brother and sister for ten years.

But times were so different back then. Everything used to be fine. Now her life felt kind of like a big mess and she felt like she was always improvising to figure out a way to not drown in it, and somehow nothing she ever did felt totally right. Except when she was with him. When they were together everything was fine again. She felt safe, home. He was her home, despite all these years apart, he was the cheerful memories, the peaceful Sunday afternoons, the smell of the sheets in Winterfell, how could she not feel that way towards him? He was all the good memories of her childhood wrapped in an alluring packing…how could she not be naturally attracted to him? How could she fight it when it felt like he was all the good things that had remained after the chaos?

Ah, the drunken philosophical reflections…

But there had to be some truth behind them, right?

Somehow, after she settled on the couch and closed her eyes for two minutes, Sansa woke her up and it was 6am. The lights were all off, the apartment was quiet, people were laying on the ground in their pyjamas and she could hear her sister mumbling something about going to bed.

Yes. Bed. Thank God. She was exhausted.

She collided on her pillows. God, was the sun rising already? Ugh-she did not find the strength to stand up and draw the curtains. She barely managed to unhook her bra and throw it away. Sansa would probably admonish her for sleeping in that fancy silk tank top but it was too comfortable to take it off. She kicked away the shoes and wiggled out of the tight shorts before cuddling up the bed.

She almost jumped in fear when there was a hard thud on the mattress next to her. And then a familiar groan.

Oh right, she had forgotten about that.
Shit—she had not removed what little make-up San had managed to smudge on her face, he would wake up next to a raccoon with a pony's breath and hair like a bird's nest.

And oh God, since how long was he in there? Did he watch her get so sexily out of her clothes? Shit.

She was too drunk to be embarrassed.

“It was a nice party.”, he mumbled.

Argh—did he really want to talk now? Usually she would see this as a marvellous way to get closer to him but right now the alcohol in her blurred her judgement and she did not feel like she had the energy to come up with a smart answer if he would be to ask questions. And she was drunk and half-naked. Pathetic. That had been an awful evening.

She hoped the darkness hid her face. She felt hideous. A nasty mess laying amorphously on the bed.

“Very nice. The drinks were really good.”

Great. Now she sounded like an alcoholic. Quick, say something else.

“I mean… I didn't know you were so good at bar-tending.”

He chuckled. Good. Now please cuddle up with me and hold me tight while I-“

“I have a friend who taught me, back in Canada, we used to go out on Friday nights and he would always bring his own booze and show us tricks he learned around the globe. That one time he even got behind the bar and taught the actual bar-tender of the place how to properly mix a drink, you should have seen the boy's face, he looked like he just met bar-tending God. We went on a mission in Africa once and he was part of the crew, and he would always complain because you can't find good-quality drinks there so he would always try new things—”
Urgh- She tried to care, but he would not stop talking and she was too tired to try and understand the words that got to her ears. Was he ever so talkative or did he drink a bit much too? And his face was so close, she would only need to move from an inch and she would be kissing him…

She had never kissed anyone before, she had tried to imagine the sensation but nothing seemed to be right.

Keeping her eyes open was truly a struggle, she felt foggy from travelling back and forth the line between sleep and awoken state. The thoughts popping up in her mind were like random images flashing on a screen. Some of them lingered and confused her. *Fuck*-why was she worrying if her phone was making friends with the forks in the drawer?! That made no sense! And why the hell was she picturing Jon with red hair?!

And *fuck*-*, his body was sizzling hot and almost touching hers, his lips looked so smooth and plush and near from hers, it was pure torture… She was quite sure he could sense her awkwardness and see her cheeks redden, and she prayed for her breath not to be too bad if he could smell it from this close.

If she could stop time she would, only for five seconds, just the time to quench her thirst of knowing what the feeling must be like. How soft are his lips? *How would his beard feel against my skin? Would it be soft of spiky? And his hands? Where would he place them while his lips are on mine?* The need was urging her inside, and she found herself unable to shut her inner tangled questions, to the point where she could not hear any more what he was whispering so close to her face.

*God Arya, stop lusting after your freaking brother you weirdo*, the reasonable voice still managed to admonish her in her drunken haze.

“…No? What do you think?”, he asked, and *fuck*-she had no idea what he was talking about. She willed to shake herself to wake herself up from her day-dreaming state and stop staring at him, but she did not find the energy.

“Arya?”, he asked, and the warm wind brushed against her skin.

She blinked. Once, twice, thrice. God, his voice sounded like their father's. And these lips were haunting her. They were too close to ignore.

*And he's not even truly my brother. And we haven't seen each other in years-*

*There's something wrong with y-No. Enough of that. I can't hear that anymore.*
She could not continue living without knowing.

So by some kind of sudden boldness probably provided by the alcohol, she closed her eyes and pressed her lips against his.

And *God*—that felt strange. An amazingly good kind of strange. In a fraction of a second, she felt her stomach being turned upside down by the wave that came with this new feeling. It was unlike anything she had ever experienced before.

She did not even consider the possibility that he could back away or call her crazy or that this might destroy everything between them, the fear caught a strong hold of her guts a little too late when her lips were still locked on his, completely unmoving after three long seconds.

But he did not back away, he did not call her crazy. He put a hand on her cheek and pressed further, and the scene felt brusquely unreal, the thoughts blurred in her mind as did the world around her.

Chapter End Notes

What do you think Jaqen will answer?
What do you think is going to happen between Jon and Arya?

Please, leave a comment! :)

Thanks for reading! <3
(I do not own the picture and I have no idea where it's from)
Hi everyone!

I'm sorry that I haven't been able to upload much lately, but with the summer holidays coming up I'll be able to repay myself ;)

Anyway, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jon frowned, and Arya's face paled.

“Does that come from… the drawer?”, he asked pouring the milk in his bowl of cereals.

Arya's eyes widened and she almost strangled herself on her next sip of coffee.

She had totally forgotten about that H'ghar situation.

For a long minute she did not dare to move and kept silently cursing while all the potential scenarios rushed in her head. Most of them included a hard rejection that would constrain her to find a new hobby and maybe disappear from the crust of the earth for a few decades to rebuild her dignity.

“Did anyone forget their phone?”, he asked, eyes on her sending a weird chill down her spine.

“No… it's mine.”, she answered meekly.
Fuck—her head buzzed so much and her eyes still struggled with the brightness of the day. She remembered almost nothing about what had happened after that stupid message was sent. She could only recall drinking heavily to stop thinking about it. That had never happened before, she had never forgotten about a part of her evening because of alcohol. Sometimes images flashed in her aching head. Images of the swarming of the party, the sweaty bodies stirring and pressing against each other, the rainbow lights flickering and making her feel dizzy. Thankfully she had done nothing too embarrassing, she knew Jon and Sansa would not have let that happen. But she was not ready to drink again any time soon, not with that awful sensation of dry tongue and the pounding in her head.

Everyone was gone by now, it was almost three in the afternoon and she had just woken up. Jon had left the bed a few minutes before she did, along with the pleasant heat he brought under the covers. She had somewhat hoped that they would wake up curled up in each other's arms like in all the cliché movies but none of that happened. In fact she had almost forgotten that he was there. She had pretended to be asleep a few minutes after he rose because she had no idea how to deal with such a singular situation, and she had hidden her head in the pillows so he would not face her morning-puffy-eyes nor her awful breath still stinking of alcohol.

She heard the sound of Sansa’s hurried strides in the living room while she cleaned up. She groaned each time she discovered a new stain on the couch or stumbled on a half-way emptied cup on the ground and spilled it all on the expensive carpets. On any other day Arya would have found this little show very entertaining.

But on that afternoon she only felt dirty. She needed a shower. Maybe a bath. Yes, that sounded marvellous. She took out her phone without looking at the message and headed towards the bathroom before locking herself up. A bath was an excellent way to refresh. As she removed her clothes, she pondered if she should rather read the text before or after.

If she did it before it could ruin her moment of relaxation. Yet it could also help her think about something else. With the bath she could wash away the embarrassment, she would way better cope with it while soaking in the hot water alone. And while she was in the bath she could work on gathering up the courage to face Sansa’s interrogatory afterwards, because she knew perfectly that her sister remembered this incident and would ask her what he answered. And she could not blush and look disappointed in front of her or else she would understand that she had a freaking crush on this bastard.

So while still wearing her underwear and all the determination in the world, she unlocked the phone and clicked on the message app. While facing the contact list she froze again. A blue dot was next to the number.

Oh God
“A man will be waiting there on Tuesday 5pm”

She had scarcely enjoyed the bath. She could hardly remember if she actually went in the water when she lay on her bed two hours later, still that fool's smile digging in her cheeks.

Oh fuck

Now what? What was she supposed to do? Just go? But say what?

She curled up on her rather small bed and hugged her knees. God, she looked so much like a foolish high-school cheerleader too happy that she got the attention of the soccer team's captain, but she did not find the will to give a crap. She had a date!

She could not help but imagine the possible scenarios. She found herself almost wishing that some girl of the theatre group would walk in on them in the Café. She felt stupid about it, but she also thought that this would be an awesome way to make them all shut up about him. Yes, that'd be so cool. They'd take little Arya more seriously after that.

That's ridiculous

She sighed and plunged her face in the pillows.

Damn it, she had a date with Jaqen H'ghar!

This was so unreal.

Oh fuck

His face flashed in her mind as if she had just woken up from a sweet dream.

She had a date with fucking Jaqen H'ghar. He may be good looking and this may annoy the other
girls if they somehow discovered it (but she would never talk about it herself, ever, she quickly swore to herself), but he was the same annoying guy who spoke in riddles, he was the same infuriating man who always made fun of her. How the hell was a freaking date with him supposed to go well?! And what should she say when she-

Something stirred in her guts.

It was the smell of the pillow. Something was wrong and felt very odd. Jon's smell was still on it. But, why did it feel like-

Another image flashed in her mind. Or rather, a feeling. Lips against lips.

*Oh shit*- 

What the hell?

Now it felt more vivid, the memory reconstructed itself in her mind. She remembered the blurry vision, his breath against her skin, and then… his mouth pressed against hers. She brushed a finger on her lower lip, and a strange fear caught a strong hold of her guts, making her head sway a little.

*That… no, no that could not have happened?*

Her mind went blank, and the feeling intensified making her feel like she was falling off a cliff.

*No… he was perfectly normal this afternoon, he wouldn't have… and I would never have the courage to… and how could I have forgotten about this?*

Her eyes went wide, and for a second she felt almost sick as if the bed had become a raft wobbling on the sea.

*No-that could not have happened, I would remember…*

Something felt so wrong.
Damn it! Had it been a dream or did it happen for real? Why did she drink so much last night?!

She heard Jon's rich voice outside the room, probably making fun of Sansa for cleaning the apartment for the thousandth time. The sound of his voice made something in her stomach stir again.

No, something was wrong. She was fucked up, but Jon wasn't. He would never kiss her. As desperate as it may make her, she knew perfectly that he considered her his little sister, despite all the time apart and the non-existing common blood. Yet... the way he looked at her on the beach had been quite unusual. And the image in her mind felt...too disturbingly vivid—That's your stupid imagination.

Why wasn't she fully convinced?

Well, she was definitely not asking him. What the hell would such a conversation look like? Hey Jon, do you remember if we made out in my bed last night, or was it just another of my impossible fantasies? That sounded so ridiculous and improbable.

Fuck

No, that was obviously a dream.

Oh fuck fuck fuck now what?!

She shouldn't have come. She shouldn't have tried to copy one of Sansa's hairstyles. Messy bun? She was sure it looked ridiculous on her. God, she should have buried herself somewhere and never come back. What the hell was she supposed to do now?

The questions kept fusing as she made her way to the Café. This may have been the very first time that it took her more than five minutes to pick her clothes. She wanted to go dressed as usual, but in the last minute before leaving the apartment she had started wondering about incredibly stupid stuff she never gives a shit about usually, like if this pair of shorts did not look too boyish, or if this t-shirt smelled good enough. She had settled on remaining dressed as she was. Don't make such a big deal
out of it, she had kept on reminding herself during the whole day.

School had been as boring as usual, and she had been unable to concentrate on the simplest thing because what awaited her after had been invading her mind since Saturday. She had even needed to ask Gendry three fucking times to repeat whatever he was explaining about her biology lesson this morning before he quit after telling her that she was too distracted to listen. Gendry had never been very patient. Neither had she. But this time he had stormed off and he looked really pissed. She did not tell him why she was being so slow, but he must have sensed it. He did not know her as much as Sansa or Jon did, but well enough to tell that something was off. Whatever. This dork would come back when he'd be done brooding. He was her only friend and he knew it. She shook her head to stop thinking about it. She must concentrate now.

Quick check up. She looked at her face in the store's windows. Shit, why did she agree for all of this? And damn it- she was already sweating and she felt disgusting.

*It's just a coffee. Play it cool.*

She found herself wishing that she had done this before. She felt like she was terribly lacking experience. She did not know how to start a conversation, how to not become weird when she spoke about her interests, she had no idea how to be cool with the fact that she would be alone with her sexy teacher like in the beginning of a bad and very cliché American movie, and mostly she didn't even know if this was a properly called date, or what the heck they would talk about. But the thing she was the most afraid about was that if the embarrassment and the stress were to make her unable to say anything, this rendez-vous would turn out to be a long, boring and very awkward meeting. Ugh, maybe it would have been a good idea to go out at least a few times before this. Maybe if she had she would be less stressed out about it all. But now that was out of options.

Harren's Hall was at the end of the street. It was not a busy street. That was a good thing. She did not want the theatre girls to walk in on them anymore. She did not want anyone to walk in on them and witness her self-humiliation. She barely wanted him to come, because she dreaded that he might make fun of her or speak in riddles again and that the stress would prevent her from saying anything back without embarrassing herself.

She threw a quick look at her phone. It was 5:06PM when she reached the small Café. Good, her sister always said to make men wait a little, but she didn't want to make him wait too much, so it was perfect. Everything would go well. *We'll just chat a little, drink some coffee. This will be lovely. Don't mess up.*

She wanted him to see her first for some reason, but when she entered curiosity won over. She forgot how to breathe when he rose his eyes from the newspaper, there, a few tables away. As always, a light smirk played on his lips. And he looked satisfied like he had just won some gambling game
with a pack of cheater's dices. God- she reminded herself to act normal when she felt herself blush. He was a handsome man, truly. Arrogant and annoying, yes, but Arya was not sure if maybe that didn't make him more attractive. It was as if his aura filled the whole room, invaded every mind and stole all the thoughts of the lost ones whose eyes lingered for too long. He looked relaxed and sure, legs crossed the manly way below the small table, his unusual hair tied in a man bun, and that plump lower lip just begging to be bitten down- damn it, she was staring.

What the hell did I just engage myself into?

“…Hi”, she smiled awkwardly, toying with her necklace. Act normal.

He smelt like of exotic spices, something like ginger (maybe it was cologne? She had noticed this scent before) and it sent tingles in her stomach and tickled her nostrils. This scent was becoming too familiar too quickly. She had started to crave it for no reason.

She tried to ease and sat in front of him, and prevented her fingers from looking for something to busy themselves with.

“So a girl enjoyed the private lesson, despite what she might say.”

He cheeks reddened again. What could she say?

“The teacher's quite persuasive.”

He chuckled and she was proud. Ugh-would she smile like a foolish maiden each time she would make him laugh?

“Could the teacher persuade a girl to make it into a weekly course?”

She hated how she loved this idea.

“Why not?”, she wanted to sound less exited, but according to the way his smirk grew larger, the sparkles in her eyes betrayed her.

The waitress came for their order, threw him a flirty look and Arya did her best to hide her displeasure when he returned her a smile.
He's not yours. She wasn't sure if she addressed that to herself or to the pretty waitress.

“How about Saturdays, an hour before the actual lesson, lovely girl?”

“Sure.”, Arya answered, bitter to lose another hour of sleep on her week-end. Ugh-what wouldn't she do for this man and his mocking eyes?

But one question burned on her tongue.

“I wanted to know, uhm, do you… I mean, do you do this for, like… other students?”, why was she sounding so not sure of herself!? She had every right to ask that! His smirk grew larger, and for a fraction of a second she wondered if this was not a stupid question.

“No.”, he simply answered, seemingly very satisfied.

She felt her lips form a thin line. What? No, that's it? I don't get an explanation?

She crossed her legs and propped her chin on her fist, elbow resting on the small table as she examined his uncommon feature.

She did not know if she liked the thought of being a teacher's favourite student. Arya Stark had never been the teacher's favourite. Most teachers annoyed her because they spoke to her as if she were a child. The few teachers she ever liked treated her justly, and that was mostly why she liked them, because they did not give her a better treatment for being an orphan. They liked her for who she was, and the word orphan was not enough to describe her.

But… Jaqen H'ghar didn't know that she had no parents. He knew her name, but only since their last encounter. So, why did she seem to be on top of his list?

The waitress came back with his coffee and her tee, still throwing him interested glances and little smiles whenever she could, and Arya found her beyond ridiculous. He's busy with me, can't you see? Some part of her thought.

But when she gave him that over-the-shoulder look, she realized. No, the waitress obviously didn't
see. The both of them looked more like a father and his daughter merrily having a drink after he
picked her up from school rather than two grown-ups on some kind of… face-to-face meeting. He
was at least twenty years older than her, if she judged right by the slight lines on his face. Only one
single strand of hair was white, the rest was perfectly red-ish, making it hard to judge. Maybe it was
his natural hair in the end, she thought as her eyes lingered on the auburn locks-*since when do I care
about that?*

She however, looked about thirteen years old. She was small, she had a round face and big eyes, just
like a child. Maybe if she looked more like a woman, if she had pretty curves and long legs like
Sansa, or big and lush hair like all the other girls, other women wouldn't look at her as if she were an
innocent little girl.

“Why?”, she pressed further, when she understood he would not give details from his free will. She
wanted to know why he gave her a special treatment.

“You think I have difficulties?”

He chortled. Now, she felt like she had asked a stupid question. Was it this obvious?

“It looks like a lot of students are here only because they think that studying theatre always leads to
becoming a famous Hollywood actor. And the rest of them, if a man is not mistaken, seem to be
more interested in the man himself rather than what he has to teach them.”, these words, in anyone
else's mouth, would have sounded incredibly vane, but somehow he managed to stay humble. And,
Arya was not entirely sure, but somewhere in his eyes she believed she saw a tiny spark of
disappointment at that. She felt suddenly a bit guilty. Sure, she was interested in what he said during
the lessons, but she could not deny the fact that her eyes were not always on him for that exact
reason.

“And so a man is left with only one lovely girl whose intentions he seems unable to understand, and
that raises his interest.”

Arya scoffed. *And here I thought a man was the riddle.* And had he just called her… interesting and
lovely in one sentence? Why was she so happy about it?

“Well, I'm definitely not planning on becoming a big Hollywood star, but I guess you've noticed that
already.”

He laughed and the low grumble made her chest vibrate. Yeah, she would probably smile like a fool
each time she amused him.
“A pity, a girl is very good at pretending to be someone else.”, his eyes were locked on her, and for a minute it looked like he was pondering about something.

“A girl is British, isn't she?”

“What betrayed me?”, she asked. Her accent had never been very marked, and the three years in LA had weirdly transformed it into something that sounded more North-American than British. Sansa put a lot of efforts into keeping hers though, she always said it sounded smarter.

“Milk in your tea. And the shorts when it's almost winter.”

Damn- and here she always thought she was good at picking up details. Even she had not paid attention to the fact that she still wore shorts in November.

“How long since a girl hasn't been on the other side of the ocean?”, he continued before she could ask where he was from.

Arya did her best not to grimace. Fuck- how long had it been? Since… the last Christmas she spent with her father. They had returned to Winterfell almost a year after moving in LA to celebrate her fifteenth birthday and Christmas at the same time, since she was born at the end of December. And then they had come back, and a few months later Sansa and her got a phone call on a grey Tuesday morning.

“Almost three years.”, she answered staring at the milk swirling in her cup. She willed to smile but he must have seen how fake it was.

His eyes remained on her for a few silent seconds. She was about to boil up, she hated getting pity glances, but when she raised her gaze to his, his light eyes had a tinge of empathy in them, and that look had a strange effect on her. How could it be empathy? She had not told him anything about what had happened to her and her family! She took another second to brush away he painful memories and managed to regain her usual resting face.

“And you, where are you from?”

“A man has travelled all around the world, he comes from many places.”

Ugh- Arya did her best not to roll her eyes. Why did he keep everything about him so secret? Only after an eternity had he deigned give her his mere name, and now it was all starting again with the riddles and the unspoken stuff. Did he expect her to guess?
“I can't really place the accent. Nor the third person speech.”, she said, slightly annoyed that he was going around her question instead of answering it, but he only seemed amused.

“The speech pattern is… a family tradition.”, he smiled as if he knew how odd it sounded. Well, it had been odd in the first instants, but after a few minutes Arya had been totally used to it and thinking that it would be even weirder if he spoke normally. Maybe it was some kind of strange magic spell in the end. The only thing Arya knew was that this third person thing, plus this stupidly arousing voice added to the accent made up something she had been indescribably quickly addicted to, and she hated how she liked the sound of it all.

“Germany. For the accent.”, was all he answered with a smile. But that was enough to please Arya.

“Really? What are you doing so far from home?”

“A man could return the question.”, the arrogant gleam was in his eyes.

“But I asked first.”, she answered with a raise of her brows, kind of proud. He smirked again and slightly bowed his head as if to give her credit, which she gladly appreciated.

“The theatre club hires a different comedian every year, each time from another part of the world. A man saw an opportunity to live in the heat and under the palm trees for a year and took it when he had the chance.”, he finally obliged before leaning back in his chair and taking a sip at his espresso but without once taking his eyes off her. Arya cursed in her head and let a sigh escape her nose. Why was everything he did so alluring?

For a brief instant it felt as if he were examining her, and Arya shifted in her seat. When she brought her eyes back to him it looked almost like he was… hesitating to ask her about something.

“The club teams up with the book club in the High School next door and together they organize a trip every year, to perform with the teacher's former troop. A teacher is allowed to take a student with him to show them the tricks of the job. A man knows a girl is not fond of being on stage in front of people, but he could sneak her in the backstage and she could observe and learn from there. Would a lovely girl be interested in that?”

Arya looked at him confused. *What?*

Was he inviting her on a sort of…vacation?
“Yeah…”, she said without thinking, before regaining her senses.

“I mean- I have to think about it, it depends on… a lot of things.”

He nodded, a corner of his mouth curled up.

“This year the play is in Berlin. The club takes care of the plane and the hotel.”

Wait, what?

“Berlin?! We could go to Berlin, like, in Germany?”

“Yes, lovely girl.”, he looked very amused.

How did the theatre club have enough money to send their teachers and their students on trips halfway across the world? Their classroom was a dusty old cave and she knew not a single person who ever paid for this class. She had even wondered how the teachers leading the classes managed to pay the bills, most of them were retired and only came because they were bored from their lives and earned not a single dollar from it.

But Berlin… how could she say no to Berlin? She had never been there, and she had to admit that she missed travelling lately, even if all of this seemed a bit… suspicious. And very sudden.

“So, you and the other theatre teachers of the club will act in a play there?”

“Yes, on the last four days of November. A man would understand if a girl refused, this seems a bit rushed, but since Thanksgiving is already in two weeks, a man figured he would ask you now.”

Fuck- it would be hard to say no to these eyes.

He's arrogant and you hate him, someone reminded her. Because for a fraction of a second she had forgotten who he was. Again.
It was strange imagining him on a stage (maybe he'd even be disguised!) in front of people, playing and all. But she'd miss it for nothing in the world. And Berlin? That sounded so great. Moreover Jon and Sansa would be working during the week of Thanksgiving's break. So she could either spend the week alone most of the time, eating take-out because she sucked at cooking for herself, and being admonished by Sansa for making a mess in the apartment, or she could get on a plane and visit a European capital (for free at that). And with Jaqen H'ghar.

_Calm down. This would be just a study thing. And don't expect him do be less of an arrogant pain in the ass once he's abroad. The plane won't change him._

But she still needed to ponder on it. It was very out of the blue, and she still did not know much about this man.

“I… I need a bit of time.”

“A girl is in no hurry. A man is not planning on asking anyone else to come with him. But he would appreciate an answer before next week, to deal with organization and plane tickets.”

She nodded, finished up her cup of mint tea.

She was definitely not planning on staying until the very end of the lesson tomorrow, neither on Tuesday or on Friday and bear these stupid girls asking stupid questions. That left her until Saturday to answer. _God_- a trip with him? Well, even if other theatre teachers would be here, as well as the book club and the comedians of the former troop, it still looked like she would spend a lot of time with him. And she hated how she was looking forward to that.

After that they talked. For quite a while. Well, she answered his questions, rather, she did not gather much more info about him. She explained him that she lived with her sister and her brother. She ticked at the mention of Jon but he did not pick up (thank God, she would have had a hard time explaining herself). She told him that she had two younger brothers still in Great Britain and that her parents were dead. Arya rarely explained that. Actually, she never got to explain it, she recalled. All the people she ever met after the murder and the accident either knew already, or Sansa took care of explaining because she was way more eloquent and easy-speaking, and somehow she was always with Sansa when there were new people.

After she explained him about her parents his gaze did not change, she paid very close attention. That made her feel a great deal of relieve. People's gazes always changed, and she hated it. Yet his did not flinch. Sometimes she had a bit of trouble finding her words, but not once did she feel awkward or (too) weird. Everything went quite naturally, and sometimes she was even surprised at
how well it went. Yet she could not help but curse in her head each time his eyes were on her or each time she made him laugh. How the heat his eyes made her feel, how proud she was when he laughed at her stories…how could she handle it? How was it right? He was so much older than her!

Well, maybe she was a little messed up, but when his eyes were on her she hardly found the will to care. It felt too good.

“Oh sh-”, she recalled that he was a teacher and that she should watch her words, “-oot.”

“It's 7PM already.”

He looked calmly at his watch and nodded. He did everything calmly. Arya even wondered if he would fight back should a random person insult him on the streets or something.

She rose from her seat and opened her wallet to pay for the bill.

“A man will take care of that.”, he said, rising too.

“No, no, I can pay…”, she mumbled, a bit embarrassed. She never knew how to handle such situations.

“A man insists.”

He smirked again, eyes on her, and she smiled to thank him. Ugh- her reason mocked her when she could not detach her eyes from him. God, the way he moved, smooth and sure, why were even his darn moves having so much effect on her? And since when did stupid chivalry make her feel so dizzy?

But she quickly forgot about it. Now came a tricky part.

The goodbye.

On proper dates people kiss at the end of it. Arya was practically sure of that. But had this been a date? Well…yes and no. He was her teacher after all, did he even consider the fact that this could
have been a date? What was a proper date anyway? She had definitely felt aroused, but not particularly flirty. Well, maybe because she didn't know how to flirt. God, how could she even be flirty with her teacher? She was not even sure she was okay with her own mere physical attraction to him! And he did not flirt either, did he? Or was his way of moving and smirking and the eyes-thing his way of flirting? Why was it all so complicated?!

But damn- she did want to kiss him. The urge was there. Lust, was there, and definitely not leaving any time soon. She wanted to kiss his face, actually, not really him as a person because he was infuriating and arrogant and she hated him. Remember?

But that sexy, handsome, golden, stupid face-ugh. If only he was not this arrogant! And old! And her teacher! And him!

“A man has enjoyed it very much.”, he stated, once out of the small Café.

“I did too.”, she cut her inner turmoil. Her stupid thoughts never led her anywhere good anyway.

Her heart raced, her cheeks blushed. If he kisses me I’ll definitely let him- she bit her lip.

Why would he kiss you?

“A girl seems unsure.”, he noted, slightly mocking her.

“I’m not.”, she laughed at herself. She kind of was though, but not for the reason he was thinking.

“It was really nice.”, that was true, she said it with a firmer voice.

Should I ask him for a second… Meeting?

Maybe he doesn’t want to…? Or else he’d be asking, right?

For a second he seemed to be approaching and Arya froze. He smirked again as if she was the most amusing puppet play he’d ever seen. He took her chin in two fingers and her pulse raced, her cheeks burnt, God was that it? Was this going to be her first kiss? The questions fused and her thoughts blurred and she remembered she had to breathe to survive but when she saw him bend over and started feeling the heat emanating off him she thought she had never been this expectant in her entire life.
She felt the world around disappear when the warm wind brushed against her face, the heat spreading in her like a fire had just started in her belly, pulling and aching and thrilling, as if she were about to burst and God! Where her lips okay? Maybe she should smooth them, but wouldn't that make them too-

He kissed her forehead.

The ground broke and suddenly everything was real again.


“See you tomorrow?”, he seemed delighted, and her hands itched to slap him.

A forehead kiss?!

“S-Sure.”, she mumbled, still processing. Her eyes were wide and she lost count of how many beats her heart skipped.

*My. Fucking. Forehead*

*Wait-*

Had he friend-zoned her?!

No- the devilish sparkle in his eyes would not be there if he had.

A forehead kiss?!

*What did you expect Arya Stark?*

*He's still Jaqen H'ghar.*
He had women-to-tease-and-make-fun-of-zoned her. He had lovely-girl-zoned her.

And, please- it had been barely a kiss. A brush of lips would be a better way to describe it. Just scarcely enough for it to haunt her but not enough for her to properly remember what it actually felt like to have his lips against her skin. Did he do that on purpose?

_Fucking demon_

She turned her back and felt… strange. Disappointed? Maybe. Frustrated? A little bit (more than a bit, way more than she'd be comfortable admitting). Confused? Definitely.

She only had the time to take one step and her phone was buzzing. _Shit_- 17 unread messages and 4 missed calls.

“For God's sake Arya, where are you?”, San sounded angry and frightened. _Fuck_- Arya had not told her that it was today.

The consecutive losses had made her sister slightly paranoid, and she often lost her temper when she felt like she had not everything under tight control, which Arya had trouble to understand, but she tried her best not to alarm her (well, most of the time. Sometimes it was just funny to see her freak out).

“Everything is fine, I'll be home in fifteen minutes, I'll tell you all about it.”

“Oh!”, she seemed to understand.

“You better!”, she squealed before hanging up.

The sky was starting to get darker. She thought about Berlin again on her way home. She did not know a single word of German. And she did not know much about the man she would be travelling with (despite her incomprehensibly increasing familiarity with him and the fact that he was a fucking tease who kissed girls on their fucking foreheads).

But that would be a most excellent way to get Jon off her mind for a bit, to reset the relationship and erase this sick attraction that had grown in her and made every single moment with him awkward and unnatural. Somehow when she was with mister H'ghar (maybe she could call him Jaqen by
now? Or maybe not…maybe she would wait for him to tell her if she could call him Jaqen. Or maybe could she come up with a nickname like he had with lovely girl. But what would suit him? Sexy man? German teaser? Forehead kisser? Ugh, she was distracted enough not to think about him, and that felt both deceiving and liberating.

The feeling of lips against lips had been still troubling her, even after a few days, and she had noticed herself avoiding the young man’s brown eyes and being more self-conscious about her lusting-phase. It was just a phase, she was sure of it. She knew that in a few months she’d feel totally differently about him, she’d be normal again and everything would be well.

Hopefully.

She forgot how to breathe when he rose his eyes from the newspaper, there, a few tables away~

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for keeping up so far!

Please, leave a comment ;)

Whith who would you like to see Arya end up with?
Heyyy

Yes, it's short. I know it's short. But size doesn't matter, right? :P

The tears would not stop running. When was the last time her eyes were not red and puffy? God—it was almost time for dinner, she could not allow them to see. She must stop. Now. Please, make it stop…

But the weight in her throat would not leave, and the memory was like a hard slap in her face again.

She's invited me to hunt, her family does it every year, they'll eat whatever we manage to catch, Jon had said, sparkly eyed.

Oh, and who is “she”? Sansa had asked joyfully, and Arya had begun to feel weird and distressed.

Ygritte, he had answered with a damn enamoured smile, and that had felt like the hardest punch in the guts.

She had left after that, caring to take one step after the other, and pretending that the whole world was not crumbling around her when Sansa asked who Ygritte was and he answered Hopefully my girlfriend if I catch something big enough to impress her.

She had been locked in her room for hours, pretending that she had homework to do. And that feeling was not even close to bearable yet. Why was she feeling like that? She never should have allowed herself to grow so obsessed. God, she had been so fucking stupid and pathetic.

And now she was doomed to spend the rest of her days hidden from the rest of the world. How could she explain the tears? She never cried! But somehow since Jon had come back in her life the tears ran from her eyes more easily than they ever did before.
She hated the whole world. Jon, that Ygritte girl, Sansa, everyone. But mostly herself.

This had to stop.

She dragged herself to the bathroom when she was sure she wouldn't cross paths with anyone, and looked at the mess her face was in the mirror. She splashed ice cold water on herself until her nose felt less stuck and her vision was less blurry. *God*—how pathetic she looked. What kind of bad sit-com had her life become? She felt like the worst shit on earth right now.

*Come on,* she encouraged herself to look decent, while looking at herself in the eyes in the mirror.

*Come on, everything will be fine.*

She wiped a towel on her face, sighed and tried to calm her shaky breath.

*Ygritte,* resonated in her thoughts again, and the weight in her throat came back a thousand times faster than she had managed to make it disappear.

She bit her lip and looked at herself.

*What the hell is this Ygritte like? What does she have that I do not? Maybe she's pretty and smart, but I'm—...I'm...*

*God, you're pathetic.*

*I'm his sister*

She sniffed, looked at herself again. She raised her chin.

*He's. Your. Brother.*
She would stop crying. She didn't want to hear her stupid sobs any more. She looked at her eyes. The green of her irises popped out because of the red around and the little veins. She looked until she felt the tears go away without shedding them.

Done.

It's over now.

She was tired. So freaking tired.

She wanted to sleep and think about nothing. Hide from the entire world for a week or so.

He's Jon.

He's your brother.

Brother, she repeated to herself until the thought was not strange any more.

Brother, she did it until the feeling of lips against lips faded away and she could only remember his warm smile. Maybe by doing so she'd trick herself into believing nothing ever happened. Because nothing ever happened.

It was a phase.

Just a stupid phase and now it's over.

She needed some time. She needed some time with herself.

Thank God it was Friday afternoon. There was no way she would have had the energy to go to class on the next day, and Sansa would have been mad if she would have skipped.

Oh fuck-
It was Friday afternoon.

That meant tomorrow was Saturday.

And Saturday rhymed with H'ghar day. She needed to give him an answer for the Berlin thing and she hadn't really thought about it.

She was certainly not in the mood to travel with anyone, and even less with that guy who speaks in riddles and kisses on foreheads. But right now she was not in the mood for taking any decision. She still needed some time.

Ah, the forehead thing. It still angered her. But she was fully drained of energy right now so she found no will to curse him again for the thousandth time.

But why had he kissed her on her forehead?

She sank to the ground, buried her face in her knees and felt the weight in her throat again.

Because no one liked her. She was either people's little sister or their little student.

But she was a woman to no one. She was just someone to mess around with and make fun of. To literally everyone.

The tears formed up again.

When would people finally take her seriously?

She quickly wiped the tears away and stood up. She took a deep breath. And she was suddenly mad. Very, very mad. At herself and at everyone else.

No one would take her seriously if she kept on whining about how people didn't take her seriously.
She needed to act.

Maybe she should tell the man off with his trip. Pretend that she had a real life or something.

She started striding back and forth in the small bathroom. She probably looked ridiculous, but there was no one to judge her.

*But wouldn't that be a great way to start again? Like, with everything? Start fresh?*

A trip could be a way to renew her thoughts.

But she didn't want to rely on H'ghar too much, and she certainly didn't want to please him by making him believe that she would follow him wherever he'd go. She was not like these other girls who worshipped him. She saw clear in his little game.

*Ugh*-she didn't know what to do.

Like, really, what should she do?

Should she take the Thanksgiving break for herself, stay at home and try to rebuild herself better? Or travel to get some fresh air, and come back as the real Arya, the one who had faded away bit by bit after Dad's death?

But at the same time… she really didn't know much about that guy. The google research had been very unfruitful (obviously, what was she expecting, a Wikipedia page about that H'ghar man maybe? Jaqen H'ghar, age: forty something, hair colour: maybe natural, known for: giving theatre courses, inventing smirking and kissing foreheads), and except for his name and the fact that he was enigmatic and older than her (she didn't even know how much older, and honestly she didn't want to because she knew that'd only make her feel weirder), she knew nothing about the man she would be travelling with.

She looked in the mirror again, at that pathetic and ugly face struggling again to figure it out.
She knew what to do.

She knew who to ask.

She splashed some water again on her face and checked if it was not too red and puffy.

It was close enough to normal. So she breathed in again and got out of her hiding place.

“San, that might be the strangest thing you ever heard from me, but I need a piece of advice.”

Wow, even in her mind it sounded strange.

That had never happened before. Arya even wondered if she had ever asked for any piece of advice in the past. Well, she had certainly never asked her sister.

Sansa dropped her phone theatrically, brought her hands together in prayer pose and put on a proud smile for effect.

“Finally, this day has come. Who’s the lucky one?”, she japed.

Arya rolled her eyes.

“Come forth, young one, your master shall answer your questions. What is it that you wish to know? I detain the knowledge-”

“Stop it! See, that’s why I never ask anything!”, Arya boiled up, her cheeks reddened from the anger and the awkwardness.

Sansa laughed again, and ended her show.
“Chill. What's the problem?”

Arya took a deep breath in before she began. Never, ever, did she think she would be the kind of girl to have a conversation about men with her sister.

“There is this someone I like.”, she started, lowering her gaze.

No-that was a terrible way to start it.

“Well- I don't really like him, not in that way, he… he doesn't like me, it's just, like, I like his company and we're… friends, it's not like I want something really serious, I don't really know if I'd like anything to happen but-”

“So you like him, and?”, Sansa went straight to the point, seeing that she was struggling. Arya inwardly thanked her for not making a big deal out of her confusion.

“And… I don't really know much about him, but, he has uhm-well- sort of… invited me to spend the holidays with him kinda… far away from here…”

“You fear he might be a psycho luring you to his torture tent or something?”

“No-”, a funny image flashed in her mind. H'ghar binding her to a chair in some weird hangar like in the horror movies, a wicked look on his face. Even then he'd be hot-

“I know he's not, and there will be other people around, it won't be a just the two of us kinda thing, it's just… I haven't known him for that long…”

“Could it be a certain theatre teacher who kisses foreheads?”, she asked in an annoying sing-song. Of course Arya had let slip out the fact that he had kissed her on her forehead, and of course Sansa had been unable to shut up about it since she was delighted to see how it annoyed her little sister.

“It might be.”, Arya willed herself to sound detached and bored. She did not want to get exited about that trip with him and start day-dreaming, because she knew she'd take a hard blow in the face when none of her stupid fantasies would come true.

It was not important anyway, she had just stated that she did not like him and that he did not like her. And as she said, he was a teacher. No one she could ever consider as an option. This trip was only a way to get some fresh air. Who accompanied her mattered very little, she tried to convince herself.
“And where could he potentially take you if it were him?”, she joyfully asked.

“Berlin.”

“Berlin?!”, she blurted.

“Like, Berlin…in Germany?!”

Arya nodded and looked away.

“Is it a scholar trip?”

“Sort of… he told me the club pays and that there would be other people, but from the theatre club it looks like it'll… only be me…”, now that sounded very weird but it did not alarm Sansa the slightest bit.

Mum or Dad would have never agreed to any of this. Spending four days away from home with a stranger (and a grown up man at that)? She could not have even considered it, even if it had been only a block away from the house, let alone another continent. She could almost hear her mother's admonishing voice, threatening to have this teacher fired for his inappropriate behaviour. Mum had always considered everything improper. She would have been suspicious about this man the second she would have known that he had given her a private course. So of course any chance of getting closer to him would have died a painful death before they would have even surfaced.

But Sansa seemed incredibly okay with the fact that he was much older than her and that he seemed (from her point of view at least) into her. Arya knew that it was illegal in all the ways possible, she was not eighteen yet and she was his student. And San was in no way the kind of girl to go against the rules. But she was so okay with it that Arya suspected her older sister might have slept with a teacher or two at some point in her life. When she thought back on it she did speak a lot about her Math teacher when she was still in college.

“So basically you're telling me you would spit on a free travel to Berlin if I told you to?”, she asked, falsely bedazzled and apparently very amused.

“Why did you hesitate in the first place?! God-just pack your bag already, what are you waiting for?”, she laughed.

“A man is taking you to Europe and you're pondering?!”
~The tears formed up again.~

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you think? What would you have done in Arya's place? Tell me in the comments! ;)

ALSO: Do you like shorter chapters more often or longer ones with a longer delay in between?
Next chapter is quite long and I'm hesitating whether I should break it in half or not. Tell me :)
Hi!

If you don't speak German, I would advise you do not translate the German bits for a
full "Arya-experience" ;)

If you do speak German, please excuse any mistakes, it's been a while since I haven't
practiced and my German is a bit rusty xD

In any case, I hope you enjoy <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The last week of November had come sooner than expected. Arya had struggled, but she had
managed to shut her mind and not spend her entire days imagining unrealistic plots of how this trip
would go. And Jon had barely been home reminding her that he had a girlfriend so she had kept the
break-downs to a minimal number. She was pretty proud of herself. *Expect nothing, we'll make it up
as we go*, she often repeated to herself not to get disappointed. What would there be to expect
anyway? She would just spend a few days in Germany, work with a troop, visit a bit, come back.
That's all. *Don't dream.*

Now they were waiting in the airport. He had briefly introduced her to his colleagues, an old man
with not much hair left on his scalp and a gentle smile, and two guys approximatively the same age
than him whose names she did not remember. The book club constituted of a middle aged woman
whose name was Lana and a few students Arya knew went to the same school that she did but to
whom she had never spoken to. But they had not stayed with the other group, apparently they were
not booking at the same place that mister H'ghar and her were and they had not had a single minute
to chat. That was perfect. Arya had been in no mood to chat. It was 4am and all she wanted to do
was curl up somewhere warm and go back to sleep. In his arms would be a most perfect spot. She
did not find the strength to admonish herself for that wish. Her eyes lingered on him by their own
will for long minutes, her mind made up scenarios of how and why he'd take her in his arms right
here right now and there was no one in her head to tell her that she was crazy. The reasonable Arya
was still asleep, and it was so appeasing.

She heard a woman's voice from a far saying that VIP's could start to get in the plane. She felt a light
tug on her sleeve, met his eyes seemingly amused to see her so tired. She kind of felt like a child in
this huge airport, trailing behind him.

“We're VIP's?”, she managed to ask in a voice rusty from sleep.
“A man and a girl are in business class.”

Oh

Nice, was all her mind managed to think.

Nice indeed. Once on the plane she toyed with her seat. The thing was electric and could move from sitting position to bed position. Marvellous. She had never been on business class before, so it was all exciting, and despite the tiredness she managed to explore every option offered to her. She went back to sitting position, a smile tugging at her lips. And she was next to him. Oh- how well it all started. She would not have liked being next to a stranger, somehow she felt reassured that he was near. Now the steward was done with his welcomings and his explanations and they were about to take off. She turned her sleepy eyes to him to ask him how it was that the theatre club had such opportunities, but her eyes locked on a strange glimpse in his bronze irises.

He stared at her, and there was something in his gaze that seemed almost… nervous. What was wrong with him? The golden tone of his skin was suddenly paler than usual. There was something odd in his face too, Arya was not able to pinpoint what exactly, his eyes were the same and the smirk was still there, but she sensed it. Was he afraid of the plane? Or was he regretting his decision to take her with him?

“Are you alright?”, she asked, and she suddenly felt the urge to take his hand in hers but she brushed it away, thinking that it would be stupid and awkward.

“Yes.”, he purred, back to his normal, arrogant state. Maybe he was just tired too.

“Waldorf Astoria Hotel, bitte.”, he spoke in German.

The ride to the hotel was quite short, and Arya noticed she couldn't understand a single word that the stereo outed. It all sounded like a harsh and low grumble to her ears. She watched the empty streets pass. It was 6am, people were only waking up. The hotel was huge. After letting him check in they rode the elevator to the seventh floor. He gave her the key-card to unlock her room and left her, telling her she should be ready for 8am to attend the first general repetition.

“Oh wow…”
That was the biggest hotel room she had ever been in. It looked even bigger than their living room in the LA flat. She felt dizzy from the nine hours long flight, but she needed to explore first before throwing herself on that King size bed. What an incredible view! From there it looked like Berlin was spread and alive underneath her. The streets were still lit up, and the sky of rose and gold and rich orange looked like it was taken right out of an Instagram picture. She inspected the mini bar, the flat screen of the TV, there was even a coffee machine! She looked in all the drawers, the huge commode, the dresser, who ever needed this much space?

Alright, that had been enough exploration. She jumped on the huge bed and hugged one of the many fluffy pillows tight. She still felt tired despite the amazing plane ride, she felt that her eyelids were heavier and she was colder than usual.

A shower would be nice to freshen up. She kicked her boots away and lifted her little suitcase on the tremendously large bed. By the way it sank in the mattress, she figured she would probably have the best nights of sleep in her entire life here. Like, really, this hotel was the most luxurious she ever set foot in. How did the school have enough money to afford this when their theatre classroom was some dusty old basement room with scruffy curtains and wobbly chairs?

She made a quick tour of her suite again (a suite!), unfolded the robe laying on the bed, which was enormous compared to her small frame but Arya was used to that, and headed towards the bathroom. And Oh- a shower in this will be so nice. It was an Italian shower, and it had freaking jets. Arya had never tried that before, but damn, she was definitely settled on spending the next hour toying with it. She looked at her phone. 6:32am. Great. She had an hour and a half before meeting again with Mr. H'ghar.

She unpacked her bag and took out her beauty pouch (well, the term 'beauty pouch' was a bit exaggerated, it only contained her toothbrush, a chap-stick and a tube of mascara she had had for an eternity). But when she was ready to step in he huge bathroom something shiny caught her attention. She lifted her not so neatly folded sweat-shirt from the suitcase and took a look at the small silver squares that she did not remember placing there. Was it… foil? And something was inside, at first she thought about some of San's weird beauty products, like some kind of travel make up remover or something. She took one out. She was quite tired, that's why it took her three long seconds to realize that these were-

“Oh God Sansa!”

*Condoms?! Really?!*

*Stupid Sansa!,* she kept cursing in her head during her long shower.
“Wer ist das?”, a woman with short, blonde hair asked with a cold look on her face. According to the
din of the question, she must have asked who she was, and according to the disdainful tone, she must
have not been very pleased to see her. So Arya decided that she did not like that chick. Her severe
gaze on her indicated that the hate was already mutual.

“I'm Arya.”, she only got a more disdainful look in exchange.

She breathed in and suddenly felt like a stranger whose place was not here. But Mr. H'ghar's smile
reassured her, and she raised her chin to look more self-assured.

“Meine Studentin. Ich dachte sie könnte ein Ding oder zwei von der Trupp lernen.”, he smirked, and
that seemed to infuriate the woman. She angrily took his sleeve between two fingers and her eyes
were like daggers she was throwing at him, but it did not look like he felt threatened the slightest bit.

“Dies ist keine Platz für deine Spielsachen.”, she began spitting at him, and Arya cursed in her head.
Damn it-why did she study French in elementary school?! She could not understand a single word!
And she cursed again, feeling her cheeks blush. Were they beginning to fight? Oh God no please,
y they had only arrived, she did not want to look for a place to hide right away. Why must she always
find herself in such embarrassing situations? And what could she do? She did not know a word of
German, and she was there between these two like a mouse between a cat's fight. She stared
awkwardly at the floor while the woman's voice kept raising in this passive-aggressive tone that
quickly became fully aggressive, wondering what else she could do and desperately trying to figure
out what she was saying.

“Hast du unseres Ziel vergessen? Ich habe was anders zu tun als von deinen kleinen Schlampen
geärgert zu werden-”

“Genug.”, he outed, voice stern and cold. The woman stopped, Arya felt a shiver run down her at
how thrilling he sounded. That might have meant stop it or shut up. And this was maybe the first
time she saw him angry, yet she could not understand why. And it was a strange anger, cold and
controlled. Had she insulted him? Why did the woman sound so exasperated? Was she not supposed
to be here?

“Ach du-”, her eyes lingered on Arya and travelled from head to foot as if examining her, and that
made her very uncomfortable.

“Wie alt ist sie, zwölf?!”
She shot him a stare full of both mockery and fury and her little eyes narrowed.

“Hier in Deutschland gibts auch kleine Mädchen, weisst du? Du brauchtest nicht dein eigenes mitzubringen.”

He raised a brow at her, half annoyed and half stunned. “Neidisch?”

Now it looked as if he had insulted her.

The conversation evolved into what looked like a lover's riot and if Arya had bent her head any lower she might have sunk into the ground. She fought the urge to shout that she was still here for she kind of dreaded their reaction if she intervened. And moreover she did not know who that woman was. *Fuck*- could she be, like, his wife or something, admonishing him because she thought she was his mistress? No, no that could not be. *I look nothing like a woman someone would take as a mistress, I look like a lost child.*

*Damn it*- it had been a bad idea, all of it, she suddenly started to regret. Why the hell did she accept to come here with him? It was the other end of the world, she could not escape because she would not know where to go, and he was practically a stranger.

And…could that angry woman be his girlfriend? Or someone important to him? According to the way they fought right now it did not look like they were getting along wonderfully well these days but it definitely seemed like they knew each other better than she knew him.

“She ist ein Manns Studentin. Der Rest ist keine deiner Sorgen.”, he ended it, and his voice remained calm despite the woman's provocations (or supposed provocations, according to the tone of her voice, Arya did not understand a single word of it). However it was enough for her to shut up and walk away angrily.

“A man apologizes.”, he bowed his head slightly when she was gone, turning his attention back over to her.

“What was that about?”

He sighed.
“A friend does not like newcomers.”

He sounded honest, but Arya ticked at the word *Friend*. Was she *just* a friend? She was definitely pretty, so it would have been no surprise if- God, why did she wonder about that right now?! She could be anyone to him, she didn’t care! Or at least that was what she repeated in her mind to try to convince herself. Why should she care anyway? He was *just* her teacher and they were just on *some kind* of scholar trip.

It turned out she did not get a single peek at the play from the backstage. She could only hear voices from time to time, but mostly she spent the morning being pushed out of the way by light engineers or curtain-guys or whoever looked like they had something much more important to do than she did.

The repetition had been long and boring, she ate a sandwich for noon and on the afternoon the play had been long and boring, and in-between she had not been able to escape this place and this damn woman with her freaking murderous gaze. Like, truly, what did that chick have against her? She was a lost little girl far from home hiding in her teacher's shadow in there, about what could she hold a grudge against her?

*Anyway.* He had told her that this would be a long day, she had been somewhat prepared not to feel in the best shape. But she was glad. She looked at the clock. 6:57pm. The second part of play would be almost over. That meant typical German dish on the way back to the hotel and then testing out this King sized bed and spend a wonderful night not thinking about this woman until the next day. Ugh-luckily the plays were only on the evenings and there would be no more long repetitions like the previous one, that meant she would not see her that often.

She heard the claps, and twenty minutes later the director's voice, probably calling for the end. Arya had not fully understood, but in between his scenes Mr. H'ghar had explained her that the play was about some mystery game where a woman had to solve an enigma, and he held the role of some guard supposed to kill whoever the protagonist (who was played by that annoying blonde) asked for him to kill in order to solve the mystery.

But *Thank God*, the day was over.

“How about 10?” he asked, looking at his almost empty plate. The restaurant was not very crowded and casual-ish, just like she liked them.

*Oh, perfect.*
If they met at ten in the morning downstairs that meant she could wake up at 9:30. Even 9:45 if she hurried in the shower. They would visit Berlin a bit after that, he promised her he'd show her a new building everyday during their short week, starting with the Olympiastadion and then the Wall. On the afternoon he said they had to help with the organization of the play, and that she would have to assist to a lesson or two that he gave here. She would agree to anything if that meant staying away from the angry woman until the evening. Ah- a pretty sweet week was shaping itself.

“This way a man can repay you a bit for all these Saturday mornings he did not let you sleep in.”, he added with a smirk.

“How do you know I usually sleep in?”, she asked, frowning but amused, taking a sip at her soda can.

“A girl does grimace not so discretely when she is unhappy.”, he mocked her.

“What? No I don't!”

He kept grinning at the sight of her and she realized she was doing it right now. She groaned and concentrated on her meal. Why was all the fuss about these curry sausages? They really didn't have anything that amazing to them. Anyway. She'd try something else tomorrow. He had promised he'd take her in a different restaurant too every evening.

That would really be a cool vacation.

Everyday went the same for five days straight. Meeting up at ten in the morning, visiting something, eating a sandwich for lunch while heading to the theatre school, rehearsing for the show and then performing on the evening. The angry woman grew colder and more distant every day but Arya paid her no attention. She had better to do than to worry about her. And she didn't seem to care about her, she never bothered her, so Arya didn't bother her either even though her tongue burned to ask her what her problem was.

She learned a little bit more about him. Well, she made observations. He was not fond of chatting about stupid stuff like the weather or sports. Their conversations were often centred around her childhood, or theatre and it's psychological aspect. One evening they even had a very interesting debate about self-discipline. That was the moment she learnt the most about him. He never revealed
anything about his past, she knew nothing about his life here in Germany nor the school he went to as a child or if he was close with his family, but she had understood that he was very hard on himself, that the self-assured attitude was sometimes a result of his urge to control (kind of like Sansa, but not exactly) and, she had not fully understood it yet, but she knew he had a very deep and psychological understanding of life.

He was like a riddle. During each conversation she felt like she was solving the mystery, only to realize minutes later that there was a whole other level of personality that she didn't know about him.

All of that had only made him more dangerously interesting for a teacher with whom she was supposed to keep a rather detached relationship. But she had ignored the little voice in her head whispering that she was learning too much.

She was on holidays after all, and, unlike him, she was not that strict with herself. She did not always listen to the reasonable voice.

And eventually, the last evening came.

A knock on the door.

“Oh, uh-I'm not ready yet, didn't you say-”

“The play was annulled, lovely girl.”

A strange look was on his face. Again, she couldn't place what exactly was stranger than usual, but she knew there was something. That afternoon had not went like the other ones. On that day, after his lesson, instead of going to the rehearsal he had said they had to head back to the hotel to deal with a few matters before the show. Arya had figured he wanted to check out and deal with organization and everything instead of doing it in a rush when the play was over, for their plane left tonight right after the end of the show. But he had been a little weirder than usual. Maybe he was tired, she had thought. He had been performing for six nights straight, surely that was a bit exhausting.

“The director of the theatre was caught in a car accident.”, he said calmly but sadly.
Arya knew the woman… what was her name again?

“Mrs. Crane? Is she alright?”, she asked. The woman had talked to her once, she had been kind and caring, asking her if she enjoyed Berlin and the play and if she had everything she needed. She had even complimented her eyebrows or something.

“It does not look good, a man is afraid.”

“Oh…”, was all she responded. Well, she was a little sad for her, she did not know her at all but she seemed nice.

“A man thought he and a girl could go out for a drink instead, while they wait for their flight.”

“Oh-”, he had a certain talent to drift from one subject to another.

“Y-yeah, okay, I'll finish packing my things.”, she answered with a quick smile.

He nodded and she closed the door.

Well, that was a little strange.

But she brushed the weird feeling away. She did not know this woman at all after all, and it did not look like he was super moved by her accident, so maybe he didn't know her much either. And she was going out for a drink with him and then they'd fly home, that meant she'd never see the blonde woman again. And that was definitely a relieve.
“Die Brandenburger Tor.”, he said.

“The West and the East would communicate only through this gate when the wall still stood.”, he added.

It was quite an impressive thing. The way it was lighted up made it look even more massive and heavy. The plaza splayed flat underneath to let it rise higher, and the four green copper horses drawing the carriage on top looked like they were about to take off and reach for the sky to race against the clouds and riot against the stars.

It was not as brisk as she would have expected for the beginning of a European winter. The plaza was huge and almost empty, and the open sky above their heads was so dark it felt like it could swallow the whole city if she stared into it for too long.

“So, is a girl satisfied with her trip?”

“Well, I feel like I've learned more about curtains and lights than I have about acting, but it surely was nice.”

He laughed.

_Damn it-it felt strange in her stomach yet she loved it when she managed to amuse him. She could not help but smile back like a fool._
Somehow this trip had helped her take Jon off her mind, and it felt like freedom. Her plan had worked.

She looked at him and his golden eyes were on her.

_No_, she thought.

_He_ had helped her take Jon off her mind.

_All of this might have been a good idea in the end_, Arya thought, suddenly thankful. It had been lovely indeed, despite the rough start and the few awkward moments, in general she had had a very good time. She found herself regretting weirdly that it was over already. She wished she could spend more time in this city with him, visit it properly, let him guide her through the small alleys and tell her about the history behind them.

“So, it turns out the teacher who comes in late to his own class cares a bit about his students’ education anyway in the end.”, she said and he chuckled again, and the thrill in her stomach rose. Maybe that orange punch drink would give her the courage to flirt with him. She remembered how she had pondered for hours in LA whether she should or not flirt with him. Where would it lead anyway? She did not know, she did not want to know, but she wanted to try anyway. She considered the fact that it might ruin everything, but she figured she’d try her best to keep it subtle so she could always back away if things started to get awkward. Yes, that was a good strategy.

“Ah, but only about the students who desperately try to catch his attention by bumping into him.”, he smirked.

_Of course_, he had to be a brat and ruin her plans.

“That's not what I did! I'm not one of them!”, she defended herself.

“They? And who is _them_?”, he mocked her, and she hated him again, because she knew that he knew perfectly who she was talking about yet he wanted her to say it to make her sound even more ridiculous than she already was.

She clenched her teeth and let out a sharp sigh to clearly show her annoyance.
“These girls who keep on screaming for your attention during class.”, she tried to say that angrily but only sounded like the confused little girl that she was.

“A man has noticed no one doing that…”, his fake tone made her want to slap him and walk away. Or push him against the wall and smash her lips against his to make him shut up. Damn it.

“Only one most lovely girl who he keeps on noticing because she stares at him when she thinks a teacher is not looking, and then sneaks out before the end of the class because she's above salutations.”

She lost her angry expression for a fraction of a second. *He caught me staring too-*

“That's not what I do！”, she hissed.

Damn it- he caught me staring too?!

“A man has tricked you once yet you have not stopped doing it. If that's not begging for even more attention-”

“You're unbelievable！”, she boiled up.

“Then what is a girl doing？”, his arrogance was like a spark dancing near the dynamite in her, threatening to make her explode.

“I…”, she blushed, suddenly feeling beyond stupid. Quick, what could she tell him? God, why can she never think about a good lie when she needs one the most?!

“I hate these girls who always ask stupid questions, so I leave before I hear them.”, that was only half of the truth. Hopefully he'd believe her enough.

“Hate them? Why？”, he continued, and her nerves were flaring, her cheeks aflame.

How was she supposed to say this? That she hated it when other girls spoke to him? Pathetic. And was he not done with his game already?! Did he not feel triumphing enough?! What was he trying to extirpate from her?
“Because-”, she got lost in his eyes and her thoughts blurred. What the hell was she supposed to say?! “They're annoying and I… I mean, I am-”

“Neidisch?”, his demonic grin made her frown.

“What?” What the hell did that mean? Was it an insult?! He leaned over, close, until she was against the wall under the Brandenburger Tor and she felt her cheeks burn from his warmth before he whispered next to her ear.

“Jealous?”

“No!”, she hissed out of breath. Why couldn't she breathe suddenly? Was he doing that to her?

“I'm- No!- I'm… I'm…”, What the hell did she want to say?! Say something!

“I'm… I meant-I'm…”, she looked away unable to hold his stare for one more second. Shit, why did he love to embarrass her so?!

“I'm not jealous!”, was all she managed to mumble, scoffing nervously, and she hated herself for how unsure she sounded. Because yes, even if she refused to admit it even in her mind, she was definitely jealous.

He said nothing, and she brought her eyes back to him to see if he bought the lie.

Shit

He did not. Not the slightest bit. He bought not a single word of it. How the hell did he manage to read right through her?! He now gawked at her like the devil himself probably gawked at his victims while torturing them in Hell.

He was winning over. She hated that. He was making fun of her again. She wanted to punch him and scratch his face and feel his blood underneath her short nails and oh-why did she tremble so
inside when he made that *Hmm* sound?

“You're infuriating, you know that?!”, she frowned while looking at him but she only felt like a puppet amusing him. And *shit*-he was pulling the strings, she realized. He had reached his goal by making her boil up. Or else why would he look so damn delighted?

He put a fake, hurt expression on his stupid, sexy face, and her eyes could not help but wander back and forth between his gleaming irises and this lower plump lip that she had thought of tasting so many times before like it were a tempting piece of fudgy brownie just there begging to be eaten. And his eyes had been the barrier, his arrogant, stupid eyes, daring her to eat the piece of mouth-watering brownie and deal with whatever consequences they had planned for her.

She bit her lip, felt her cheeks redden as the lust spread in her. Oh God he was so much older than her. And he was her teacher. This was so wrong. So, so wrong. So why the hell was it arousing her more?

“A girl could pick up a fight with such mean words…”, he said, taking another step towards her, until she had to raise her chin and look up to him. She would hate looking up to anyone else, whoever they may be, but with him, she only felt safe.

“A girl has more courage than sense.”, his hands were in his pockets, he was so relaxed and she was going so crazy.

“What if someone decided to pick up your fights? What could a girl do?”

“You think I'm too small to defend myself?”, she was almost insulted. True, that her 5 feet 1 were not very impressive, but she had quite the reputation of being the ruthless warrior in elementary school.

He raised a brow that meant *Absolutely*.

“You shouldn't underestimate small people.”

“Believe this man, lovely girl, he doesn't. Only you don't seem to be on top of my list of threats.”

“You're just so full of yourself!”

“Is that so?”, he raised both his brows, and his slyness made the anger spark.
“Yes! You're arrogant, and infuriating and-”, her eyes drafted back to his lower, damnably kissable lip. Help me…

“And sly and above everyone you make fun of and-” God, these lips!

What was she saying again?

Ah, yes. She was mumbling and spitting out nonsense as a shield to try to show him how much she hated him but she sounded ridiculous and she hated herself and she hated that he did not seem to listen to a single word she was blurring out.

And these lips! She could be kissing them instead of trying and failing at explaining him how she despised him to try to shield herself from her own lust.

“And- arrogant…”

Yes, she actually could be kissing them.

Wait- no no. What if she got fired from another class? What if he told everyone about it? What if she became that chick who screws her teachers to get good marks? What if-Enough.

It was time for her to pull the reins.

“Could that be that a lovely girl only wants to-”

She tip-toed and crashed her lips against his.

And all the-Oh my God I'm kissing Jaqen H'ghar

And this was the most unexpectedly, amazingly odd feeling she had ever experienced.

God, I'm kissing him, I'm kissing him, I'm kissing him and it feels so fucking good and so fucking wrong at the same time and what the hell am I doing is this even right-
She had no idea if she was doing it right but it felt too freaking good to wonder if there was any other way to do it. Lips against lips were quite a feeling. It made her stomach tingle, her whole body seemed to be into it and she was unable to think about anything else than these soft and warm lips against her, moving against them, the heat of his body and his scent of spices. She felt his hands on her waist, push her lightly until she was pinned against the wall and she was devouring him gently.

She felt him sigh against her, the warm wind of softly caressing her face, and she could not think about anything else than the turmoil in her head. She was kissing him! That darn, sly, mysterious man was pressed against her under the Gate of Brandenburg and her lips were on that face she had day-dreamed about tasting so many times and oh, how would she ever be able to survive so many emotions rushing in her all at once? His lips were soft and knowing, so fucking perfect against hers… He was leading the pace, she could not believe the situation, it felt unreal and so freaking amazing, she shut the turmoil and wanted to enjoy it as much as she could.

"God-she wished it had never stopped."}

When their lips unlocked she was almost out of breath, her heart racing and her mind more confused than ever. God-fucking-sweet-hell what the heck is supposed to happen now he's a damn forty years-old teacher-

But Fuck- this had felt so good, so different than she had imagined, so much better, she could still feel her heart pound in her chest and the air lack in her lungs as if she had run a marathon and she was craving so much more. She was a bit dizzy, the odd and amazing feeling still on her lips, and she nervously chipped the soft skin around her nails to busy her fingers because she dreaded that he might treat her of crazy. Her eyes travelled everywhere but to his for the few seconds that followed, and the voice kept cursing in her head. What the hell did I do everything was perfectly fine and then-Oh shit, I took my life for a movie for half a second and I ruined everything again-

Oh fuck and now he was not saying anything, she dreaded to bring up her eyes to his and meet with an admonishing gaze or a disgusted stare or something even worse.

But she eventually did, with the fear holding a strong hold of her guts, she moved her eyes back slowly to his face and she felt her cheeks burn. Oh God this is going to be so awkw-

The bastard looked delighted. The sly smile was still plastered on his face and he looked like he had just won the freaking lottery.

“So, it turns out a girl who has a full list of her teacher's faults cares a bit about him in the end.”
She sighed and could not help the fool’s smile from tugging at her lips.

He threw a very quick look at his watch with the usual satisfied smirk on these lips that she was craving to taste again, and said they should head back to the hotel to get their luggage before leaving for the airport. She nodded meekly and her cheeks reddened. For a fraction of a second she thought about these condoms in her luggage. Would that be too rushed? Maybe… but damn it, she wanted it. Maybe that would make her a loose girl, maybe it wouldn’t lead anywhere, but the thought lingered in her mind. Would she do it? It would be her first time… was she ready, to show her body, to give it to him, to do… all these things? She felt a pull in her lower stomach, her skin call for skin.

Oh, God

She wanted to.

“Like, I don't even know if I want to go to college. Maybe.”, she answered to another of his questions on the way back to the hotel. The conversation went quite fluently, considering what had happened only minutes before. Arya would have expected everything to shift and become weird and awkward but it was all strangely natural. He was asking questions, as always, and in her mind the mental debate whether she was ready to do it or not and whether this was truly happening or if she was just over-interpreting everything went on like an infernal background music.

But he abruptly stopped walking.

He stared. Had she said something wrong?

“How old is a girl?”

Oh

“I-uh…I'll turn eighteen next month.”, she answered.

Would that be a problem? Like, apart from the fact that he was her teacher, this was almost legal. She
was one year older than regular twelfth graders for she had had to retake the eleventh grade because she had missed out too much after Dad's death. And it was not like he had abused her or something, she had been the one to initiate.

“A girl is a student in the High School over the street.”

That wasn't a question. Did he expect an answer? Or was he just making a statement for himself?

“Y-yeah?”

The bedazzled look on his face almost amused her. Almost. What, she didn't look young enough for him to guess her age? It wasn't like she looked ten years older in any way, she looked about thirteen when she had no make up on.

“Why? How old are you?”

She didn't actually care about his age. But… they had just kissed in the middle of the street, why would he care about their age difference now?

“A man is older.”, he said, and he looked slightly…she didn't actually know how he looked, his expressions were always hard to name exactly. Maybe disappointed was the right word?

“Much older.”

Again, he never answered questions directly. But she didn't care about his age so she did not get mad when he gave her no exact number. He was forty something, and that was precise enough for her.

He looked at his watch, as if nothing had happened. He had a certain talent for skipping from one situation to the other as if the previous one never existed.

“We still have some time before the plane takes off. A girl should finish packing and meet a man downstairs in an hour with her luggage.”

He smiled before walking away and leaving her in front of her hotel-room door a bit confused, alone,
and… frustrated?

Well… ok

But, like…

Seriously?

~She tip-toed and crashed her lips against his~

Chapter End Notes

Hi again!
Please, leave a comment if you enjoyed ;) Tell me how you think these two's relationship will evolve... do you think they will act on what happened?

Thanks for your support!
Hi there! It's been a little while, but I'm still here!
This chapter is introducing new PoVs, I hope you'll enjoy! :)
Also, this chap is exactly 6,500 words, how cool is that? xD

He hit the punching bag. His muscles were sore and his fists hurt but this was the only way to get the stress out.

Well, maybe there would be one other way. Her private lesson started in half an hour. Maybe this time he should pin her against the wall for real and- *She's seventeen you old pervert*

*S hit*

He had known this, he had known before taking her to Berlin. He knew she was young and didn't have a ton of experiences in relationships. He had noticed it by the way she was not at ease when she came to the small Café, to what resembled a lot like a forced date, by the way she looked like she didn't know what to do most of the time, because it was true, she probably had no idea what to do because this was the first time she was ever confronted to a situation involving a grown-up man. But he had chosen to ignore the fact that she was *that* young and still decided to get to know her a little better.

And oh, Berlin.

What a stupid move.

He knew deep inside he should have let go of her the second his eyes met hers.

But no, he was Jaqen H'ghar, and he enjoyed challenges. A lonely girl who looks lovely but doesn't know it? Challenge accepted.
And now there he was. Lost. Frustrated. And kind of disgusted with himself to be quite honest.

Seventeen was... young.

And above all, it was all his fault. It wasn't like she had been the one playing with fire. He was entirely to blame.

He could not help but want to see more and more of her, ask her to come at his courses, literally trick her into spending time with him only, without the other students around to have her all to himself, and then take her on that stupid trip because he just wanted to see more and more of her...

He really should not have brought her on that trip. When they were on the plane he had cursed many, many times in his head, only realizing then what danger he had made her take without her even knowing on what kind of expedition this really was.

He had promised himself not to go any further, to kill the seeds of desire that had grown in him, for their own good.

But then she had kissed him and for some reason he had been unable to stop her. He knew she had wanted to for a long time, by the way she always bit her lip in front of him, by the way she squeezed her knees together, by the way her cheeks reddened, God just so many signs...

His training had sharpened his sight to the point where he could almost always expect every move from everyone. But her, oh, how his calculations were all wrong about her. He thought she wouldn't have the guts to make the first move and kiss him. He had not even taken this possibility into consideration. But she did it, she smashed her lips against his there, in the middle of a busy street, and completely out of the blue at that. This girl was surprise after surprise. And it was only entertaining him more.

After that surprise kiss (but not so surprising in the end, because let's be honest, he had consciously teased her to test her limits. He quite enjoyed the sight of her fuming and burning inside. He had just been taken a little bit aback when faced with the realization that she did act more on instinct than he had thought) he had planned to enjoy the few hours left before their flight in his hotel-room making her scream his name.

And then suddenly she was seventeen.
Oh

This is illegal, he had thought for an instant.

Like I care, his mind had answered when another image of her panting and moaning underneath him had flashed in his mind.

But then another problem had surfaced.

God, what if she were a virgin?

Fuck

That had tasted rather bitter.

He could not do a virgin. Virgins were against his personal code. He could not mean this much to someone, he could not allow this image of him to stay in her mind forever associated with her first time, it would be selfish and cruel. She deserved better for her first time, someone worthy of her, a real person. He must be no one to her, just like he's always been to everyone he was with before he vanished from their lives.

But what if she were not a virgin?, the hopeful man in him asked.

What if she would surprise him on that point too, and just show up at his theatre course someday hornier than ever and trap him in a dusty old room and ride him hard until-

Oh God of course she was a virgin, it would be no fun to watch for anyone who decided their fates if they didn't see him struggle to keep his eyes and his hands off her.

Thank God-she had decided to not appear in his hotel room that night after the kiss, because there would have been no way she would've remained a virgin had she decided to knock on his door with that adorable face he so wished to see flushed and distorted with pleasure. He was not even sure if he would have been able to hold it back and not make it as rough as he usually liked it had she asked him to be gentle for her first time. Not with that broken voice of hers encouraging him, and definitely not with the roller coaster of emotions she had made him experience. No one made him experience emotion roller coasters, not without consequences. Oh- and the lovely consequences he had prepared
for her rhymed with sweat and squeals and lots and lots of rusty *Oh Jaqen.*

But he doubted that she'd like it gentle anyway. No, she did enjoy games, and it would be quite entertaining to see her quickly boil up for he was a great fan of teasing and she looked like-*She's a virgin you fool*

*She probably doesn't even know herself if she likes it rough or gentle.*

*And a man shall never know if she likes it rough or gentle*

Oh, he knew this would not be the only time he would be tempted. There were many other jaw-tightening and take-a-deep-breath-in-situations to come.

This would be pure torture.

He was so fucking screwed.

He punched the punching-bag some more.

No—this could not continue, he must stop all of this madness, it had gone too far already. When she would come, he would address her to one of his colleagues so she can still go to the theatre courses, and explain her that they can't continue whatever it is that they've started. For almost half an hour long he thought about how he would say it so that he would spare himself the disappointed look in her eyes. He was not sure if he could bear that look. No, there was no way he could watch her lovely face break down without feeling the urge to run his fingers or his lips on it, he thought again under the shower.

But he must stop all of this before anything bad happens, he reflected before making his way to that old building.

Fuck, why was everything so suddenly complicated? He had never asked himself so many questions.

The building was empty and cold, and he tried to compose himself while arranging the chairs. How could he say it? And when?
Before the lesson starts. He would not find the courage to do it later, he knew it. And maybe he could tease her first and annoy her. He could pretend that it was all a game, that none of it was serious, and that would only be half of a lie.

What would she expect from a relationship with a man so much older than her anyway? Yes, surely it was not serious for her either. That made it easier. So he’d tease her and annoy her until she’d boil up, and then say that everything is a game and that he never stops playing. But wouldn’t she take him for a madman after that? No, hat wouldn't work, he wanted to stay…“clean” in her mind.

Maybe he should just say that this is against every rule, and then pray for her to believe that he was the kind of man who cared about the rules that make no sense.

No. That would not work. He cared too little about rules, she knew it, and she seemed to share his point of view about them. Worse, she looked like she enjoyed breaking them.

Maybe he should just say that a relationship would not lead anywhere-

“Uhm, hello… Mr H'ghar.”, her raspy voice interrupted his aching flow of thoughts, and his eyes met the light grey and green in hers.

What was he saying again?

Damn it-he so wanted to feel these lips against his own again.

“Call this man Jaqen, lovely girl.”

This might be much more difficult than he anticipated.

She looked at the clock again.
Damn it, it had only been five minutes since the last time she checked. God, why did the lesson seem this long? Usually she loved to sit here and listen to whatever he had to say about characterisation or the fluidity of scenes, but since he gave her her first private course the general courses had only seemed longer and longer.

Uh- couldn’t they just all leave already? Didn't they have something more important to do than watching him read his notes? She was sure most of them didn't even understand what he was talking about.

She sighed and sat back in her chair. She knew he would catch her, she had gotten used to the fact that he somehow saw everything, but whatever.

“-and, just like we can observe in many works by great writers, the spectator always memorizes one sentence that was said in the play, which has a symbolical and a psychological meaning that we understand later on, the most popular example being To be or not to be in the historical play Hamlet. But we can also notice—”

Goooooooooooooodddd...”

If only they were alone and she could munch on those lips to make him shut up…

But she thought back on that private lesson, just a few moments earlier. She had come with a bit of apprehension. Like, what was supposed to happen now? When she had entered the room and seen him from a far, toying with his papers and looking like he had much more important stuff to do than worry about her, she had even considered for a brief instant running away and never coming back. What would happen? He had not been overly demonstrative on the way back from Berlin, and he had wasted no time chatting when he drove her back home from the airport. But he had never seemed fond of useless chat and she had not known if his silence should alarm her. And the hotel episode? Please, that had looked like a bad joke. But what the hell was she supposed to think now?

Over the week-end the memory had lingered in her mind, spinning and aching and frustrating her. He left her in front of the hotel room. Alone. Confused. Horny. Surely she wouldn't forget about it for the next ten years. It didn't feel exactly like rejection but that awkward sensation was probably somewhere on that spectrum.

And why was he never clear with his words? Or his actions?! She had no clue about what it all represented to him! What if that kiss had been a mistake to him? What if he considered it a mere slip, something they’d never talk about again when it had cost her all of her courage? Did that mean they were supposed to simply ignore each other now? She knew he was a teacher, a forty year old man,
but… that didn't mean that they had to stop everything because of this little detail, right? And, did he still considered her just his student, or had the recent events made her earn… a little more important title to him? Like, she knew she couldn't be his girlfriend, he was a forty year old man and she was seventeen, but… the trip and everything, that made them at least friends, right?

*Oh God why is it so complicated*

She didn't know.

She didn't know and that frustrated her.

Somewhere in her mind a little voice whispered that she shouldn't care about it so much, that she should act the same way as him, pretend that nothing happened for now and that she knows how to handle such a situation. She should pretend that he was not the first guy to ever show this much interest in her, and, the most important of all, pretend that she was not going crazy about all of it. Like, really, she didn't want to be this annoying girl harassing him because of a mere kiss.

But at the same time…she was starving to wolf these lips down again. What would happen? She wanted to surprise him again and see the look in his eyes when he's startled. That look was so priceless. The mere thought of it made her grin like an idiot.

She caught his stare on her. He was smirking, as always, his eyes filled with that wicked gleam that looked like he knew exactly what she was thinking about and she felt her cheeks blush. She sank in her seat and tried to casually hide her stupid smile.

“The lesson is over for today, we will work on acting next week.,” he announced, and the rumble filled the classroom but his stare glued her to the wooden chair.

The same girls as usual went to ask their questions but during all that time Arya didn't move. Even when they went away and all granted her the *what-the-fuck-look*, she felt very much like she was putting herself on display but didn't move from an inch, very aware that she was the last one in class with their sexy teacher and what that looked like.

“A girl doesn't seem as eager to retrieve her beloved sister as she usually does.”, he said, walking towards her, when they were finally all gone.
“A girl wanted to talk to you.”

“A girl had a private lesson and yet she demands more. A teacher feels flattered.”, the sparkle in his eyes and the grin on his lips made her grow more confident.

She finally stood up, put her backpack on her shoulder. He was tall and she was very short. Even when she stood she had to raise her chin to look at him in the eyes.

The private lesson had been very professional, she had forced herself to cool her mind down, and he had a certain talent to set the mood. Somehow he was not the same person when he was in teacher mode than when he was in teaser mode. And that had helped a lot. Teacher H'ghar was very serious and calm.

But now she was facing infuriating and kissable and infuriatingly kissable-Jaqen, and she couldn't help but feel her heart race. He was like… magnetizing her. That kiss had haunted her day and night for over a week now, how could she stand standing so close to him and prevent herself from smashing her face against his?

“I-”, damn it, stop staring at me like that.

Great, now I don't remember what I spent the last hour putting together in my mind!

Oh fuck, just go for it-

“I don't want to be this girl who makes a bit deal about stuff and everything, but uhm… about… what happened in Germany-”

“Yes, a man also wanted to talk about that.”, he interrupted her, and she was a little surprised. This was the first time he interrupted her while she was speaking. He sat and waved at a chair for her to do the same and she thought her heart was about to stop beating. Damn it this is getting so serious, that was like exactly what was not supposed to happen when I made it all up in my head-

“A man wanted to apologize.”

What?
He took a breath in and her mind was blank. *Apologize? Why would he apologize? Is he dumping me when we're not even together?*

“Giving the situation, a man and a girl should leave to the past what happened on the other side of the sea.”

*What?*

Had his blue eyes ever looked so strange? Damn it! Why was she staring into his eyes when he was talking so seriously-

“A man thought about putting another person in charge of a girl's education, but surely looking at how well the course went this morning, I figured we could keep it like that and move on, as two adults.”

He smiled, but he looked like a puppet. Also, had she been in her normal state, she would have slapped him and stormed off. But she was bedazzled and unable to move, to speak, to think.

*What?*

She must've looked like an idiot, her eyes round, her mouth slightly open, and her brains unable to function.

“That looks like a-uh… reasonable decision.,” she mumbled. Damn it, what was happening? *No, no, no no no-*

*I t's, like, not even started yet-

*How, how-

Now that tasted bitter. Even more bitter than when he left her in front of the hotel room alone.

*No that can't be happening, that was too quick-
She inhaled, and it looked like his empty eyes were not seeing her confused inner self when they usually guessed every emotion she felt.

**Stupid Arya**

*What did you think would happen you fucking moron? That he'd take your silly kiss seriously? That he'd consider you a potential “partner”? You're a little girl, a child, and he's a man! Open your fucking eyes!*

She gave him a fake smile and stood up slowly, and her life looked like a bad movie again. The room around suddenly felt like the décor of some shitty sitcom.

The door burst open, and four girls appeared. But Arya was too confused to grit her teeth when she realized these were Sansa's friends, the ones who always ask the stupid questions and beg so pathetically for his attention.

“I forgot my lipstick, sir.”, one of them said, and the others giggled. Arya felt all their stupid eyes on her, but she was staring at the ground, processing.

He paid them no mind, only smiled politely when the girl picked up her lipstick before looking at the ground too.

“I hope we're not interrupting anything.”, one of them cackled, ad Arya felt her blood boil up. She sighed, not loud enough for them to hear but loud enough for him to see her anger.

She wasn't angry at him, nor at these foolish girls. She was angry at herself.

She heard them mumble, didn't want to hear what. The one with the lipstick walked back over to her group of friends and the silence was a bit awkward.

“Hum… bye then.”, the girls mumbled before giggling again.

It took them forever to close the door, but they eventually heard the lockets click and their hurried steps in the corridor.
“I uh…I should probably leave too.,” she said, but his eyes wouldn’t meet hers.

*It’s never gonna be the same again*, she thought back on these hours spent boiling up at each of his words, tensing up at his closeness, warming up at the sound of his voice.

*It’s gonna be so fucking awkward now…*

Maybe she should never come back again. What would be the point? Uncomfortably stare at him for hours and then simply leaving with that unbearable, unfulfilled feeling stirring in her stomach? Please, better sleep in on Saturday mornings from now on. Better spend her Tuesday afternoons focussing on homework. Better spend her Thursday evenings cooking up a storm and eating like a big fat mess on the sofa with Jon.

“Jaqen?”, she called, doorknob in her hand and ready to step out of the dark room.

No. She didn’t want to spend her Saturday mornings in bed, her Tuesday afternoons doing homework. And she could cook up a storm and eat on the sofa like a big fat mess with Jon and his girlfriend on Friday nights.

She turned around to face him. He had followed her on her way to the door. She had not heard him but she was not surprised to find him there.

“Is it because you don’t like me, or is it because I’m seventeen?”, she asked, and his blue eyes seemed like they pierced through hers. He didn’t answer, but that was a usual thing for him to do.

“Would it be any different if I were 24? 31? 42?”, she continued walking toward him again.

“Age does matter.”, he simply said.

“But it's only one factor.”, she added, raising a brow for she was a little proud when she saw him smirk.

“A man promised himself he would not touch you before you turn 18.”

She felt a shiver of thrill when her mind ventured to make up a few images of what he implied, before she pulled hard on the reins of her debauched thoughts again.
He was still calm and serious, and her smile grew more wicked when she felt the situation slip back into her control.

“Alright.”, she said, carefully putting her bag on the ground.

She walked over, closer to him, until she felt the heat radiate off his body. He was always warm, she figured, she had discovered that during the trip in Germany. His skin always looked soft and smooth and warm, at whichever hour of the day. He would be a very comfortable and perfectly heated human pillow. Not the stifling kind of heated, the it's-the-perfect-temperature-like-in-your-bed-in-the-morning kind of heated.

“Don't touch me, then.”, she said, wrapping her hands around his neck.

He didn't back away and she saw a sparkle form in his eyes. She pulled him gently, until his face was low enough for her to be able to plant her lips on his.

_God_, she had dreamed of that moment so many times.

She continued planting tiny kisses, first on his lower, plush lip, then on the top one, then on the side of his mouth and oh- she felt so mischievously triumphant, she wished this feeling would never stop.

“You devilish thing…”, he growled, a tint of amusement in his tone, and she giggled like a foolish little girl. He took his face in his softly calloused hands, pushing her against the door to trap her with his broad frame. It was like he was asking for more with no words.

“A girl is making this difficult…”, he spoke against her parted mouth, and she couldn't help but smile. Finally, _she_ was in control.

“I'm not the one setting up stupid rules for myself.”, she joked before resuming her feathery pecks.

_Damn…_ would she ever get enough of his taste? She could not recall loving anything more than the feel of his kisses. They were familiar but made her stomach tingle at the same time, increasing her hunger for him and for this new feeling growing exponentially in her. She had missed kissing him. Damn, what had held her for so long? There was no way she was stopping now.

“What a girl calls stupid rules is only a means to keep her safe-”

She snorted, brushed her nose against his cheek.
“Safe from what? From you?”

She laughed, and bit her lip at his falsely hurt expression. How good it felt to make fun of him.

“A man is serious-”

“Oh yeah, I should clearly be afraid of you.”, she took his hands and held them up.

“These hands, though they look soft and delicate, are in fact the hands of a killer who likes to torture his young victims with-”

“Don't be ridiculous.”, he cut her, taking his hands away.

“A girl is young.”

She inhaled. She didn't want to get serious. Why should everything always be so serious? She wanted to have fun with a man who attracted her, and a mere number on her ID would not stop her from doing exactly that, even less when he was as attracted by her than she was by him.

“Yes. I am young. I still don't see how that's a problem.”, she ran her fingers on his strong shoulders. She had never touched him so intimately, and in any other situation she probably wouldn't have had the courage to. But right now the closeness made her feel dizzy, and she felt so safe between the door and him that she had the sensation she could do anything. He was like a shield protecting her from the rest of the world.

“I'm not as childish as I look. You don't have to keep me safe from anything.”, she scoffed.

“If your using this as an excuse because you don't like me, just tell me and I'll go.”, she said, letting her hands fall to her sides.

He sighed, and his look upon her was gentle, despite the usual, playful smirk his lips twisted into. And she felt the urge to kiss these lips again.

“If a girl decides to give this a go, it won't last forever. She still has a whole life to live she deserves someone who would consider their relationship as seriously as she wants it to be.”
Maybe he was trying to dissuade her. But he couldn't have said anything that would have persuaded her more, in fact.

“I'm not looking for a husband to have a house and a bunch of kids with, Jaqen.”, she took a shaky breath in. Should I say it? That's a bit straightforward- Oh fuck it, I'm saying it-

“I'm here because I want you.”

His serious look changed, and his grin became so wide she wondered if she had ever made anyone so happy before. He plunged toward her and devoured her lips, and for a brief second, she felt invincible. She felt the warmth spread in her, her body curve into his, and she sensed him tense up when he didn't allow his hands to settle on her waist.

It felt like the world around had frozen. She allowed her thoughts to wander freely, she allowed her eyes to close and her fingers to explore the spiky feel of his jaw, the softness of the skin of his neck. They moved as low as the rim of his shirt, which was concealing the burning flesh that she so craved to feel and taste. But time had not stopped to permit her to follow her explorations of this widely unknown and alluring territory, and just as she was about to slip her tongue through her lips to better taste him, her phone buzzed in her bag, troubling the peace and the sound of their quiet kisses.

She grimaced and made him smile, and pulled out the noisy gadget.

“Jon's growing out of patience.”, she mumbled.

She gathered her bag, smoothed her clothes a little. She felt her cheeks flare but chose to ignore the flutter in her stomach and tried to act as casually as possible.

“See you on Tuesday.”, she said, the feel of his lips still ghosting around her.

She saw him smile and lightly bow his head. He did that quite often. He must know it made him look like a real gentleman. It was probably another technique to hide his true nature: a wicked teaser who lures them all with his spicy scent and his European accent and these full, soft looking lips.

I kissed those lips… she thought as her eyes lingered on them for a bit longer-Stop staring and get out of here now you fool, a voice in her head admonished her, before she turned her heels.
“Maybe a girl should come in early next time.”

She grinned like an idiot in love. Ugh- what kind of cheesy romantic comedy had her life become?

“I will.”, she said, biting her lip.

She turned around and felt like sprinting and jumping and flying everywhere. She had never been so light-headed. And she had never cared so little about being light-headed.

“The others got out at least fifteen minutes ago.”, he tried not to sound as sharp but failed. She fixed her seatbelt and he started the small car.

“What were you doing? San said you always come out early.”

“The teacher wanted to talk to me.”, she answered casually, re-arranging her ponytail. Why was she re-arranging her ponytail? True, that her hair never looked neat, but now it was so messy it looked like she got right out of bed.

“That same teacher who took you on a trip half-way across the world when you guys knew each other foe, like, twelve minutes?”, alright, now he totally failed to sound friendly and smooth. He sounded cynical and provoking.

She frowned. Anyone would have frowned. Jon was never cynical and even less provoking.

“Uh… yeah?”

The arrogance in her voice made him feel like he had to punch something.

“You should be careful about that guy.”, he said between clenched teeth. Why the hell was that old guy lurking around her? Could he not choose another prey? Like, really, she was small and naive, that wasn’t a really fair game to play. Did he have no honour at all?
“Why?”, she answered, scoffing like this was the stupidest piece of advice she ever heard.

“Because-”, he did not mean to sound so unnerved. He breathed in quickly and ignored her surprised expression. Why was she playing stupid?

“He's an old guy and you're-” Erm, how was he supposed to say this?

“-a young…pretty girl.”

She scoffed again.

“So?”

“So? You want me to make a drawing for you to understand?”, wow, where was calm and composed Jon? He was surprised by his own words but the most surprised was her.

“What the hell is wrong with you?!”

Awesome, now she was angry too.

He tried to measure his words but they slipped out of his mouth before he had the time to repeat them in his mind.

“He took you on a trip, you and you only, no one else, can't you see what he wants or are you completely blind?”

He almost heard her nerves pop, transforming her into tempest-like Arya who doesn't hear. Great, a part of him thought ironically. Angry-Arya was even more difficult to speak to. God, if only she wasn't this young, maybe he could have a serious conversation with her. But if she were older they would not have this conversation at all for she would be wise enough to know how to recognize old men's disgusting desires.

“He's too familiar with you!”, he kept on. He would until she'd understand.

“You don't even know him! Why do you care?!”
“I'm your brother-”

“How familiar men are to me is none of your darn business!”, she vociferated.

*True*, a voice shot in his mind, like a punch in the guts.

But the voice was wrong. She was his little sister. She was his business. He had to protect her against old guys who like little girls too much.

But… she didn't deny. *Fuck*. She didn't deny the fact that the man may be too interested in her. Did that mean she saw through his game? Did that mean she consciously played with him? *God*, had anything happened yet? Was he too late already?!

The cold rage boiling inside him made him miss the turn.

“Shit-”

“Jon! You were supposed to turn here-”

“I know!”, he roared.

He breathed in, tried to calm himself. Why was he so angry? The hard training of the US forces was really draining all of his patience and energy lately. And it had been a while since he hadn't seen his girlfriend. And his foolish little sister would not hear a damn word he said. He was quite on the nerves already and she kept playing the stupid little girl. What an awful day this was.

“Arya, listen-”, he tried, calmly.

“No! You listen now. He's a nice guy and I trust him. And you agreed for me to go on this trip, I don't see why you're bringing it up now-”

“I didn't agree. Sansa told me you were in Europe with a man only once you were on the plane.”, he said, his voice as cold as the punch he had felt in his stomach when Sansa had announced him where
their very young, very unconscious little sister was, and with whom.

“Well, it’s not my fault if you spent all your time with Ygritte when I was planning that trip!”, she had a lot more trouble to control her own anger.

And she was right, at that. He had spent all of his time either training or with Ygritte before the Thanksgiving break, he had been barely at home. And when he had come back thinking about what a cool week of holidays this would be, watching old Disney movies and eating junk food with his little sis all week long, she had disappeared on the other side of the planet with that freaking pervert who gives her private lessons and that had felt like a hard slap in his face.

_All my friends say he’s super hot, and she's his favourite student, even if she won't admit it_, Sansa had said, and the images had flashed in his mind, so disgusting it almost made him puke.

A nasty fight had followed, his only argument being that she had half a mind to let their little sister travel so far with a man she knew so little, and hers being that he was worrying way too much about a mere scholar trip. Which, he had to agree, wasn’t totally wrong. Even if he was absolutely convinced that he was right. Who the hell travels half-way across the world with a stranger more than twice their age whose intentions are so clearly not scholar? Only crazy people and naive little girls. And naive little girls need protection against shady-intentioned men.

_Fuck_

“Dad or your mother would have never agreed to this.”, he didn’t really know what to say to make her understand.

“That doesn't mean it's your job to bother me with it now.”

These words stung a bit, yet Jon could not place why exactly.

She sharply sucked in some air and kept the irritated, not-open-for-debating-face.

“He's just a teacher! Why does it bother you that I spend ten more minutes in class with him?!”

“Why am I the only one alarmed by the fact that that old guy is hitting on you?!”
“He’s not even that old, and-”, she squeezed her lips shut. And now, strangely enough, she was the calm one. *Wait*- why did she not deny the fact that he was hitting on her? *God*- had anything really happened yet?! 

“Look, I know you like to play the protective-big-bro and everything, but that doesn’t mean you get to decide who I hang out with.”

“It’s not a game, Arya!”, he said, missing the street for the second time. He did it kind of on purpose this time. He knew the second she’d be out of the car that no conversation would be possible. So he’d keep her trapped here until she would understand what is good and what is bad for her. Although, she was Arya. If he pretended to miss the street a third time, she was able to jump out of the moving car and go home to foot before locking herself in her bedroom and never speaking to him again. And he could not allow that. He had to convince her to stay away from him in the last five minutes.

“I know him better than you!”, she spat.

“God! You're less annoying when we ride your bike!”

True, but Sansa had forbidden him to pick her up with the bike because she had no leather jacket and no gloves. And now he felt grateful because the little car provided an amazing interrogatory room.

He breathed in again and retrieved his calm. That was the only way she ever listened. When the person in front of her was calmer than she was.

“I only told you to be careful. Just-please, make sure you really know him.”

She sighed to show her annoyance. He knew she thought he was being ridiculous. And, ok, he might be a little. But he thought it better to keep her away from old men rather than risk expose her to perverts who only think with their dicks. Even if that meant keeping her away from all the men on this planet.

God. He was becoming like Sansa.
She was the one usually annoying Arya with this kind of stuff. Se was the overly protective one, she played the “Mom” part. Why was he having this conversation with her now? Usually he was the funny big bro messing around with her and making plans to turn Sansa crazy. Why had he become the over-fearing one?

And why did the little wicked voice inside of him whisper that this fear was not entirely justified?

~He knew deep inside he should have let go of her the second his eyes met hers.~

Chapter End Notes

Hi again! So, what did you think? These guys are acting pretty weird...any idea what they might be up to? Hehe...leave a comment!
Her breath accelerated and the feeling was both strange and incredible. The room with the lockers was so tiny and dark it looked like the hiding places in Winterfell.

Between her legs was all warmth. She interlaced her fingers in his long red locks and it was like the space around her was moving weirdly. Her back arched and she pushed her core toward his mouth to get more of that oddly satisfying sensation. His groan was like the grumble of some terrifying beast she wasn't afraid of, and the only thing she wanted to do was to scream for him to never stop.

She turned her head to the side and suddenly the room with the lockers was not so tiny any more. It looked like it had fused with her old bedroom in Winterfell. The heavy wooden door was partly open, and she could see her little bed, the window with the blue curtains. She wanted to stand up to go in it, to smell the perfume of winter that she had forgotten and feel the rawness of her old duvet that she missed so much.

She couldn't, she was stuck on the ground with a formidable tension building up in her stomach, and somewhere far was the sound of deafened moans.

But when she brought her attention back in front of her, it wasn't Jaqen's face that was buried between her legs. Her fingers toyed with dark curls and she couldn't understand what was going on. And when Jon lifted his face, his eyes were severe and sad.

“He promised he wouldn't touch you.”, he said, but it was Jaqen's voice and before she could ask him why something caught a strong grip of her guts and she felt like falling.

"Driiing"
Fuck, she was so confused. Where was she?

Uh-

She crushed her fist on the alarm clock to stop it's unbearable ring. Oh right. She was in bed.

Holy shit-

Had she just dreamed about Jaqen going down on her?

What the hell was that now? Since when did she have this kind of dreams?! Some strange feeling of wet warmth still ghosted around her, and God she felt so dirty. She had had weird dreams that were somewhat related to sex before, but never had she dreamed of such… intimate behaviour, let alone with someone she actually knew.

And- damn it

Why was Jon in that dream too?

I thought I was done with all of that shit

She sighed and rolled back to stare at the ceiling.

Dreams are weird. No big dea-

Her thoughts were interrupted by the same sound of moans that she had heard in her dream. Hushed moans. From the other side of the wall.

Oh come on-she thought as the awkwardness made her feel funny.

Right on the other side of the wall was Jon's bedroom.
Ugh—she pressed the pillow on her face.

No, she couldn't be imagining him having sex right now, especially with the images of this strange dream still popping randomly in her brains.

The sound was barely audible. Ygritte was never loud. Well, from what Arya knew of the nights Jon and the redhead spent here. Had the teen been in any other part of the apartment, or just a tiny bit farther from that wall she wouldn't have been able to hear. But she wasn't. She could hear and that was very unsettling. She should probably get up and dress up and try to not look at them in the eyes when they'd come out to take the breakfast.

But… God, he must be good, right? Or else Ygritte wouldn't be… making these sounds, Arya thought as she was unable to move for a second.

She was not obsessed. That was not what obsessed was like, she was just… curious. True, that she had never been that curious concerning this kind of behaviour before. She also used to be not that tactile. But now… she had realized that this rule didn't apply to everyone. With the recent events including a certain redhead, she had developed a strange craving, something she'd never felt before. And it scared her as much as it turned her on, because it was not the affectionate kind of craving, it was the carnal kind of craving. Something she had had pinch of a taste once, and that she missed terribly now. And that had led to some more solitary experimentations, that were starting to be more and more successful. But the thought that it could also be done not in solitary had raised a thrill and a sick curiosity in her.

Well, basically, she was being a teen and her body was waking up.

Better late than never, some part of her thought. Someday she might even be normal around other people. If she kept her current pace she'd have a normal social life in about eighty three years.

She heard a particularly loud moan and her toes curled.

For fuck's sake Arya, get the Hell out of here. This should make you uncomfortable, not freaking fascinated.

She clenched her teeth and the next minute she was in the kitchen, cereals crunching under her teeth.
It's not even 8am yet and I'm already confused as shit, she thought, depressing in front of her halfway emptied bowl of fruit loops.

What a shitty way to start a day. She could already tell she was going to hate this Tuesday. The only thought that cheered her up was the fact that Jaqen had told her to come early to his lesson. She grinned. What could that be for? Uh- she couldn't wait to figure out. Maybe that would be an opportunity for her to talk him out of his nonsense about not touching her bef-

“Hey!”, Ygritte smiled as she passed by, before grabbing her pair of shoes and sliding them on. She looked bubbly and joyful, and like she had not combed her hair in years. But Arya couldn't blame her on that one. Her hair never looked neat either.

“Hey”, she responded, her voice rusty from sleep, before watching the young woman put on her jacket.

“Have a nice day!”, she said in a sing-song, before slipping out through the door.

Yeah, Ygritte never stayed for breakfast.

“Mornin’”, Jon said, walking out of the bathroom with some shaving cream on his beard. He groomed it quite often. Because of the army he wasn't allowed to have it very long so that demanded some care.

“Sansa's gone already?”

“Yep”, she answered. Sansa had a different shoot every week for whatever brand, but on Tuesday mornings she was always at her ballet courses.

“Do you know if she'll be busy this afternoon?”, he continued, wiping his face with a towel before throwing it back into the bathroom and coming over in the kitchen.

“Uh… I think she was planning on going to the gym, why?”

His grin grew a bit mischievous and that made her smile too.
“Because if she's out, that means I can buy a ton of doughnuts and we could eat them on the couch while watching that new Disney movie with the bunny cop that looks like you.”, he said, pouring himself a cup of coffee.

“It doesn't look like me!”, she laughed. He only said that because the bunny was tiny.

“And I can't, I have theatre class this afternoon.”

“But it only starts at 5, and you'll be out of school at, what, 2pm? If I drive you that's more than enough time.”

“I can't, I have homework to do and I'll go early.”

Only after saying it did she realize that she probably should have left that little detail out.

His smile died and he let himself fall on a chair. He took a deep breath in and the cheerful taste in the air disappeared.

“Only you again?”, he asked.

She rolled her eyes.

“Will you stop with that-”

“No, I won't stop with that. He's creepy, Ar. I want you to stop giving him this much attention-”

“What?”, she scoffed in disbelief.

“He's only gonna ask for more and more each t-”

“Since when do you tell me what to do?!”, she raised her voice.
He frowned and that made her head boil. Who the hell did he think he was?!

“Since old perverts lurk around you and you're too blind to see he only wants you in his bed-”

“What the hell do you know about it!? You've never talked to him! You've never even seen him!”, she fumed, jumping out of table and angrily tossing her emptied bowl in the sink. The dishes clang together but she was too angry to care. Why the hell was he such a pain in her ass?! He knew nothing about Jaqen!

“And what do you know about him?! You see him for four hours a week, how are you supposed to know him well enough to know if-”

“Why don't you focus on your relationships rather than bothering me with mine?!”, she spat. He looked startled but she went on before he could answer anything.

“Since you and Ygritte are together she's only had one-night-stands here, is it ever going to get serious or is your relationship only based on fucking?!”, she raised her brows. She clenched her teeth, her face was warm from the argument. She picked up her school-bag, didn't bother to brush her teeth and stormed off before he could utter anything else.

God, what an awful day this was.

The day had been as boring and long as expected. Hell, she couldn't wait until she wouldn't have to sit through all of these useless classes any more. What did she care about oxidation-reduction reactions? And she hated asking Gendry about stuff she didn't understand, he had become super cocky lately and when he explained her stuff it sounded like he was talking to a baby and she hated it. Her grades had suffered a bit from it, but not enough to alarm her.

Damn, when would all of these freaking people understand that she's not five years old any more?

But, thank God, it was over now, and she was headed to the theatre class.

Jaqen had told her to come early, but she didn't know how early. So she figured she'd do some homework to not be too early because she didn't want to look desperate for his attention, and now it
was past 4pm. Less than an hour early was a decent amount of earliness, right?

God, she hoped she wouldn't find herself alone in front of a locked door, because that would definitely not improve her mood today.

Thankfully the door wasn't locked. She had to focus not to run down the stairs. She wanted to burst into the room and make one hell of a noise so that the whole world could understand how mad she was about people taking her for a child.

Luckily she calmed down before that happened.

She slipped discreetly in the dark room. She looked around, the chairs were already in place but he wasn't there. She was about to boil up and leave. She was truly in no mood.

But a noise came from that little room that served as a backstage. The door to access it was ajar.

“You're hiding?”, she asked, and he turned his head so quickly she thought she had surprised him for an instant.

“You're sewing a costume?”, she continued when she saw him toy with—what was all of that? There were tiny glass vials and weird fabrics and a leather jacket that looked kinda too casual to be a theatre costume.

“Props.”, he said, and he quickly put them away in his bag before turning his attention to her.

“Why do you do it in that dark room? It'd be much more convenient with the light out there.”, she wanted to get another look, but he closed his bag.

“A man likes the fresh air in here.”, he said, and as usual a smirk was plastered on his face.

_Uh_- she wanted to kiss him. He looked awfully good with his hair loose. Kinda… savage. And his lower lip looked tastier than ever. Could she kiss him? That wouldn't be too weird, right? Like a greeting kiss. A casual “hi” kiss. People do that, right? They kiss to say hello? Although… couples kiss to say hello. And they weren't a couple. They were… well, she was his student.
God why was this so complicated. Other people always knew what to do. Why the hell can I not figure out simple shit like that when it seems so evident to others?

“Did a girl have a nice day?”

She sighed.

“Excellent.”

She let her eyes drift away so she didn't see his smirk grow larger.

“What a lovely grimace.”, he said, taking her chin in his fingers and making her look at him. The gesture and the contact made her smile like a fool.

“What is it that troubles a girl so?”

She looked into his blueish bronze eyes. They were sparkling with amusement and arrogance, as always. God, there were so many ways he could make her forget about that awful day, why did he want to talk about it?

“It's been a long day.”, she said, throwing her bag on the table before hopping on so that she wouldn't have to crane her neck to look up to him.

He walked by, a questioning smile curving his tempting lips.

Why couldn't they try to be a normal couple? Kiss when they wanted to, go out, do what normal people do… She had never wished to be “normal”. Actually, she had always found some kind of pride in not being like everyone else. Maybe she didn't want them to be a “normal couple”, but she wanted a tiny bit more than just a few hours a week that she'd spend wondering if she could kiss him or not. Even if it didn't last for long, at least their story could be… a little bit more than 'a student and a damnably attractive teacher that once kissed in a moment of distraction'.

He ran a hand through his hair. Maybe he was waiting for her to develop about that especially long day, but she could only concentrate on the stir in her lower stomach.
Damn it, if she wanted more, she had to reach out for it.

She pulled him toward her and planted her lips on his.

Here, that was for Jon. To prove him that she wasn't a little girl and that she had everything under control.

He was surprised but gave in, chuckling lightly. She felt the sound vibrate in his chest, which was a strangely enjoyable feeling. And his lips did not disappoint. They were full and knowing, and for a brief second she wondered if it was possible to know the feeling of kissing by heart. She hoped not. She wished it could keep forever that sparkle of unexpectedness.

Her hands travelled down his neck. Damn, his shoulders were strong. *He works out*, she mused. They ventured further, the fabric of his shirt like a barrier to her caresses. *Wow, he works out a lot*, she thought when her long fingers could guess the sculpted abs.

She sighed against him and hoped to make his restraint go away. The warmth was making her feel light-headed, and in a rush of longing she realized she wouldn't mind experiencing with his tongue in her mouth. That thought made her belly tingle.

His fingers first ghosted around her thighs, and she did her best to act as if she didn't notice when his willpower melted away and he allowed his hands to settle on the sides of her legs. This was in no way an intimate place, but when she felt the wave of thrill at his touch she was highly unprepared.

Despite her tries to cool her mind down, she still felt triumphant.

*There we go. Simple as that.*

He broke away. She did nothing to hide her disappointment. His gaze was gentle and amused, and she was sure he saw her pout like a child when he took his hands away from her legs. He clenched them into fight fists and let them fall to his sides. She took her hands away as well but didn't really know how to act casual so she toyed with her bullet necklace.

“You do know that nothing's gonna magically shift once I'm eighteen, right?, she tried to not sound as foolish but failed. What, she was some starved wanton now? She didn't even know what she so wanted to happen between them, but the mere thought that there were boundaries in this 'relationship'
(or whatever it was) turned her crazy.

“And you are aware that it's in two little weeks, right?”

“A girl is upset.”, he said smirking, but then his smile grew different. She could not place how different though, the changing in his expressions were minuscule, if one could even speak of proper expressions.

“What's wrong?”

_Damn it-_ he looked like he genuinely cared. And she was, upset. But could she truly tell him about it or was he just being polite?

“It's nothing. Not up to you to listen to me grumble.”, she said, scoffing nervously before looking away. Surely he had other stuff to worry about than her freaking childish arguments with her siblings. She knew he hated useless chit chat and she could only agree with him on that point. And he didn't need to listen to her babble, he wasn't her boyfriend. He was her forty year-old teacher.

“What are these props you're working on?”, she said, not so subtly changing the subject. He raised a brow, the exact same way he raised his brow when she acted a character badly during their private lessons.

“If it's nothing then why does it make a lovely girl grimace so?”, he continued, smiling like he was asking her to solve a riddle.

“A girl can tell a man, he won't scream it on every roof, he promises.”

He had remained close after breaking their kiss, and his warmth made her feel comfortable. So she settled on telling him.

“It's stupid-”, she answered, smiling like a fool. Because it was, stupid.

“Jon and I argued.”

“About what?”

Should she tell him everything? God, no, that was an awful idea. If she told him about her brother not agreeing with their age difference it might comfort him in his stupid decision of not doing anything before she turns eighteen. And then he might settle on not approaching her before she's fifty or something.
“In his mind I’m still this defenceless little girl who can’t speak for herself and who must be protected from everything and anything.”

She laid her back against the wall and relaxed.

“Makes me think of someone.”, she added, and she was the one smirking for once.

“This is a totally different. A man is not being over-protective, he's being reasonable. Unfortunately, it looks like he's failing.”, he said, putting on his most serious tone.

She scoffed nonetheless.

“Yeah, whatever mister all-of-this-is-against-my-will.”, she laughed.

“Well, unlike this, I fear our argument won't solve anytime soon. I know it'll come up for much longer than that, if not my whole life. Jon is… Jon. In his mind I'll always remain a little girl I guess.”

“A girl's brother doesn't like to see her around older men.”

He guessed it, obviously.

She sighed and lowered her eyes.

“I haven't even told him anything that's happened. He just… he likes to be the super protective kind of guy. I bet that even if you were my age he still wouldn't approve for whatever reason.”

He sighed too and smirked, but his smirk wasn't as playful as usual.

“A man guesses it's a normal behaviour coming from an older brother. Let alone the fact that there is indeed quite an age gap that not only protective big brothers frown upon.”

“But we don't care about that.”, she raised a brow and wrapped her hands around his waist. She quickly noted inwardly how comfortable she was starting to get with him.
“Do we?”, she asked, consciously lowering her voice a little, hoping to wake his manly pride.

“Don't challenge this man, Arya Stark.”, he answered, calm and smirking. Damn it- maybe she should consider making her game a little subtler.

“You're not ready.”

She chuckled again.

“Was that meant to scare me off?”

He brushed his nose against her cheek and she felt her face redden. His neck seemed suddenly very appealing.

She moved to brush her lips against it but he caught her before.

“Ah ah ah-”, he admonished her, and she grunted which tore a laugh from him.

“Ugh—it's in two weeks, Jaqen!”

“Maybe. But right now is not two weeks from now. And right now, a man doesn't fool around with under-age girls.”, he said firmly and she sighed at how ridiculous this was.

“So what are these non-fraternization rules? Kisses on the lips are okay, teasy nose brushing is too, but the neck is forbidden territory?”, she asked smirking. But then she sighed and thought she might get a little serious for once.

“What are we, Jaqen?”

She felt him settle down to her serious tone.

“Does a girl need to put a name on this?”, he said in a low voice, eyes drifting away from hers. He brushed a strand out of her face and tucked it behind her ear.
“No, but… I need rules. I don't want to wander in that foggy zone and spend my entire time wondering if we're on the same wavelength because that'll turn me crazy.”

She wondered if there was ever a time when she was this honest about herself with someone.

Yeah, with Dad. She was always comfortable with Dad. Mum was something else, growing up she always feared to disappoint her because she wasn't like Sansa. But she always felt like she could be herself with Dad. And Jon.

To her surprise he seemed gladly satisfied with her urges to take control.

“A girl is starting to share a man's devotion to rules.”

She scoffed inwardly. *Me? Arya Stark? Caring about the rules?*

He saw her amusement, of course.

“Or is a girl only eager to learn what rules a man has set for himself to better break them?”, he added with a mischievous grin, and he was reading right through her mind. She felt a bit evil but that was thrilling.

“A man is starting to get to know a girl really well.”, she said, mimicking his weird speech pattern.

“Hmm…”, he purred.

“A little too much.”

She grinned like a fool.

“Well, say guidelines, then. That's very sweet of you to want to keep everything pure and clean, but I need to know what that means. Where's the safe-line?”

Even when she was sitting on a table he was still towering over her. He raised his chin to appear
mighty, and she held his gaze.

“Just kissing.”

She sighed.

“Just kissing?”, she repeated. Haven't we kinda… crossed that line already?

She grinned. She brought him a little closer and felt the blush radiate off her cheeks. Let's play a game…

“You mean… chaste kisses?”, she asked in a small voice. She brought her face to his, and gave him a feathery peck on the side of the mouth. A tiny thing, barely a brush.

“Like this?”

He didn't move and his amused gaze was on her. He was seeing through her game already, she knew it. But she was glad that he let her continue.

“Or…”, she planted two longer kisses on his lips. Long enough to feel the fullness of his lower lip, but too short to taste him properly.

“Something like that?”

She broke away and examined his face, wondering if she should take it one level further. She felt something tangle in her stomach and a strange curiosity tickled her mind.

She looked into his sleepy eyes, and something in them gave her the impression that if she were to take it one little step further he might not stop her. So she wrapped her hands around his neck, delicately, experimentally at first, just to make sure.

She wasn't sure how to do it. Like, should I open my mouth now, or just-

“Or…”, she said, but in a very timid voice this time, and for half a second she did not recognize
herself behind that wall of shyness.

We'll just go with what feels right

He probably saw her confusion. He tilted his head down a little, as if to encourage her, but he still wore his usual smirk which made her feel like a little fool. But a cute fool. Like her lack of experience was not disturbing him but amusing him.

Her lips locked on his, and she closed her eyes to go with the flow.

She enjoyed kissing. She had never thought she would like it so much before she let her instincts drive her on that strange evening in Germany. But since then it was as if her lust was taking over each time she saw him, and there was nothing she could do about it but follow this sick desire. It sort of freaked her out at times. She did not want to be this enamoured little girl who's fallen for her sexy teacher and totally worships him when he had voiced out before his wish to keep a casual relationship.

She was not failing. She was casual with him. She was not super in love or some shit. She liked him, that was all. But kissing, she loved kissing.

It was fine, she allowed it. As far as it remained just physical attraction on both side, everything would be fine.

With still a bit of senseless fear, she rolled her tongue against his lower lip, hoping that he'd open for her. She felt his lips twist in a sly grin, and that perked some amusement in her too. His lips unsealed and she dipped in, timidly at first. The feeling of his tongue brushing against hers triggered something fizzy in her stomach.

She moaned a little in surprise. She wished she had been more ready for that new feeling, she was quite overwhelmed. Their tongues twisted and rolled instinctively, like a languid dance in his mouth. Somehow she had imagined he'd taste spicier. It turned out she paid no attention to his taste, and she did not either get the time to wonder if she was doing it all right before it was over already. He pulled away and she was dizzy and still yearning.

She was about to voice her discontentment. She wanted more, more and more and so much more. But she would not beg for it.
“A girl's first?”, he purred, and his voice was waking something inside of her.

“Am I this bad?”, she asked. *Damn it-* had she done it wrong or something? Was she not good? Did he not like it-

He scoffed.

“A girl is pretty good.”, he said, running a thumb on her moist lip.

“Only…”, his thumb fell in the soft spot in her neck and buried lightly there. Only after two long seconds did she realize that he was checking her fluttering pulse.

“… curiously nervous.”, he smiled and she regained her confidence.

He took his hand away and regained his calm composure that the desire had slightly erased for a minute.

“This is the line, then.”, he declared.

She said nothing. It would do. *For now.*

She smirked, felt the challenge make her blood flow faster. She knew he did not set the rules for her to challenge them, but in a situation as silly as this one, she could allow herself to play that game.

“By the way, a man is not sweet.”, he said, fakely offended, and she chuckled. He was so different from all the other guys, by his ways of speaking and acting and everything, and yet he was the same as everyone. He didn't like to be called sweet.

“Okay”, she giggled.

“You should really meet Jon though. If you don't tell him you're the guy I've been hanging out with for the past months, you guys might actually get along really well.”

He smiled.
“A girl always calls him Jon.”

She frowned.

“Well, it’s his name-”, she said a bit confused, but he shook his head from left to right.

“She calls her sister “my sister”, and sometimes “Sansa”. When she speaks about Bran or Rickon or Robb, she calls either of them “my brother”, but her brother Jon never gets that attribute. Jon is always “Jon”.”

Wow- had anyone ever noticed that?

“You're incredibly good at picking up details.”, she said, dumbfounded.

“A girl has told a man that she and Jon have reunited only recently after years apart… Things probably changed a lot.”

How did he do that? It was like he was reading right through her mind, and it was as scary as it was fascinating.

“You are not as close as you used to be, is a man wrong?”

She only managed to nod. Her mind was blurry.

“That must be unsettling.”

She shook her head, as if she were waking up from another strange dream.

She didn't want to think about how unsettling her relationship with Jon was since his return. It was too soon. Unclean thoughts might surface again. For now she had to focus on finding herself again, before re-building a purely platonic relationship with him. As odd as it may sound. Maybe it was all supposed to happen naturally but it didn't and now she had to stick to her plan to make things work.
“It'll get fixed soon. He's not as stubborn as he pretends he is.”, she cut the conversation, and hurried to think about another topic to drift the subject far away from her relationship with her brother who was not a brother and to whom she might or might not have been attracted at some point.

“You made me come early, you had something to show me?”

“Yes.”, he chuckled.

He went to his bag and pulled out a couple of books that looked so old they barely held their shapes. At first she thought about some old theatre pieces or even foreign poetry of some kind. He looked like the kind of guy who would enjoy foreign poetry. But these books weren't about literature.

He held them out to her and she read the titles.

*Geometry and Equations Level 5*, and *Physics and Reactions Level 3 to 6* for the other.

*What the hell?*

“Wh- Jaqen!”, she laughed, but that was because she was surprised, not because she was amused.

“What are these?”, she mocked him.

“A man thought they might help. They're told to be the best. A girl should trust them, they will help getting her grades up.”

“Bu-”, she blurted. She didn't know if this was a joke or if he was being serious.

She stared into his eyes, and they were gentle and knowing. Not mocking.

“You're not serious, right?”, she laughed, still hoping.

She shook her head, maybe that'd help her regain her senses.
“How do you even know that I'm bad at maths and physics?”, she studied the books some more, frowning. They looked like antics he pulled out from a cave or something.

“A girl as spoken of her difficulties before. Take them, lovely girl, a man has no use of them anyway.”

She had no wish to work super hard on improving her grades in maths and physics, she found them profoundly useless, but before boiling up she realized he only meant to help her, not shame her on her grades. And the urge to kiss him was there again. He might not like being called so, but she grinned like an idiot at how sweet he was.

“Uh-… thanks, I guess.”

She still scoffed at how stupid this was. Their relationship was very weird. One one hand he was her theatre teacher, serious and hard-working, then on the other he was this wicked teaser that carried this sizzling heat within himself that turned her crazy, and now she was discovering another facet of him, the kind man who surprisingly cared about her education.

Oddly enough, after this she had been in a good enough mood to sit through his lesson without tensing up or rolling her eyes at each of the silly girls' questions. She remembered calmly sitting on her wooden chair for a whole hour, her eyes fixated on him and probably filled with some stupid sparkles or some shit. She had admonished herself in the car on the way back home, only realizing then that what she specifically didn't want to happen was arriving too fast for her to be able to stop it.

To be attracted to him was one thing. And they had had this conversation before. He was much older and nothing could be considered in the long run. But the attention he granted her made her react in a way she had supposed was not compatible with her personality.

Was she falling for him?

She did not have enough willpower to suffocate the dreamy made-up plots during the short ride. If he was as fit as he looked she might ask him to come for a run with her someday. He had told her he liked spicy food, and she had recently discovered this Indian restaurant with Jon And San when they went out to celebrate another of her sister's achievement in her model agency. She knew he'd like it there, during their trip in Berlin he always ate the spiciest thing he found. Maybe they could go
together one evening. They'd pass off as a father and his daughter.

Sansa was making the conversation alone while driving, probably speaking about the rumours she heard on the shoots about her model friends, and Arya was all entranced sighs and distant gooey looks on the passenger seat.

Only when they parked in the underground lot did she tell herself that she should cool down.

They went up the stairs, Sansa in her usual perky and joyful mood, but Arya sort of dreaded to pass the door. She knew Jon was there and that she'd have to apologize to him at some point.

But not today. She was still too pissed at him for trying to control her life.

“I have homework. Eat without me.”, she threw quickly.

“Are you sure? I'm making Mum's meatpie, it'll be cold when you're done.”, Sansa tried. Arya felt bad for her sister. She knew San tried her best to keep the tradition of the 'family meals', like they used to do in Winterfell when they were small. Because she was always doing shoots on evenings and Jon was also training until late they rarely had a chance to sit down all together and eat at the same time. But tonight Arya knew the dinner would not be pleasant for anyone with their recent steak.

“Yeah, I'm sorry.”

“Studies first.”, her sister said seriously, with her usual charming smile. Arya almost felt like hugging her.

She trapped herself in her bedroom and sank to the floor.

Being mad all day was exhausting.

She didn't have any actual homework to do. She could study maths or physics from Jaqen's books to improve her grades a little, but… not right now. She had to find another occupation. She had recently finished her latest book, and hanging on social media for hours wasn't really appealing. Maybe she'd
She pulled out her laptop and settled comfortably on her huge bed. She had no idea what she wanted to watch. Something nice. Something not too serious. She liked movies with action in them, but not too much like the usual mainstream American action movie. She liked action when it made sense and was somewhat probable. And since her private theatre lessons had begun she always paid extra attention to the actors' acting, and the world of cinematography had been taken to a whole new level in her mind.

She went on the streaming site and settled on Pulp Fiction, but they needed her to make an account or something and demanded her email address. Ugh-she hated these sites with all the pop-up ads and the countless steps to watch one single movie. Usually, she would've gotten mad at the second pop up ad, but here she was kind of lacking options of distraction to choose from, so she coped with it and discovered some patience.

Damn it- what was her email address again? Ah, yes arya.stk something. She never used it, the last time she gave it was probably at school when they asked for a way to join her. She hoped they hadn't sent anything too important, because it was probably lingering in her email box since the first day of school.

She connected on her email account on another page to answer the confirmation email or whatever this bloody site needed her to do, and the page loaded 149 new emails.

Shit- she should probably put some order in these, now that she had time for it.

She knew it was pointless, she probably wouldn't connect on her email for the next decade, but she was too bored to care.

She deleted the ads (and had to painstakingly do it one email at the time), her High School's weekly newsletter, and all the chain messages from aunt Lysa (which was her way of 'keeping up with her beloved nieces'). She deleted them all mechanically, barely reading the titles before hitting the button.

You won a coupon, go- Deleted
Welcome to our monthly- Deleted
Check out these incredible wallpaint- Deleted
Sender Unknown- Delete- wait
She withdrew her hand from the mouse as fast as she would have had she touched a sizzling grill.

**Subject: About your theatre teacher**

She frowned. How did anyone in theatre class get her email address? She quickly checked the date.

**Monday, December 13th**

*That was... yesterday*

She clicked on it, curious. What could Sender Unknown have to say about Jaqen?

The message was just a couple of pictures that she had to download to see. Maybe it was a virus or something. Should she ask Bran about it? But... “about your theatre teacher” was a little too specifically directed to her, it couldn't really be an ad.

She clicked on the first one, watched the little loading wheel fill up and... froze.

She recognized the beige stones of the Brandenburger Tor, the leather jacket she wore that night and...

*Oh God*

The picture was blurry, as if it had been taken from a far and zoomed in. But one could clearly see that the little brown-haired imp had it's face smashed against the tall guy.

She tensed up. **Who the hell could have taken that picture?! And why the hell would they send them to me, is this a threat or something?! Should I call him right now and tell him that someone in Germany stalked us?!!**

She quickly loaded the second one. It was less blurry, and on this one anyone would've been able to
recognize her and Jaqen. And this picture had a legend.

“He could lose his job”

*Oh God, this is a threat.* What the hell was this shit now? Why was a random person threatening to have him fired?!

She loaded the third and final one.

And there was no way she could have been prepared for that.

*What the-*

The legend said “And much more than that”.

And on the picture, he was standing all smiles out in a beautiful suit. He had a woman at his arm, with lush blonde hair, the most charming smile she'd ever seen, and a fluffy white dress.

Her mind went fully blank. Denial mode.

*No. It's a dream.*

Her stomach turned upside down as if she were in a roller coaster. The feeling was real. She was very much not in a dream.

Her eyes were glued to the screen.

No, this couldn't be.

Jaqen couldn't be…
No, Jaqen couldn't be…. He couldn't be married.

Fuck—tears welled up in her eyes and she wished to suck them back in.

He couldn't be married. Right?

“What do you know about him?”, Jon's words echoed in her head.

Chapter End Notes

Soo... were you as surprised as Arya?
Tell me in the comments! :D

I don't know yet when I'll be able to update again, but I'll do my best!

PS: I couldn't find any wedding pictures with Tom Wlaschiha in it (and I spared you my awfull photoshop skills), so we have Chris Hemsworth starring as Jaqen here, and Olivia Wilde as the mysterious wife ;)
The pic is from the movie Rush
Quiet Nights

Chapter Notes

Heyy :D This chapter's on the shorter side since I don't have as much time to write as I used to, but I'm still trying to update every now and then. Hope you enjoy ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“A man wishes his students a good evening.”, he said to the assembly.

He had spent the last hour scrutinizing the room. His lack of attention had even made him lisp two times.

Where was the lovely girl?

Maybe she was sick. Or maybe she had too much homework. Or maybe she had other plans for this Thursday evening.

He hoped these plans did not involve the brother Jon. Her cheeks always reddened and her gaze drifted away when she spoke about him. Of course, at first he thought she was just being a bit socially awkward, like a lot of people, because it was her brother she was talking about. But the recent explanation that they had not seen each other for years, added to the fact that she had said that he was her adopted brother had him suspect that there might be some unspoken things between the two “siblings”. It had not startled him as much as one might think though. He had seen worse. So much worse.

But he did not like to think that she was sick and that brother Jon was taking care of her. That image unsettled him.

*Because adopted siblings are still siblings?* A voice in him asked.

*Or because you’re jealous?*

He shut the voice. He could not wonder about that. He could not be jealous. The situation didn't allow it.
But if she were sick or could not come to his lesson for whatever reason, she would have at least texted him, right? She had his number, and all the reasons to think that he’d like to know why she skips his classes. Maybe he should text her and ask if everything was alright. What if something bad had happened to her? There were on average 3 deaths on the road per day in this country, what if she was caught in-

He shut his flow of thoughts. He should not be wondering so much.

The lovely girl did not come today. Statement. Get on with it.

Well, maybe it was a good thing. He was not sure if he could hold himself much longer if she kept on so naively daunting him. And now he had reached the point he dreaded, the point where it would not only be bad for her, but also for him. He shouldn’t care so much.

She was truly a mystery. Who could have guessed that the bored and lonely teen he had met a few months ago would enjoy testing his limits so much? She was always there with her fake innocent eyes, daring him to approach her and deal with the consequences of getting so attached. He had thought she was shy at first, and that messing around with her a bit would only amuse him and help her with her supposedly empty social life. It turned out this wasn't Arya Stark at all.

She was not truly shy, only an introvert who liked to carefully pick the people she cared about, and after she explained him about her deceased family, it actually made a lot of sense. But during all the time he discovered her, he had not taken the good measures. He had not paid attention to bracing himself against her increasing charm, and now he cared. Too much.

He shouldn't have gifted her these books. Not that he cared about these dusty antiques, as a theatre teacher he had no use of them. Why the hell did he do that? Why were the grades of a high-schooler suddenly important to him? But another question had raised his interest. She seemed to find some entertainment in playing the temptress recently. He had never found any intellectual stimulation in girls who placed their entire confidence on their looks, he had only been physically attracted to them and bedded seductresses of their kind to fulfil his own desires. But her, her temptations were not about looks (well, not fully, she was an interesting aesthetic, something unconventionally attractive, he couldn't deny it), but there was something about her charm he couldn't unravel. But that wasn't the question. The question was: Why did he allow it to work?

He cursed in his head.

What was going on? Why couldn't he keep his thoughts off this one? It was not like he had not known women before. Was it her youth that made her so attractive? Was it the fact that he did not
allow himself to properly bed her that made him want her even more badly?

No. The lovely girl was like that. She enjoyed breaking rules for the sake of braking them, but that wasn't Jaqen H'ghar. And as fiercely as he wished to deny it, it was not the physical attraction that made him break his own rules.

Maybe it was the look in her eyes. Maybe he had taken pity over her for her difficult past, her recent losses, for the confused look that she allowed her face to adorn when he caught her off guard. She looked confident most of the time, but if one scratched a tiny bit on that hard surface they might notice the mysteriousness in her gaze. And that was tantalizing.

But all teens are confused. Nothing made her truly special. And he'd get bored with her pretty easily should he unravel the riddle that she was, because he'd discover that she's like all the girls her age. A confused little girl who likes to believe that she's different.

Yes. Surely.

And maybe if he repeated that to himself more often, it would someday not sound as wrong any more.

* *

She was mad. She would not cry, not for this bastard. And they had been nothing. There had been nothing but mere attraction between them. If she compared, what she had felt for Jon was closer to love than any of the disturbingly…disgusting-absurd things he made her feel.

So why was she so disappointed?

And why had she asked Bran to track down the email address to know more?

She knew that whatever she'd find would only disappoint her more. God, what if he had kids that went along with this beautiful wife? What if she'd find out that he had a pretty, boring house somewhere, filled with the innocent laughs of little blue-gold eyed babies?
She had sent her brother the text, seeking his help anyway. She had looked on the internet, but the ways to find out if someone was married were either to check the local papers (and she had no idea where he got married, maybe it was Germany, or somewhere else. Maybe Italy, the wife had an Italian tinge to her looks, or so Arya thought) or hire a private investigator, and she was definitely not spending a single penny on this cheating dog.

So she sent a text to Bran. He didn't ask why she needed to know the address, and she was sure he didn't even click on the pictures. Bran was like that. He only cared about the challenge of tracking down the email address.

She would tell them all, her siblings, someday, what happened between her and that teacher. Or maybe not. But maybe she would. Or maybe she'd just say that there was indeed something, that they had spun around the other for some time and played kissy face like foolish high-school girls experimenting with their sexuality. But in a few years, when she wouldn't feel betrayed anymore, when she'd feel like she could laugh about how stupid she was and look back at it with a wiser gaze.

Now she just needed to know if it was real. She needed to see the pretty house and the cute babies and the beautiful wife to believe that he was as huge of a bastard as she thought he was. Then she could walk in his bloody class on a Saturday morning. She'd let him think that everything is fine. He'd feel the tension, obviously, she was not as good at suppressing her emotions as he was. She wasn't a professional adulterer who's at ease with lies and stuff.

But when he'd ask her what's wrong, or better, if he'd try to kiss her, she would slap him hard in his pretty face and leave so quickly that he wouldn't even understand what's going on. Then she'd text him his own freaking wedding picture.

He was much bigger than her and her slap would probably be like a mosquito sting to him. But she had to slap him. If she couldn't hurt him emotionally, she'd hurt him physically.

She had thought about finding his wife and kids and tell them he was just a lying cunt.

But then she thought about the fact that almost nothing happened. He hadn't promised her some huge wedding or a house and a bunch of kids together. He hadn't promised her anything serious, they hadn't even slept together. And while thinking about that she had realized he might have never intended to. That 18 years old rule was kind of too ridiculous, even for him. Maybe he had planned on just toying with her, and he had decided to settle that rule only to keep her away for the needed amount of time, at the needed amount of distance for him to have fun but so that she wouldn't become an actual part of his life.
The wife and the kids had to stay out of that. God, it was so awfully weird to imagine him coming home after every course, after their fucking trip to Germany, and act the part of the good father and the faithful husband. He didn't fit in that picture. It was way too…normal.

It wasn't real, right? He… he couldn't be married…

She had to punch something.

“Hey”, Sansa entered after knocking. She had a cup of steaming green tea in her hand, and Arya knew she had put two big spoons of honey in it, just like she liked it.

“You feeling better now?”

Of course, Arya had to come up with an excuse for not going to theatre a couple of hours ago. She had settled on saying that she felt a little sick. Surely her drained expression after the tremendously long day at school, fighting against the urge to cross the street and kick a certain redhead in the balls had helped convince her older sister.

“Yeah, thanks for that. It'll be much better tomorrow. I think it's just a cold.”, she answered, taking the steaming cup in her hands. She was snuggled up in her bed, open books lying all around her because she hadn't been able to decide which one she wanted to read.

“You should probably trade your tees for sweatshirts. I know we're in LA but it's still December.”

She looked around the messy room. Arya saw in her eyes that the piles of clothes on the ground and the books and all the random shit that was laying on the floor irked her sister, and that made the young one grin. Her room was her temple, and the neat and tidy ballerina wasn't allowed to touch anything there.

“Wow, where did you find these?”, the pretty redhead said, holding up one of the old books that laid on her desk.

“My physics teacher told us about these when I was in High-school! He told us they were the best to learn the intricate formulas, but I never actually had the chance to lay my hands on a real one, he talked about them like they were pieces of art. How did you manage to get two?”, she continued, going through the pages without paying attention to what was written.

The image of Jaqen's face flashed in Arya's mind, associated with the crumbly covers of the books
that she hadn't dared to touch since she had learned the truth about his marital status. It was like a
dagger piercing right through her throat. She had even called him sweet for caring about her so
much. *What a fool I was.*

“My uh-… my theatre teacher gave them to me.”

“The one who likes you?”, she asked, bubbly and joyful. She meant it as teasing, so Arya
concentrated to smile back and act as if she were embarrassed. Had she acted like that in front of
him, he would have given her that look, with one of his brows raised and his eyes telling her that she
could do better.

“Why would a theatre teacher have books about maths and physics?”, she continued.

“I don't know.”, the brunette answered, he gaze distant.

She truly did not know. She didn’t want to know. She didn't care if he had a whole library about
maths and physics, and she didn't care that he made no sense. She didn't want to hear another word
about him.

“I should work some.”, she said crawling out of the bed where she had been reading (or 'holding a
book and planning on ways to get her revenge in her thoughts', rather). Her voice sounded tired.

“Dinner's ready in five minutes-”

“Eat without me.”, she said, sinking in her desk chair.

“Are you sure?” Sansa sounded concerned, and the tone of her voice was breaking her a little.

“You alright? You know, you shouldn't skip meals, even if you think you're not hungry-”

“I'm fine San, really. I just-”, she took a shaky breath in. *Don't cry. Don't you dare.* She didn't even
know why she suddenly felt like crying. Maybe she'd be on her period in a couple of days and her
hormones were going mad.

“I don't want to retake a grade another time.”
In truth, she wanted to be alone. And she still wouldn't meet Jon. Somehow she had managed to dodge him, and their only conversation since yesterday morning and her comment about his relationship with Ygritte had been a cold 'Hi' and dry 'Bye'.

Sansa nodded, convinced by her little show, and left. For an hour Arya sought peace and quiet. She could hear the low grumble of Jon's voice from the other side of the wall, in the kitchen where he was eating. He was probably telling Sansa about his day, and the older sister giggled at times. Arya couldn't hear exactly what he was saying, but the cheerful sound of his voice made her smile.

She wanted to hug him. To feel safe in his powerful arms. Of course she'd never tell him that he was right about everything, she had her stupid pride. But she wanted him back, she wanted to snuggle up with him like before when they were kids and talk for hours under the warm blanket.

She looked out the window, and the sky was dark. The flat had been quiet for a while. She checked the time.

0:23

Had she spent the last three hours doing nothing? Just blankly staring?

She looked at her unfinished maths exercise.

That can wait

She got out of her cave and saw the rest of meatpie on the counter top in the kitchen, next to a halfway empty plate of vegetable lasagna. Sansa had been experimenting with vegan dishes lately because all of her model friends were following weird diets and cutting out gluten or carbs or whatever, and she felt left behind with her “normal” lifestyle. But Arya appreciated that her big sister was not blindly following the movement like a sheep and still cooked what she liked on the side of her supposedly healthier experimentations.

She nibbled some at the crust and ate of bit of the over salted meat, and then took a quick shower to refresh. Despite not being really sick, she still felt a bit under the weather. The news of last night had been kind of difficult to swallow, and she felt as if she had just been hit by a truck.

Why was that? She only knew that guy for like… three little months, and they hadn't been “together”
as a couple, they had barely been friends. They had only kissed a couple of times. And that was it. So why did this revelation have such an impact?

Some crafted images invaded her mind again. Yesterday evening, before checking her stupid email box, she had imagined taking a run with him, or go out to that Indian restaurant. She had even wondered what kind of movies he liked so that they could maybe organize an evening together when she'd be on her own in the apartment. Even then she knew it was dumb to day dream about things that'd never happen, but she hadn't been able to suppress the wish to spend more time with him.

_Ugh_

She should probably slap herself each time she thought about him again from now on. Why had he invaded her mind so?

Her fists tightened when she looked at herself in the mirror after her cold shower, wet hair, skin so white she looked like a zombie, and the tiny amount of mascara that she hadn't removed smudged on her face making her look like a sad raccoon. Yeah, she did feel like slapping herself. Slapping that stupid, naive face, to wake that silly imp from her dreamy made-up life and face her with reality.

In real life, cute forty year old teachers are happily married and don't care about bloody high-schoolers. She shouldn't even find forty year old teachers attractive, she was a fucking seventeen year old.

She got out of the small bathroom in her oversized shirt that served her as nightwear, her feet soft on the ground to not make a sound. The flat was empty and quiet, and she felt like a cat gliding in the silent streets of the night. She should probably sleep, she had class early in the morning.

But Jon's door was too appealing. She hoped he wasn't asleep yet.

She didn't bother to knock, if he were asleep she wouldn't wake him. She turned the handle slowly to not make it creak and managed to get a look inside his bedroom. He was in bed obviously, it was almost 1am. Maybe she shouldn't bother him when he had training so early in the morning.

“Hey.”, she heard his rusty voice.

She slipped in the room.
For a moment they just looked at each other in the eye. She could guess his features despite the lack of light. She knew his brown eyes were looking at her almost emptily, waiting for her to say the first word. But she knew his mouth wasn't flat and that it adorned a gentle smile to encourage her.

“I uh… I'm sorry. About what I said yesterday.”, she said, her voice flat though she meant it.

She saw his smile grow larger. The light glow of the moon kissed his face like a veil that embraced his features.

“Aye, I know you are.”

She thought about leaving right now, but she didn't want to. So she sat down, and then laid next to him. His bed was softly warm, and it smelled of him. It smelled manly, with a tinge of that foresty smell that always floated around him. Maybe it was his deodorant that smelled like that, and after using it everyday the smell had impregnated in his skin. She loved it.

He shifted and took her in his arms, laying her head on his chest. He was warm, and his bare chest was like a gentle ray of sun on her cheek.

*God*, how good it felt to be in his arms. She felt so… safe.

“Maybe you were right.”, he said.

The sound of his voice made his chest vibrate under the side of her face. She heard him gulp down, and she sensed his face loose it's gentle expression to grow sad.

“Can I tell you something?”, he growled.

She smiled. It was just like these evenings they spent at Winterfell eight years ago.

“Of course.”, she willed her voice to be reassuring.
He took a deeper breath in and it made her head move gently up and down again.

“I don't think I love Ygritte.”

She circled her hands around him. She didn't really know what to do with this information. What should she tell him?

“What you said, it… it got me thinking.”, he continued.

“Jon, I… I wanted you to leave me alone, I didn't mean to-”

“No, I know Ar, I just…”, his arms closed more tightly around her.

“I just… You were right, I should focus more on my own business before messing up with yours. We… Ygritte and I, we've been together for almost a month now, and I know it's not a lot, but… I don't know, something's telling me that it's not quite… right, you know?”

Her smile died, although he couldn't see it. She understood him. That was what her whole life felt like. Not quite right.

“And… I don't think she loves me either. I think she got with me because I'm the new guy in town, like… sometimes I just feel like fresh meat to her. And I got with her… I don't know, I think I felt lonely, and I liked the idea of having a girlfriend more than I liked actually dating her. I don't want to be selfish like that, I don't want either of us to waste our time, because… I just know, I just know she's not the right one.”

*Please Jon, just... stop talking*…, she begged inwardly, while biting her lower lip hard to restrain the tears. He shouldn't be telling her this, and she should not be letting his words sparkle hope in her.

*I'd be right for you* - she shut the voice, she wanted to stifle it, to destroy it. *No, please no, don't think about that Arya...*

It was so horribly wrong, so disgustingly inappropriate.

She closed her eyes and enjoyed the feel of his skin, soft and firm and forbidden. She kept her hands from wandering, despite the urge growing in her belly when his started to draw random shapes on her back. She didn't want to shiver like that each time his fingers brushed a new inch of her flesh on top the shirt, but as hard as she tried, she couldn't help her body from reacting at his touch.
“If you're looking for advice, I'm not sure I'm the one you should refer to.”, she managed to say in a flat voice.

He said nothing, and his fingers moved slowly from her shoulder blades to her lower back. She knew it was want that strangled her so, but she refused to pay any attention to it, despite the fact that a voice in her mind was screaming, begging for him to move under the shirt.

*He doesn't mean it like that, freak*

He had just admitted not being in love with his girlfriend, he was looking for advice and someone to reassure him, and she felt awful because all she could do was think about herself and fall deep into that dangerous void, again.

No, she refused to pay it attention. She'd manage to kill those impure seeds, one by one if she needed. And the first thing she had to do was be honest with him. She took a deep breath in, and swallowed her ego. He had admitted that she was right about Ygritte and him, so she'd be an adult too.

“You were right too. About my theatre teacher.”

He clenched his teeth.

“I swear if he laid a single finger on you I'll find him and beat the shit out of-”

“No.” she stopped him.

“Let me do that myself.”

“What did he do to you?!”, he tensed up but she remained calm.

“Nothing, Jon, really, believe me. Nothing serious at all. I just… I got carried away, and I got a hard slap in response.”
“What?! He slapped y-”

“No!”, she laughed. Never had she feared that he'd hurt her physically, despite his apparent strength. Although she knew she didn't know him as well as she thought.

“I mean a figurative slap, he… I discovered that he's married.”

“Oh.”, she felt him relax.

“I'm sorry.”

She scoffed.

“No you're not.”

“Let me rephrase it: I'm glad this'll keep you away from him, but I'm sorry that it makes you sad.”, he ran his fingers through her wet hair.

“You looked like you liked him.”

“And it looked like you were really annoyed by that.”

He sighed and caressed her hair in a soothing motion.

“It hit me, you know. When I left Winterfell you were this little girl who didn't even know how babies are made. I came back eight years later and…”

“I became that girl who fools around with her older teachers.”, she said mockingly.

“No, you're not that kind of girl. I know you. You're just… you're so different. And I think I have to get used to the fact that you're not the fragile baby sis anymore. You're stronger than you look.”

She was grateful for his acknowledgement, but she wasn't sure he was right. She had been naive and foolish, the very stereotype of the stupid high-schooler in love with a freaking married teacher.
No, I wasn't in love, she corrected herself.

I was just... hoping for a little more. That's not love.

There was silence for a moment. The nights were lively in LA, there were always cars passing by under the flat's windows, alarms or sirens or random lights showing through the curtains. The city was never asleep, always buzzing, and sometimes she missed the real quiet of Winterfell.

“I missed you.”, he said again when she thought he'd fallen asleep.

She grinned.

“It's not even been two days since we haven't talked.”, she answered.

“No, I mean... during all these years. Almost what, eight years? We didn't text, we didn't call, I didn't... I trapped myself in my little bubble, we all did the same in our own corner of the world. I got used to being away and have zero way to communicate with the outside world, but... until I came back, I hadn't realized how much I missed you. I never want to be away from you for so long ever again, from any of you.”

She didn't look at him. She couldn't. If she did, she'd be tempted to kiss him. And she didn't, absolutely did not want to be tempted to kiss him. Because he didn't mean it like that, how could he mean anything beyond his words? Why was her mind twisting and writhing and shouting for something that wasn't even close to be real?

“Me neither, Jon.”, she whispered, burying her face in his chest.

“Me neither.”

She woke up in Jon's bed. He had been gone for an hour, and she heard her clock ring from the other side of the wall. First thing she did was unlock her phone to see a text from Bran.

ProfessorX: I wasn't able to track down the email address, but I know where the email was sent. Idk what you're looking for, but the person was there when they sent you the message: 515 Essos Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90019, USA.
Arya tightened her jaw, but couldn't help but feel the punch in her guts. She was getting close to the dreaded answer. Essos Boulevard was the highest ranked area of LA, where all the fancy flats where, the gourmet restaurants, the Louis Vuitton shops and everything.

She could imagine him live there. She could picture him exactly, coming home every night to his beautiful wife.

She'd slap him so, so, so hard in his pretty face.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked it! Feedback is much appreciated, so don't hesitate to leave a comment :DD

Any thoughts on what's gonna happen next? I'd looove to read your theories :D
Hi guys!
I feel like I keep repeating myself, but: it's been a while since the last update, sorry xD
BUT here's a big fat chapter with buckets of info to keep you satisfied for a little while
Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

MiniStark: You sure?

ProfessorX: 100%

MiniStark: ok, thanks bro. Btw, stop changing my nickname to Ministark

ProfessorX: Not my fault if you're the smallest of the pack. I'm sure I'm almost as big as you
now (when I'm sat in my wheelchair :D )

MiniStark: Stfu. Go to bed now, it's like 3am in the Uk.

She sighed and smiled at her stupid brother, and put her phone in her pocket.

This was really weird. 515 Essos Blvd wasn't one of the fancy flats on Essos Boulevard with the big
windows and the designer furniture. It was the Gourmet Restaurant at the very end of the Boulevard.

It was quite an impressive thing from the outside, with columns and marble stairs. Curiosity had
pushed her to take a look at the ridiculously fancy menu, on which the prices were not indicated. It
said it only opened for the public on Tuesdays and Fridays evenings. Today was Friday, it had only
been four days since the email but it felt like an eternity. Surely this place would be crowded in a few
hours. According to Google it was a three stars restaurant, the place to be seen in, where powerful
Oriental rulers and rich pop stars go eat too on special occasions. Apparently the waiting list to get a
table was longer that the huge Boulevard it was situated on.
But that didn't solve her problem.

How could her email come from that place?

Maybe the Chef was a friend of Jaqen's, or his brother in law or whatever. But how could he have been in Germany at the exact same time they were? She had checked on the internet and it was not specified that the restaurant had had a recent vacation.

So it couldn't be the Chef who had followed them and taken pictures of them. But who else in this freaking institution would've had enough time to stalk on a comedian and his student at the other flipping end of the world?

Maybe she should knock and ask to see the person in charge of the emails. But how stupid would that be? Little old her in her stained sweat-shirt and her dirty snickers walking in that fancy restaurant in which the tiles are probably shinier than her future, asking to see a person she wouldn't even know what to say to.

_Ugh_

She thought about leaving for an instant.

*I mean, I will probably not like whatever this person has to say to me, if they do have something to tell me…*

But at this moment a guy in a truck opened a big electric gate on the side of the building. Arya wasn't entirely sure that this gate led to the inside of that fancy restaurant, but she had to try it. So she sneaked behind the truck and entered with it.

It drove down a small alley and entered a little courtyard. The dim light of this day of December was obstructed by the tall trees and the high walls, which made the small courtyard look like some kind of bubble ostracised from the world. She hid behind some bushes. What the hell had she done now?

The guy got out of the vehicle and a few other people came out of the back-door of the building (which probably led to the kitchen, Arya guessed) and helped him get the crates of vegetables out. She shivered in her hiding place.
Fuck

What kind of stupid idea was that

How the hell would she get out of here now?

Maybe I'll wait for him to be done delivering the food and follow him out again through the electric gate, she planned. But a part of her was disappointed. She would never know about that freaking email.

Who the hell in this place would be crazy enough to fly at the other end of the world just to stalk-

Her eyes caught a familiar face walking at the other end of the small courtyard, and it was like a strike of lightning in her mind.

The annoying blonde from Germany

She processed for a few seconds. What the hell was she doing here?! And why would she be in that freaking restaurant? And-wait… now that she saw her face again… that girl did look a lot like the wife on Jaqen's wedding picture. But something about their faces wasn't strictly identical. She would've gladly gotten her phone out to be able to compare directly, but she was too afraid to make some noise by ruffling the leaves surrounding her.

Maybe she's the sister of Jaqen's wife…

That'd explain… why she was so mad about seeing me when we met during our trip, the teenager realized.

The blonde disappeared behind a wall, and Arya was too eager to know more. She threw a quick look around. The guys were inside with the vegetables. She sprung out and followed her on the other side of the building.
Her heart beat fast, her breathing accelerated.

*What the hell will I say should someone ask why I'm here?*

But that wasn't what troubled her the most.

*Why the hell is she here? Is this some kind of comedian's secret meeting place or something?*

Careful about staying out of sight, Arya followed the young woman. They went down some stairs, and she was able to catch the door without a sound and enter the underground part of the building. There were cold neon lights inside, and shiny tiles on the ground, and it looked more like a dentist's cabinet than a restaurant. The woman looked like she knew exactly where she was going in this labyrinth. Arya struggled to follow her, cursing herself because there was no way she could get out of here on her own now. She hid behind a corner when the young woman stopped and talked to a guy who crossed her way.

She couldn't hear what they were talking about, and after a few seconds she realized it didn't sound like English.

*Damn it- what a stupid idea I've had*

*What should I do now?!*

She discretely looked out to make sure they were still here, and analyse the situation.

*When she's done talking to him him I'll go over to her and ask her if she knows anything about Jaq-

“Hey, you!”, the guy yelled after they made a quick eye contact.

*Fuck*

“How'd you get in?!”
Fear caught her guts. She thought about running away but she wouldn't find the way out of this maze.

Shit shit

Well, at least she still had the email to show them that she had a reason to be here, but she wasn't sure if she could explain why she was kissing that old guy on the pictures if they asked to see them.

“I uh- I'm looking for-”

“She's with me.,” the blonde intervened. She looked calm, which struck Arya.

The man shot her a confused look and shook his head. He examined Arya some more, and sighed, as if he were… disappointed. Arya felt like slapping him, but she was too confused herself to do anything.

“Elle ne devrait pas être ici. Le chef sait qui elle est. Rien de bon ne lui arrivera.”, he said.

Damn it - was that French? Ugh- she should have studied French a little more seriously in elementary school. What the hell did he say? Something about her, that… the chief knew her? And that nothing… tasty would happen to her? What?

“Je sais. Je vais la faire sortir.,” the woman answered.

“Fais le avant qu'il ne la voie.,” he said before leaving, his face cold, and the woman caught a tight hold on Arya's arm.

“What is-”, Arya tried to intervene.

The woman pulled her through another corridor and spun her to face her.

“How did you get in?”, she asked, but she seemed…impressed, this time.
“I uh-”, she blushed. Would she kick her out?

“I followed you.”

She looked confused.

“I'll go, just, I have to-”

“You're Arya Stark, right?”

She frowned and the blonde let her shoulders go. She had an incredible strength for her size. She was barely taller than Arya and she looked like a waif. Also, she didn't look nearly as pissed as she did when they first met in Germany. She looked way more serene and… kind.

“How d'you know me?”, Arya asked.

“Did you send me this-”

“You should leave.”, she said, alarmed this time. She caught her sleeve and dragged her back. The brunette was barely strong enough to resist her grip.

“Come on! Quick, you have to go-”

“No! Who sent me this email?! Was it you?!”

The woman looked around, breathing a little heavier, as if she were fearing that someone see them.

“Yes, it was me. It's for the best. Stay away from him, he'll stay away from you, and everyone will be happy. Now, please, you have to g-”

“No! I-”, Arya clenched her teeth. So it was real. He was married.

“I don't want to mess around with… his marriage or anything-”
“Shhh”, she said.

“I just want to know-”, the teen continued, whispering.

“Please, tell me her name, I need to know.”

“What? Why do you want her name?”

“I need to know, please, just tell me and you'll never see me again I swear, I just-”

There was the sound of footsteps in the corridor, and Arya heard the woman curse under her breath.

“Run, now!”, the blonde seemed to be freaking out.

“Wait!”, the teenager scoffed. Why was she so eager to kick her out? She looked like a character of some arcade game. She pushed her through the corridor towards the door but Arya tried to fight.

“Just give me five seconds, and I'll be-”

“Sister!”, a voice called from a far, resonated against the walls.

“Fuck.”, the one called sister whispered, closing her eyes. Her hold on Arya relaxed, and the sound of footsteps approached.

“Would you be kind enough to introduce our visitor?”, a tall man with dark skin and a very chic suit said, assessing the young one from crown to sole. Arya blushed, feeling uncomfortable and very out of place. Damn it- what would she tell him? Was he the chief, or some important figure in that ridiculously fancy restaurant? How could she explain that she came here to know about a man's marriage, who he probably never heard of?

“Hmm…”, he seemed to be examining her, and she lowered her eyes, freezing in place.

“My apologies for this welcoming, miss. Our sister lacks manners.”

Sister?
The blonde sister lowered her gaze, and seemed very embarrassed. What the hell was going on? *Oh god I hope I'm not getting her fired or something*, she wished quickly. She seemed too strong and easily angered according to their confrontation in Germany, Arya didn't want to get in trouble with her. Well, considering the brunette's size, there were a lot of people she did not want to get in trouble with, but that had never refrained her from getting in trouble anyway.

She looked at the man. They looked nothing like siblings, the man was old and black and the woman was so pale she looked like some Russian top model. But… maybe they were adopted siblings. After all, she too had an adopted brother with whom she shared no blood.

But that seemed weird. That woman looked at least twenty years younger. If not forty, actually.

“What's your name miss, if I may?”, he asked, his tone calm and reassuring.

“Please-”, the woman intervened, a distressed look on her face that Arya did not understand. She was hushed by a raised hand from the man. He called her sister but he looked an awful lot like her superior. Her superior's superior, even.

“I uh…”, Arya began to answer, not sure what to do.

“I'm Arya Stark.”

She looked around, maybe for a way to escape this weird place.

The superior smiled and bowed his head in a manner that reminded her a lot of Jaqen. So much it almost made her uncomfortable. Yeah- they had to know each other. But she didn't know if that statement sparkled hope or fear in her.

“Well, Arya Stark, you could not be more opportune.”

He turned his heels, and she looked at the woman, frowning. Her gaze was far and empty.

*Opportune? What, they were expecting me?*
“Uh… I'm sorry, I should-”

“Come.”, the man said.

“Let me offer you a cup of tea.”

A… cup of tea?

She threw a look at the woman again. She inclined her head, seemingly implying that she should follow him.

Oh God, she thought as she walked behind the old man through the neat corridors. There were quite a lot of them, and they were all white and clean, so white and clean they looked like a hospital. They even smelled like a hospital, which was very unsettling.

What the hell is this place? And should I really be following him? They look like really weird people…

Fuck, I hope they're not some psychos luring me to some weird room to kill me and make my body disappear-, the questions kept fusing in her mind. She even quickly imagined how easy it would be for them to make her body disappear in a freaking kitchen. They only had to bake her in a pie or something, and no one would ever find out the consequences of her-

Why in the world was I stupid enough to follow him?!

They entered through a double door, in a huge room with chandeliers and draped tables and fancy chairs. The restaurant.

In the meantime the woman had disappeared, it was just that old guy and her now. Arya gulped down and sat where he pointed that she should sit. Her fingers tried to find her bullet necklace to toy with it to get her nerves to cool, but she had forgotten to wear it today. That had happened a lot since she had met Jaqen, somehow he made her forget about Jon. She should probably start wearing it non stop again, now that they weren't… a thing any more.

She toyed with the bottom part of her shirt in proxy of her necklace, and her cheeks were red.

“Forgive me for the way you have been welcomed, miss.”, the man said. His voice was deep and calm.

“How do you drink your tea? Green, with milk and sugar I suppose?”
“Uh… yeah, thank you.”, she said, not further asking herself how he knew. Her British origins must be written on her face, she mused.

“I will be back in a minute.”, he said, leaving her alone in that too fancy place.

Her dirty converse shoes contrasted with the red and gold carpet on the floor, and the daylight was hidden by heavy curtains, red too. The cutlery on the tables was so neatly displayed it looked like whoever did it used a ruler to dispose the forks and everything. But despite all of that, she wondered why all the fuss was about this place. *Like, in the end it's just a restaurant.*

The man came back, two pretty mugs in hands. He served her before settling down in front of her, and crossed his legs. He looked very posh. Surely this place belonged to him if he was free to drink tea in here whenever he wanted.

“I'm sorry miss. I suppose you are a bit confused by this masquerade.”, he began, and she shook her head timidly.

“I believe you are close to the man who teaches you theatre. That would explain your presence here.”

“I'm- I'm sorry for arriving here out of the blue. You see, I just wanted to know… well… I needed to know-”

He raised his hand to hush her, cutting her babbles. She blushed harder and lowered her eyes. *This was a stupid idea-*

“I am not here to judge you miss, or to give any explanations about him. It is for him to explain all he has to explain you. When the right time comes, I will make sure he does. Now, I am only here to propose you something that might interest you.”

He took a sip of his tea.

“As you may have noticed, I am in touch with some comedians, as well as people from an artistic background. Your teacher, the woman you saw before, and a fair amount of others. We are all interested in human behaviour, and together we form a group who research and analyse characters. More specifically the behaviours of criminals during public cases.”
“Like… amateur detectives?”

“I prefer the term criminal onlookers.”, he smiled. He look very kind and poised.

She waited for him to continue his explanation, but he didn't. Yeah, that was a lot like Jaqen too. She also had to push sometimes to squeeze some words out of him. She was tempted to ask about the German again to get the answer she had been so eagerly looking for, but considering the old man's previous statement and his resemblance to him, he might do just like Jaqen and ignore her question, or turn around it and answer something totally out of place and make her forget about her inquiries.

“So uhm… what does that have to do with me?”, she asked, unsure if her question was stupid or not.

“Well, considering your interest in matters of theatre and your liking for discretion, as I've heard, I thought you were a perfect profile for our little group. We study people and their behaviours to build a chart and better be able to detect criminals and prevent unfortunate events.”

He finished his mug, and set it down delicately on the table.

“Before you ask for further explanation, I would like to add that this little job pays off. Quite well, at that. I know students your age struggle with money sometimes. Working with us for a short hour each night could provide you enough to live comfortably on your own, or properly help your family.”

She thought about it. It would be nice to bring some money home. Jon and Sansa both had a job at her age. She wanted to be independent too.

“I uh… I don't know, I'd need to talk about it with… my sister. Is there some kind of contract or anything, also I'm not eighteen yet, I'm not sure I-”

He raised his hand, hushing her again.

“This is why discretion is one of our main criteria of recruitment. This business is resting on a beneficial exchange for both sides. You gift me your work, and I gift you a check in exchange. You need not to worry, all of this is legal. But since our locals are here, in this restaurant where I employ
people for real, the line between what is legal and what is not sort of blurs out. Surely I can count on your discretion, miss Stark?"

Her eyes were round, and she shook her head to approve.

“Yes, of course.”

Yeah, it would be nice to bring some money home. Arya remembered that Sansa always came home very late and was exhausted because of all the shoots she had had recently. Surely one more monthly check in this household would help her rest a little.

“Agreed, then?”

She shook her head again, and his smiled seemed satisfied.

“I shall address you to a man who will first show you what the job consists of. Of course, your trial period does not engage you to anything. Don't pressure yourself too much of course, but this is serious business for me, and considering the cheque that comes along at the end of the month, a reasonable amount of work will be expected of you.”

He stood up, and she did the same.

“You shall meet him every day at seven until eight at the electric gate on the side of the building. He will open the door for you at first, but when your apprenticeship will be over, you will be able to come here whenever you want.”

He led her through the corridors towards the back door again.

“You start tomorrow. Oh- and, miss Stark-”

“Yes?”

“If anyone asks, you shall say you work as a waitress here.”, he smiled again, and disappeared.
Before going out again, she sighed, confused but determined.

*What did I engage myself into?*

The next day she was in front of the electric gate five minutes early. It was Saturday, everyone was out on Essos Blvd. She had skipped theatre again on the morning, both her private course and the main course. Of course, she hadn't gotten any text from Jaqen. *He probably doesn't care that his puppet is missing his classes, surely he has others to play with,* she had thought, angry to not see her phone light up at a worried message from him.

*Ugh,* she should slap herself each time she thought of him.

But she didn't get any more time to curse herself. She saw a shadow approach from the other side of the gate, and then a comely face greet her with a formal smile. She followed the man silently through the alley, then through long corridors. He was quite handsome. His hair was thick and black, his eyes looked like a cat's, and he looked about thirty years old, and somehow she felt like he was an arrogant teen inside.

They reached a small room, with white tiles, white walls, two white plastic chairs, and strange
pictures on the walls.

“I'm Chameleon.”, he simply said after letting her take a look.

Chameleon?

Is this a joke?

“Uh… I'm Ar-”, she stopped when he shook his head frantically.

“We don't use names here. You'll get a codename once you've learned a few things about this place and the work we do.”

Codename?

Wow, these people are really taking themselves way too seriously, she mused, mocking them inside. Whatever, they could be ridiculous if they paid her. She'd keep her cynicism inside.

“For now you're just my apprentice. I know this is weird, but this is the way we work. It'll make sense once you'll understand how we organize ourselves.”, he smiled.

“I'll get our stuff. I'll be right back.”, he said before disappearing through the door.

She examined the pictures. The room smelled like a hospital too, and a weird ambiance was making her quite uncomfortable.

She had brought a block-note and pens with her, not really sure what else she would need to work on human behaviour. She was expecting a lot of reading and maybe some heavy books about psychology. She was quite looking forward to that, actually. Psychology interested her more than she had expected.

The man came back with two empty plastic bags and a suitcase.
“Please, hand me over your jacket and your bag. All we need to write and do our research is in this suitcase. Since we're not really allowed to speak about the work we do here, it would be unfortunate if a relative stumbled on notes you took here, do you understand darling?”

She frowned, but obeyed and gave him her jacket and her bag. She wanted to pick out her phone, but he shook his head and took it along with the rest of her stuff. He disappeared again and came back a minute later, opened the suitcase and gave her a blank block-note and a sharpened pencil.

He settled down on a chair, and sighed, examining her.

“So… you are the girl my brother has been getting into trouble for.”

Arya frowned and didn't know with which question she should start. **Why are they all calling each other brother? Is this an organization to study crime or some kind of sect?**

“He's in no trouble. Nothing happened. His marriage is perfectly safe.”, she said coldly.

He scoffed, and that truly infuriated her. How could he scoff at her miserable love life? So, apparently he knew she had fallen for a married man, the people of this freaking place had threatened her for it, and now she was in a weird place with a stranger about to do some weird job, and all that jackass could do was scoff.

“You still believe this stupid marriage thing? I thought he'd fall for a smarter girl.”

She frowned harder. **What?**

“And taller.”, he continued, casually.

“I thought you'd be taller. According to his history of women. A bit older, too. But who am I to judge, eh?”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Wow, calm down, princess. Alright. You should sit down.”, he took her shoulders and gently
pushed her to sit. She wanted to punch him in the face but she was able to restrain the urge.

“What I'm about to reveal will change how you perceive this entire world. Or not. Most likely not, but listen anyway.”

She was getting pissed but she feared that if she spat at him to hurry the hell up he might not take it very well and decide not to tell her what seemed so important.

“They've been taking you for an idiot.”

“What? Who?!”, she boiled up.

“The people who work here. My colleagues. My sisters and brothers. Especially Iris, the blonde woman you've met.”, seeing her confused expression he clicked his tongue, casually put his hands in his jean's pockets, and went on with his explanation.

“Well, when that sly fox first talked about taking a student with him in Germany, they all feared that if he would get too close to you he might forget who he's working for. I told them they were being crazy. I mean, I don't mean to make him sink even lower in your esteem, but he's been with a fair amount of women before. I thought he was just playing, which he probably was, the job gets a little boring sometimes, you know. But my sisters and brothers, they preferred to play the safe game. Surely it was the chief's idea. He gets paranoid really easy, you know. Sometimes it's funny, sometimes it leads to this. He sent Iris over to watch over you two and report anything curious. Apparently she took a liking for you and tried to scare you away rather than include you in all of this mess.”, he looked at her decomposed face.

“Looks like it didn't work.”

“What the hell are you talking about? How does the job have anything to do with my… private life? And why do your sisters and brothers care who he's going out with?! And—”

She did her best not to fume. What the fuck was going on? Did these people have nothing else to do with their lives than set up freaking farces for her?! And where did that wedding picture come from if Jaqen wasn't married?!

The teasy expression on the Chameleon's face melted, and his smile died. She cooled at the gaze of pity he now granted her.
“Oh boy.”, he said in a low voice, his eyes gloomy.

“Have you got any idea what you just engaged yourself in?”

A knock on the door interrupted his pity glance. The old and posh black man from yesterday (probably the one he called chief) entered the room. Somehow she felt the urge to stand in his presence.

“Please, miss, remain sat.”, he said, a kind smile on his face.

“I only came to see if Chameleon was doing his job right.”, he joked.

“Always, chief.”, Chameleon said, but there was something tense in his voice.

The chief inclined his head, and looked at her with eyes that reminded her a lot of her father's.

“As you may have understood miss, I'm the chief. You shall call me so, as everyone else in here. This is your first course, Chameleon shall show you some cases and evaluate your skills to better decide which aspect you will later work on. This evaluating period will last eight sessions of one hour. Then, you will be attributed a mentor, who shall teach you in the field you are the most likely to succeed in. Once the mentoring is done, your mentor will become your partner.”, Arya shook her head approvingly throughout the explanation, sometimes throwing a glance at Chameleon, whose empty eyes were on the ground.

“After every session here, you must come to my office to take back your clothes and your bag. And once you are out of the building, you musn't talk about anything you do here. You are also forbidden to meet with your mentor outside, as well as any person you will meet here. If you happen to cross paths with someone, which is unlikely but plausible, you shall only greet them casually as anyone would a colleague, and not start a conversation. Understood?”

She felt that he was strangely serious for a project he presented as a simple hobby, but she shook her head again nonetheless.

“About your cheque at the end of the month, it will depend on how much effort you put into your work. But considering that you seem to be at least averagely smart, you should earn around two thousand dollars a month.”

She did her best not to gasp.
Two thousand dollars?

He must have seen her pale because she saw a corner of his mouth lift.

Two freaking thousand dollars for one little hour a day?!

There's no way I'm ever getting a real job, this shall be my life now.

“Now that this is settled, I shall let Chameleon proceed. Oh- and since this is your first course, you shall spend ten minutes with our sister Iris for a medical check-up before you meet with me. I hope that agrees with you?”

She wondered why for a second, but for two thousand dollars she'd let them do all the medical check-ups they wanted.

“Sure.”, she smiled.

The chief went away, and Chameleon's gaze was blank when she turned back to face him.

“What's wrong with you?”, she asked.

“Nothing.”, he said after he woke up from his little trance.

“Here, fill this up please.”, he said handing out a sheet of paper.

This was some strange test, with questions she had to answer. At first she thought it was a joke. The first question asked to copy a sentence, like in some elementary school exam. But she did it seriously anyway. She answered the other questions, filled up the cases. Most of the questions were about what she would do in a certain situation, so she figured this was probably a personality test, since they all focused on human behaviour.

When she was done Chameleon handed her another test, then another, and another. The more she filled up, the more the questions became personal.
“Here’s the last one. I hope your wrist isn't too tired.”, he joked, but the amusement went away when his eyes lingered on the questions on that last piece of paper.

“Something's wrong?”, she asked.

“Uh…”, he looked up at the ceiling. Only when she looked up too did Arya notice that there was a camera. Probably a microphone too. That freaked her out a little. But after all, he’d only been watching her fill up paper sheets. Why was he so nervous?

“No… no, it's fine. Hurry, you still have to meet with Iris.”

She took the paper and examined the questions that seemed to bother him so much. And the first one was indeed oddly specific.

Would you say you share a special kind of relationship with your theatre teacher?

What?

What did that have to do with her personality?

And why did they care?

She was about to ask Chameleon, but somehow thinking that there were a camera and a microphone in this room held her from doing so. She ticked the “No” case. It was not totally a lie, they had only kissed a few times. Yeah, nothing special about that, a cynic voice in her mind intervened. But she paid it no mind. She didn't want to have a special relationship with him anymore. The last few days spent depressing over his potential marriage, added to everything she had discovered here had led her to the awful realization that she truly knew nothing about him. And if a relationship with him involved these weird people stalking on them wherever they’d go, she'd remain as far from him as possible. Even if it tasted rather bitter when she thought back on that sly grin he always wore, the one that made her blush and bite her lower lip

She filled up the rest of the last sheet, weirdly personal questions about her closeness to her siblings and her classmates. She handed the piece of paper over when she was done, and Chameleon nodded.
“Good. Iris must be waiting for you now. To go to her office, walk all the way toward the end of this corridor, turn right, then take the third turn left, it's the first door on the right.”

She nodded, and said goodbye.

_This is really a weird place_, she thought on her way to Iris’ office, loosing herself in the clean corridors. _It's crazy how you can't guess that there's a restaurant upstairs, it looks so much like some kind of lab_

_But two thousand dollars? This sounds like a joke._

Maybe she should be careful, she thought. It wouldn't be the first time a young girl finds herself in some pretty precarious situation involving blood-thirsty psychopaths who take advantage of her naiveness. Isn't that how all the scary movies begin? But somehow the thought that Jaqen was somehow related to this group reassured her, even despite all that had happened in her head recently, and the fact that they all refused to speak about him.

She found Iris’ office (finally, after almost getting lost twice), and before she had a chance to knock, the pretty blonde opened the door and gently pulled her in. Her hair was in a ponytail, and she was wearing a white blouse that made her look a lot like a scientist.

“Hi-”, Arya awkwardly greeted her.

“We don't have much time.”

Arya frowned, and first thing she did was check for cameras.

“There are none here. Nor microphones.”, the blonde said. She looked at the clock on her wrist, nervous.

“Come on, quick. The quicker we do this, the longer we get to talk so I can explain you.”

“Explain me what?”, Arya frowned. She didn't get an answer, and Iris pulled out another piece of paper to fill in.
"You'll see when this is done. Answer as precisely and truthfully as you can. This way we can get on with it. Natural hair colour?"

"Uh-", Arya blabbered, a bit confused.

"Brown.", she obeyed.

"Eyes?"

"Uh… grey?"

Iris looked at her, which made her uncomfortable.

"Blue grey. Weight and Height?"

"113 pounds, 5ft1"

The questions kept fusing, about her blood type or her numbers of tattoos and piercings, which she had none. After 10 minutes, Iris had filled up twenty pages and said they were good to go.

"Why do you need all of this?", Arya asked, frowning again.

"Just protocol.", the pretty blonde answered. On her face had been the same blank expression she had seen on Chameleon's.

"Alright, now I get to tell you some stuff. But you have to promise you won't repeat it. Ever. To anyone. It's very important that the chief doesn't learn that I tell you this, understood?"

There was a distressed sparkle in her eyes, and Arya nodded meekly. *What the hell is so important now? And why do they all seem so afraid of that old guy?*

"I'm the one who sent you this stupid email. I thought it'd scare you away from him, but-"
“It didn't work.”, Arya was furious again.

“Why did you do this?! You- you followed us when we went out?! Don't you have any better to do?!”

“Shh-”, the blonde was calm yet tense, and not at all picking up Arya's provocations.

“I had to, the-… the chief, he's afraid that if… uhm, how could I say this? The chief said if the F…uh… if your theatre teacher gets too close to you he might loose his job as a teacher and compromise the… studies he does here. So the chief asked me to get more info about you, to see what was making him interested in you and maybe hire you, but I… I thought it might be better for you to uhm… to stay out of this.”

“Well, you screwed up real bad then.”, the teen answered dryly.

“But why would you keep me out of here? It's…”, Arya lowered her voice.

“The Chief is offering a lot of money.”

“I know, I know he is, I just…”

A bell rang, making the walls shake slightly.

“Damn it-”, the blonde cursed.

“You have to go to the office now.”, she said, panicked.

“But when you're done, go to the classroom, he's waiting for you. He told me to insist, even if you didn't want to talk to him-”

“What? What classroom?!”, the young one asked while being pushed out of the room.

“I don't know. He told me to tell you to meet him there. Please, go, this is important, you have a lot to tell each other. And you might not get another chance to do it.”, she pushed her through the door, and the white lights were a bit blinding.

“Oh, and whatever happens, don't tell the chief.”, she quickly finished, before closing the door.

Arya blinked a few times in front of that closed door before she started to wonder what the fuck was wrong with all of these crazy people.
She clenched her teeth, and started to walk back towards the chief’s office to get her stuff back and leave this freaking rat hole. *That cheque better be a big one.*

She pondered while getting lost in the long corridors. She wasn’t sure yet if she wanted to go to that theatre classroom and listen to whatever this strange redhead had to tell her.

And she still hadn’t understood what this whole thing with the wedding picture had been. What the hell? *If he's not truly married, then why is he dressed as a groom, and why is that woman dressed in a wedding gown?!!*

She got out of the building as quickly as she could once she had gathered her stuff. Outside, the air was sharp and cold, perfect to clear her thoughts. She stood in front of the marble stairs, fancy cars passing by and dropping some fancy people for them to begin their fancy evening. Arya wanted to scoff at their stupid clothes and their fake laughs and their lips filled with botox.

She took a breath in, looked at the dark sky above her head, not filled with much stars. The light of the city made them hard to see.

And then she started to walk towards the theatre classroom.
Chapter End Notes

Well, well, well
Looks like someone just got in trouble
Or maybe not, you'll see ;)

Please leave comment, your feedback is so precious :D
Hey! I'm kind of struggling to update frequently these days, so I wanted to say a massive thank you to everyone supporting my works despite the schedule irregularities! :D

Hope you enjoy this one. It has kind of a cheeky bit that had been laying around in the draft for this work for quite some time, I'm excited to see how you think about it!

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

There he was. With his stupid face, sitting on one of these stupid chairs of this stupid theatre class with old lights and scruffy curtains. And she looked even more stupid, standing like that without saying anything for almost a full minute now. She shut her face and wished to keep it as neutral as possible. Because honestly she had no idea how she was supposed to feel, so conveying it on her face was not even an option.

After some awkwardly silent time, she sighed, and pulled out her phone. She searched for that email, and pulled out one of the pictures of them kissing in Berlin.

She strode towards him, and when their gaze met for half a second she was sure her heart forgot to beat.

She stretched her phone for him to see the picture. His face was totally blank too, so blank she almost felt like slapping him to get a reaction. A genuine one, not these faked ones he pulled out sometimes when he didn't enjoy the situation. One of these real expressions she had only seen when they were alone.

He raised an eyebrow as he assessed the screen.

“I want to know why your colleagues stalked us.”, she said, her face stern and her voice cold, but she cursed inside her head because she heard it break in the last two syllables. She was sure he noticed it too.

She knew why his colleague had stalked them, Iris had told her. But this was a test. To see if he'd
say the truth. For once.

“My colleague…”, hearing his voice made something tilt in her. But she erased it as soon as she noticed. Even if it was too late for it not to trigger longing memories.

“A man’s colleague was ordered to do so.”

She was about to get mad and tell him this wasn’t a full answer. Had Iris not explained it all to her before, there was no way she could have understood this strange situation.

But, since she was drained of all kinds of emotions, she decided to let that pass. Because there was another question burning her tongue.

“I know.” She gulped down, and searched for the other picture. The one with the pretty lady in the white fluffy dress and him by her side.

“Now-”, there was a weight strangling her in he throat. *Don't be stupid. Why the hell are you so touched by all of this? He's a stranger.*

“I want explanations for this.”

He watched the picture and sighed. A sad, disappointed sigh, and she almost fumed because *how in the world is HE the one disappointed by all of this?!*

“A girl should have never entered the House of Black and White.”

She waited, for the rest of his explanation. It never came. She clenched her teeth.

“Is that all I get?”, her eyes went big and she pushed the confusion away to better fume.

“Your freaking colleagues stalk me, threaten me, make me believe I’m some home-wrecker or some shit, and all you find to tell me as an explanation is that I shouldn't have gotten in your stupid detective group?!”, she tightened her jaw and restrained the urge to slap him. *Oh- how she wanted to slap him. And then let her hand melt down on his face and feel the spikes and ridges of his unshaven beard and explore them with her lips too.*

His gaze became hard on her but she held it. *Don't you dare use that authority on me*
“Lovely girl.”, something tingled in her stomach.

He looked at her, a slightly distressed look that she thought she'd never get from him. Then he frowned, and something must have tilted in his mind because his breathing changed.

He approached her and she stepped back.

“Jaqen what are y-”

“Shh-” he implored. He got closer and she wanted to shove him back. She didn't know if she'd have the psychological strength though. She didn't want him to hug her or something. It wouldn't change anything, it wouldn't explain anything. Plus neither of them was really a hugger, so what the heck was he doing?

His hands slipped underneath her jacket and made it slide to the ground. Why the hell was he undressing her?! She tried to fight back but then he was holding her wrists. Her bag fell on the ground, and the next thing she knew he was pulling her towards that dark and messy room that served as a backstage.

“What the hell is wrong with you?!”, she hissed. What the hell did he think he was doing?! She wanted to punch him in the face and run away, and then destroy every single memor-

“They put mikes.”, he was strangely calm and she was so in the mood to fight.

“What do you-”, she spat, but then realized.

“They…they put mikes?”’, she whispered.

“On… my stuff??”, a strange feeling held her guts, and she looked back at her jacket splayed on the ground a few feet away, her bag laying next to it.

“They're probably not activated yet, but it's better to be safe and… get away from them.”

Arya remembered the distress in Iris' eyes when she told her the chief shouldn't know that they're
meeting. *What would happen if he discovered about it?* Part of her wanted to know, some other part kind of feared his reaction. *Fear? Why fear? He's just an old guy!*

“Jaqen, what…”, she looked at the jacket again. She took his hand and pulled him gently further in the dark room, until they were quite far from the spying cloth.

“What does all of this mean?”

He shut the door of the small room, and his arms looked inviting. But she held her breath and didn’t snuggle up in them. *Neither of us are huggers*

“Lovely girl, this man is so sorry, he wishes…”, he tightened his jaw, and the words seemed difficult to utter.

“He wishes you had never met him.”

She rolled her eyes and sighed angrily.

“Get over with your stupid apologies and tell me what the hell is going on! What does this mean?! I don’t… I don’t understand, why would they put mikes? And why… why are you so serious?! It’s just a group interested in psychology, right?!”

His smile looked as confusing as him. His skin looked warm and she wanted to feel it against her own. And his lips looked soft… so soft and full and *God* she swore if she ever thought about how soft and full his lips were again she'd slap herself.

“A man guesses they made a girl fill up all the personal informations already.”, he sighed.

She looked at him and nodded.

“They… they didn't tell me they'd put…”, she thought about that jacket. How did she not notice if there were mikes? What the hell?

“This man knows, they do the same with everyone. He knows they offered a lot a money, too. There is no stepping back now, but a girl knows this.”, the guilt in his eyes made her feel awful. She kind of regretted ignoring him this whole time. Somehow it felt like things would have been different had
she not acted like a brooding child.

He took her shoulders gently in his strong hands, and made her sit on an old chair that was there. He sat next to her and remained silent for a little moment. Then, she heard him take a breath in, and the sound of his voice resonated in her chest. He probably smoked, she quickly noted, although she had never seen him. There was no way his voice was naturally like that.

“When this man had just turned eighteen, he got into a fight with a guy who had sexually assaulted a man’s former girlfriend. The rapist's father was a wealthy company's director, and his money prevented his son from getting into trouble. But the boy a man was once would not let that go unpunished.”, his eyes drifted away, and she shifted awkwardly. This might have been the first time he openly talked about his past. Actually, this might have been the first time he talked about his past at all. All the other times she had had to squeeze the words out of him. Finally, a part of her thought. The other was like: Why the heck is he talking about his childhood now?

“The rapist was not in a really good shape after that fight. A man had made sure to leave him in a dark alley, where there were no cameras nor people, so no one would know who was guilty. A couple of days later, the rapist was reported missing. That was the day a boy received a strange email, from a luxury brand of beauty products in one of the affluent streets of Berlin.”

A weight formed in her throat. She didn't want to feel it, but there was an urge to take his hand in hers.

“The email had pictures in them. Of a boy fighting a rapist in a dark alley. Only pictures, and one sentence that stated how many years of prison the boy risked now that the body had disappeared.”

“The guy was dead?”

He didn't answer, and his gaze was still far. After a few seconds of cold silence, she thought she had lost him, but he licked his lips and blinked.

“I didn't kill him. I know I didn't. But a week later, the police found his dead body anyway.”, he murmured.

That was a punch in her guts. For some reason. Not that she considered killing a rapist was a great loss for humanity. But if he didn't do it, then…
He passed his hand over his mouth and chin, and crossed his arms.

“So a man went to that luxury shop, and met the chief. He offered a lot of money, and safety, as long as I worked for him.”

“But… what are you working on? It's just… studying psychology…”

“Yes, studying psychology…”, his eyes met hers. They were gold and blue and honest.

“But once you've discovered the monsters, what do you think they do with them?”

Oh my God

He probably saw her eyes grow bigger.

“Oh-”, her voice broke.

“Lovely girl, this was not meant to frighten you-”

She tried to calm her breathing and clenched her teeth.

“I know, I know.”, she tried not to panic and act as casually as possible. Act as if you knew what to do-the rational part of her thought. But the other kept swearing. Oh my fucking God what the hell did I engage myself into and now it's fucking too late I gave them all the infos about all the members of my family, my bank account and fuck-

“So… they're… killers?”, her fingers were cold now.

“Well, they prefer to call it acceleration of the American imprisonment process for untouchable criminals. They have support from the authorities, that's… how it works.”, he still wouldn't look at her. She snorted, but wasn't sure it really amused him.

All will be fine. It has to be fine. I'll help San with the bills. It'll be fine.
“Please tell me.”, she twisted her fingers around the cord of her sweater. There was a strange fear in her stomach. Well, it wasn't that strange, in the end. The fact that she might have joined a horde of killers was a pretty good justification for the pressure she felt in her. She hated it too. But the fact that his eyes were finally on her now reassured her.

“What's gonna happen now?”

“A girl will work for them as well. Considering what she's interested in, she will probably be tutored to enter the research department.”

“Which department are you part of?”

“Field.”

She frowned, but he wouldn't develop, and she wasn't entirely sure she wanted to know. Was that the department that handled the… murders? I should probably get away from him…

Well, considering the weird situation she was in now, she probably should've gotten away from him four months ago since that first theatre class. She chose to be oblivious. Acceleration of the American imprisonment process for untouchable criminals… right. So in the end, what they were doing was just… justice? And if the authorities supported it… it could only be right. Right? Why make it secret then? She erased the question. Jaqen was part of that thing. So she'd trust it.

“Okay… So if I understood right… we're not allowed to see each other outside of that restaurant thing.”

“No.”, his tone was dry.

“This meeting will not happen again. This is the last time a lovely girl came here.”

She was disappointed. I shouldn't care. I don't care about him. He lied to me. About… whatever it is he lied about. I shouldn't trust him, she tried to be logical. But she was disappointed nonetheless.

“But please, lovely girl, each time you come back from the House of Black and White, change your clothes before you go out again. For… your privacy. They will try to watch you, but you don't have to always play their game. Cherish the freedom you have.”
His eyes were serious and... gooey. She snorted. And then laughed. So hard she was shaking. He looked startled but that only made her laugh harder. Ah, the nerves popping.

“I, hahaha...”, she tried to control the tears at the corners of her eyes from the giggles.

“Only a few days ago, I thought you were like, married with a bunch of kids! I don't know what the fuck happened, but I think I'd rather be your dirty mistress than be involved in all of this mess.”, she kept laughing, her body out of her control. She snuggled up in his arms, unsure elsewhere to seek comfort. He looked surprised at first (and honestly she was surprised she did it too), but he gave in and circled her skinny shoulders with his arms. God, she had missed that. All of it. The scent, the warmth, the feeling of him being close.

“What's the deal with that wedding picture, then? Did they photoshop it to threaten me?”

“No, it's... this man is a field agent, that job involves... sometimes changing his identity. For an observation mission once, he needed to be a married man. The woman is one of his colleagues, also in disguise.”, he was still serious, but she could read in his gleaming eyes that her loss of control her her giggling was amusing him. She wanted to kiss him. He had a beautiful face. But she clenched her fists and didn't. This scene looked so unreal honestly, she probably needed 56 hours of sleep to take it all in and process what had happened in the last 24 hours.

She stayed in his arms. Some part of her dreaded to let him go. Like, what would happen if we saw each other outside of the House?

He obliged and held her too, and they stayed here, in the quietness of that room. At some point she could feel his breath against the back of her hair. This was probably not a really comfortable position for him, since she was quite small, and he quite tall. But she didn't care. Images flashed in her mind, reminding her why she liked him. She should have shoved them away. But she didn't find the force. So she let the pictures of Berlin invade her thoughts, the image of his arrogant eyes when he knew he was pushing her off limits, or when his lips curved like that when she surprised him with her cynicism. Or the sweetness on his face when he had handed her these maths and chem books to make studying for her semester easier. God, there was so much more she wanted to know about him.

“Arya?”, he broke the silence. He hadn't called her by her actual name on many occasions.

“Promise this man you'll stay in the research department.”

She looked at him, and he looked too serious to be contradicted. She wanted to ask him what that all meant, the departments, the research. She wanted to ask him what his job was in the field department. She wanted to ask him if he had... killed... already. She doubted that he had, but... some sick part of her was strangely fascinated by the fact that he might have. She kept the questions for herself, and nodded. She wasn't entirely sure what he meant, but she nodded.
The ride on the way back home was strange. The bus was almost empty, and winter was here, so it had been dark for a long time. She pushed herself out once she reached her bus-stop. She lacked her usual appetite once she got home. She simply got rid of her shoes and stumbled on the bed, falling in a deep, deep sleep.

On the morning, she felt a buzz in her head, and saw a circle of haze around her. *God, did this really happen?*

There was Jon's voice outside the room, and Sansa's. The images of the white corridors flashed in her mind. The face of Jaqen flashed too, kind and mysterious. She kind of wished he were he right now. Just that he were here, asleep, allowing her to share his warmth.

_Hell, I hope this was not just a huge mistake._

The day went by as usual. It was a quiet day, all her Sundays usually were. It was Sansa's day off, and Jon didn't have any work to do either, so they all went out with Nymeria and Ghost, found some diner to eat in. During their meal, Sansa asked Jon about Ygritte. Arya noticed him being quite evasive. Things were probably not going too well between the two. She didn't know if she should be happy about it or if it should pain her for him. So she forgot about it. She also forgot about the fluttery feeling in her stomach when he put his arm around her shoulders when they walked. Well, she tried really hard, with all the voices yelling _Freak!_ in her mind.

They came back before it was dark. When it was 6:30pm, Arya sneaked out, and found herself just in time before the marble stairs of the House of Black and White.

7 sessions left, and her mentoring would begin. Serious shit, would begin. A part of her imagined Jaqen being her mentor. How nice would that be? She usually wasn't very good with strangers, so it would help her quite a bit. And… Jaqen was Jaqen, being taught by him would allow her to spend some time with him if they were not allowed to see each other outside of this strange place.

Chameleon came by to open the gate for her. Just like the day before, she got rid of her jacket and her bag in a plastic wrap that he took to the chief's office. For the first time in her life last night, she had paid attention to tidy them in the closet once she had gotten home. She didn't have anything to hide in that tiny flat, but she'd rather not have a bunch of stalker listen to her conversations with her siblings. _Especially with Jon_, part of her had thought. _They're like, experts on human behaviour and stuff…_ she didn't want them to find things or signs betraying that sick “sort of desire thing” that she hadn't figured out how to hide yet. Even if she was pretty proud of herself for acting so casually
around him. Like, in the end, it was just like with Jaqen. It was only physical attraction. But still. He was like a brother and she didn't want anyone to know.

Again, she filled in a bunch of papers that the man gave her. This time there was more writing, not just ticking boxes.

“According to your answers so far, it looks like you'd be pretty useful in the research department, darling.”, he said, after handing out the fourth piece of paper.

“What would I do there?”

“Observe suspicious people's action, note them, and prepare everything the field agents need to observe them irl. Your job would also include making resumes of their actions to communicate to the chief, so that he later communicates them to the authorities, and they decide what we do with them.”

She nodded. Damn, so they really are killers... Part of her thought she probably should be afraid. But that part didn't win over the other part.

“I believe you've seen your theatre teacher yesterday.”, he added, his voice lower.

She shook her head quickly from left to right, and blinked a few times.

“Don't worry, Iris told me you guys would meet. I'm on your side. He probably explained you a little bit more about everything that's going on in here.”, he continued, and she didn't know if she could trust him.

“He probably kept a lot of it secret though. He likes to give everything a super mysterious twist. Or maybe he thought you were a fragile little flower who couldn't take it all in, but if you're here, someone's gotta tell you at some point.”

He took a breath in and leaned against the white wall.

“The deaths of targets are rare. Very rare. And they're always natural, never cruel. A poison that makes your sleep eternal, or an unfortunate fall. That's a very kind way of getting rid of them if you ask me, the criminals who require such extreme measures have done so much bad it sometimes pains me to see them go so easily. A lot of rich folks think money will keep them from any harm. Most of them are still right, but thanks to this House, some of them still pay their debts.”
“So… in the field department… you observe people, and eventually, you… kill one of them?”

“Not always. Sometimes it's just observation, to see the extent of their crimes and provide the authorities enough content for a fair judgement. Sometimes, field agents build a crime around the target to make him look like he's guilty and still get him to go to jail for his real crimes. But they keep everything secret because our ways of operation aren't always super legal either.”

“And what about… my theatre teacher?”, the question slipped under her guard. She had sworn herself she wouldn't ask about him. She wanted to be casual about everything that concerned him, she wanted him to be just a teacher she had kissed a few times for the fun of it in her mind (like some student teacher kink or some shit). She failed at it, but she never thought she'd fail this bad. She sighed, wanted to erase her question when she saw one of Chameleon's brow lift.

“Fox is currently undercover as a German theatre teacher slash comedian thing. But you already knew that.”

*Fox*

“But… who is he studying?”

Chameleon frowned.

“Well, you're… not allowed to know. No one is, except from Fox, the research team that's taking care of the case, and the chief. Here in LA, there are three research departments, and three field agents departments. There are two pairs in each department, and two field agents pairs plus two research pairs makes a team. The teams don't know each other, and they don't know either what the others are working on. It would be too dangerous to let all these infos circulate. Only the care Team interacts with everyone, but they don't know a thing about the missions. They only tend our wounds, feed us, dress us when need be. They also help us release all the stress that builds up during the missions. They have their ways, we would all be crazy pricks by now had they not been here.”

Yeah, that made sense actually.

“And which team am I going to be part of?”

“That depends on who mentors you. If you're interested in research, that'll probably be Iris since you
guys already met, so you'll be on Team B with her.”, he looked at her and smirked.

“Can't wait to see which flower name you pick. It better be a pricky one.”

“Flower name?”

“Iris isn't her real name, as Chameleon isn't mine. They're codenames. Never tell your real name to anyone here, even the chief. Each agent of the research department of Team B has a flower name. That's how we recognize who's part of which team. The field department of Team B has animal names, like Chameleon or Fox.”

“Okay, so… that means I'll take care of planning the trips for the field agents of Team B, and analyse the people around them?”

“Yes. You'll be here in an office, and you'll be in contact with them during their mission. Then, when they come back here, you'll meet with them and discuss and plan and whatever. Iris will give you more details. Each pair takes care of another pair. If you become Iris’ partner, you'll be the research pair of the Fox and his new partner.”

She tried to restrain the smile again, but she must've failed, because his grew wicked.

“There aren't many restrictions in the research department, it's quite the safest way to play the game. You only have to be here when the chief tells you to, and do your job when your field pair is on a mission. You can't meet with your colleagues outside, especially with your mentor, but the chief’s safety team won't be watching over you as strictly as they do with the new field recruits. So if you still insist on breaking the rules and meeting with certain people, it's actually not that hard.”, his eyes shone, and his smile was arrogant, as if he were an older brother encouraging her to mess around.

She frowned. Why was he telling her this? True, that she did want to see Jaqen still, but… how could he know?

“He won't do you though.”, his smile was crooked.

“I'm sorry?”, she asked. She wasn't sure if she had understood right.

“He doesn't do virgins. That's in his stupid code.”
She had understood right.

“Why… why are you telling me this? I don't care.”, she lied. One second later she realized she should've rolled her eyes to make herself more convincing. And… was it written on her face that she was a virgin? That kind of annoyed her for some reason.

“You don't care that he won't do you, or you don't care about his stupid code?”, he asked with a mischievous grin.

“Both.”, she wanted her answer to sound cold and sure.

“No, you do care.”, he said, striding closer, until she could sense him behind her. *Ugh*-what was the point in lying to a professional liar detector? She felt tiny with him preying over her like that. She should probably get up that chair and punch him in the face. But she froze herself in place. *Don't fume. He's just being an ass.*

“It's okay, you know. He's quite the handsome guy. You think I didn't see those pictures in Berlin? That wasn't a curiosity kiss, darling. That was fiery. Ooh, the mere mention of him made your panties wet, I'm sure. Such a shame he abandoned you in front if that hotel door.”

“Shut the fuck up.”, she sounded like an angry little girl, but she found nothing else to throw at him. She tightened her fists on the side of the chair.

God, he was such a pain in the ass. And this was an embarrassing situation. And she hated him. She hated everyone in this darn house.

“Now, don't be shy. He feels it too, you know? He sees it when you press your knees together because the feeling in your stomach is unbearable, he senses this tension too.” How the hell did he know she squeezed her knees together when he was around?!

She looked at him with a fake disgusted expression on her face in hope to make him shut up.

“That's the stupidest bullshit I've ever heard.”, she spat.
It didn't work. His grin only grew wider.

“Deny it as much as you like, sweetheart.”

He kept circling around her like this was some interrogatory and she was the main suspect. She hated it. She rolled her eyes. *Goddamn it, does he ever shut up?*

“But believe me, he wants to be deep up in there.”

She clenched her teeth and exhaled sharply. Ugh—how long would this last?!

“I don't care what he wants, I don't care what you think he wants, shut up and leave me alone before my fist ends up in your face.”

“Oh, why so aggressive? It looks like you're defending yourself from something, darling. Is that so?”

She tightened her jaw. *Shit*—she had played his game without even knowing.

“He wants you, and you want him. You can't lie to me sweetie, that's undeniable. I don't understand how I'm the only one who sees it. And there's nothing like a good fuck, I understand how it turns you so obsessed.”*, his smirk was unbearable.

“But he won't do you.”*, he kept saying that as if it was meant to piss her off. And it worked.

He took another step towards her until she could feel the heat of his body almost pressed against hers.

“And you're both turning mad. Ah, the tricks of nature, eh? How crazy is it, that we turn back into savage beasts in the presence of some people?”

He lowered his head for his blue eyes to be levelled with hers.
“And yet you have to leash the beast, because of all of these stupid rules.”

She turned her head away and sighed angrily. She wanted to slap him. She really did want to hurt him badly. But how could she? Every fucking word that got out of his fucking mouth was so, so true. How could he know all this?

“That's where I can help.”, he added, making his voice lower than usual, and Arya turned her eyes back to his. They were now full of...some gleam thing that disgusted her.

“I can make you squirm and see stars, darling, you need only to say the word.”

She turned her head, grossed out and frowning. She felt like spitting at him.

“Shut the fuck up. Who do you think you are?!?”

“You could imagine that I'm him. I don't mind.”, he continued, and this was evolving into something totally out of her control. Well, she had never had any control in this whole conversation.

He leaned forward to whisper in her ear.

“I could do things to you, while you convince yourself that it's him...He could come find you in one of the rooms of this place tonight while you're tossing and turning in your bed unable to find sleep...You'd hear the lock of the door turn and he'd slip in the gloom, so that you're unable to see him move, and then you suddenly feel his breath burning with desire against your neck...”, damn it-was that dirty talking? God, she wanted to slap him and yell at him to shut the fuck up, but then she felt the burning breath on her neck and oh- images he was crafting started to pop up in her head, and she was getting lost between reality and that heat too quickly spreading in her.

“He would pull the blanket away, and run his broad hand over you, feel your skin react under his touch. When he would decide that the clothes are too annoying, he would slip underneath your top to feel the softness of your breast, graze your nipple with a thumb until you're writhing for more... but he would continue, tease every inch of your body until you're begging for him to touch you down there, until the fire that has started in you ravages everything and his hands only act as gasoline...until he finally drags two fingers along your slit and he groans at how wet and ready you are...”, the air in this small room was stifling now.

“But he's a pretentious little bitch so he'd continue being soft and toy with you until you're pleading... Please Jaqen, please you breathe over and over again, until finally he climbs on the bed
and on top of you, you feel his weight and his warmth, his gentle kisses the side of your jaw. The sound of the buckle of his belt raises the thrill in you, and you think *Finally,* you've been ready for that high since you first set your eyes on him, he moves your legs and spreads them easily, and you feel the hot tip of him ready to claim you at your entrance, hot steel sliding against you… You close your eyes to feel more and you moan already at how good this is going to feel after all this tortuously slow teasing, until finally he leans down before the decisive move and whispers in your ear with his deliciously hoarse voice: *I don't do virgins.*”

She felt like falling and then suddenly everything was real again.

“Go to hell.”, she swore.

“I suppose that is a rejection of my offer?”

“Go fuck yourself.”, she felt a bitter taste in her mouth.

“And stop playing that game with me.”

He grinned again, seemingly content.

“Oh please, my games are much more entertaining than his never ending teasing. At least there is an outcome to my promises. And don’t tell me it’s not a fountain down there.”, this pretentious asshole continued.

“If you ever grow tired of this pompous bastard and his stupid code, you know where to find me.”, he said before slightly bowing his head the way Jaqen usually did and leaving the room.

A few seconds passed and she shook her head to regain her senses. *What the hell was that?*

“Hurry. I need to teach you a few things about hacking street cameras before it’s time for you to leave.”, Iris said when she entered the room a few moments later. She unpacked a computer and approximatively eight thousand wires.

“Oh, and be careful with that one.”, she added. She must have crossed Chameleon in the corridor on her way. Arya was still blushing and feeling weird.

“What's with him?”, she asked. He was the most cocky man she'd ever seen. And somehow his manipulations had made something light up in her. Something she didn't want, something vicious
and carnal and fake.

“He’s been in the House for a long time. As you may have noticed he's a master in manipulation, and his favourite field is seduction. He was a master before I even got in. Back then he was even part of the training process.”, she said, plugging in all of her stuff.

“Part of the training process? Like… he was a step?”

“Yes.”, she said, slightly bored. She was ruling her face, Arya saw it.

“He used to be a test for young field recruits, to make sure they had mastered seduction and the body arts.”

*The body arts? Like…*

“Yes, it is what you think it is. A couple of years ago, when we had to learn to be effective in every department, all the new students had to seduce him and eventually crawl up in bed with him to show the tricks they've learned before being sent on missions. This part of the training was removed eventually. New field recruits still go through it, but later in their mentoring process, so all the students from other departments don't do it. But now he's mad that he doesn't get to screw all the new recruits, so he tries his best to get the new ones to willingly hop under the sheets with him.”

“So… he had sex with every single master in this house?”, Arya asked, trying not to sound as bedazzled as she really was. How could anyone literally trick people in their bed and not feel guilty afterwards? How could anyone treat people like mere fuck-objects? And, _wait-everyone_? Like, men too? Like, Jaqen too? No, that couldn't-

“Yes.”, her voice softened and Arya didn't like how it sounded like she was talking to a small child.

“Everyone.”

“The German too, a long time ago.”, she added with a smirk.

“I thought relationships between colleagues were forbidden?”

Her look changed, and despite her tries to hide it, Arya saw something move, far in her gaze. Was it… sadness?
“Well, he's kind of ignoring this rules, because it wasn't forbidden at all at first. Not so long ago, sex was considered just another way of getting the stress out after tough missions, along with the care-team's potions and the different relieve processes. But then there was... an incident with a team, that lead to the death of an agent because he refused to let his partner down when they were in trouble. So then the Elder decided to forbid this kind of relationships to prevent the agents from developing feelings for their partner.”

There was a knock on the door, followed by the chief's entrance. He bowed his head at both women, and then addressed to Iris.

« Il y a un changement de plans. Nous avons besoin de la nouvelle recrue sur le terrain. »

Damn it, French again. Well, this time she understood quite a bit. They changed their plans and they need her on the field- wait what? Is he talking about Iris or me?

The door opened again, and this time Jaqen appeared, followed by another woman around his age, with black hair and a tanned skin.

« Non, chef, elle ne peut pas- », Jaqen tried to intervene. Wow, he speaks french too- He was hushed by a raised hand. God, it was weird seeing him obey so meekly. And it was weirder to see him in here.

« Chef, c'est ma mission ! Vous ne pouvez pas- », the black haired woman urged the old man. The chief frowned and looked terrifying for a split second. That was enough to make the woman shut up.

« Ma décision est prise. Elle a passé assez de tests, et nous ne pouvons pas risquer de manquer cette opportunité. Renard, tu lui feras une formation accélérée. Nous avons peu de temps. »

Wait wait wait, what? She had passed the tests? And they couldn't miss the opportunity? And... damn it, what did Renard mean again? Why did he say she was supposed to be taught quickly? What the hell is going on again?!

The other woman with black hair stormed off, seemingly very mad. The chief sighed, hearing her angry steps in the corridor.
“Miss.,” he addressed to Arya now.

“We have a field mission for you. This isn't usually the way it goes, but we have an emergency, and you seem to be the only person fit for the job.”

Chapter End Notes

So, what are your thoughts? Leave a comment!

There's more drama coming ~~
Hiii! Here's a little chap for you if you haven't forgotten about this ff xD Unfortunately I couldn't find a fitting image, but next chap will be a pretty fat one and you'll porbs get a few of them. I've realized that the chapters are a little like info dumps these days, but don't worry it'll settle down and leave space for some action.

I hope you enjoy this one!

“There is usually a lot more preparation that goes into a mission. But we are quite in an emergency situation. Please, follow me.”, the chief said, and Jaqen felt Iris catch his sleeve when he was about to follow them through the door.

He watched Arya disappear with the old man, and he cursed him with words he wasn't even sure existed. His fists tightened before he had a chance to regain his his composure. He cursed himself too.

“Brother, you are loosing your facelessness.”, his sister reminded him, her grip still tight on the sleeve of his grey suit.

“We can't let them do this.”, he whispered through clenched teeth, hopefully silently enough for the people behind the hidden mikes not to hear.

“She chose to walk though these doors the first time. She chose to work with the chief. There's nothing we can do now.”

He felt the anger boil, and caught her shoulders. He forcefully dragged her until they reached her lab, where there were no ears or eyes in the walls.

“The only reason he's involving her in all of this is because of this man, and you know it, sister. He's afraid his leash on me is not tight enough.”, his tone was cold and his nose wrinkled despite his tries to stay calm.
She frowned and freed herself from his hold.

“And every single of your reactions when it concerns that girl is proving him right.

“Where is the brother I know? The one who taught me how to rule my face and hide the emotions far away, whatever happens?”

He sighed, angrily.

“How could you tell me this?”, he shook his head.

“This woman knows better than anyone why everything I taught her is pure bullshit. Or else she would still be a field agent, and her partner would still be roaming the corridors of this place.”

Her eyes went dark, and he saw the energy it took her not to slap him. He would have liked a good slap though. He deserved it. He had just ruined a life. And the night of his sister, now he knew she would break in tears again as soon as she'd be alone.

“It's not about this man, or what he taught or believed once. It's about this girl, her safety, her life. She's never done anything wrong, she has no business being here.”, he added.

“What made you change so?”, she asked, confused and angry.

“I can't remember the number of women you fucked during all your missions, I'm sure you can't even remember yourself. What's about this one that's making you change your mind about everything? And you better not tell me about how she's different or some shit, because we both don't believe in that. Is it because she's young, she's making you regret all the things you missed in your own youth?”, she rose both brows.

“Or is it because you didn't get to fuck her yet, and you're mad you'll never get a chance to now that the chief is watching over you both?”, she added, and her lips twisted in a cocky smile. Now it was his turn to use his energy to concentrate on not fuming.

“Any relationship between her and this man was screwed from the beginning, he knows it. But her life was not screwed, and now it is about to be. Don't assume wrong things, dear sister, this man taught you better.”, his voice was as cold as stone.
“Oh, don't you dare telling me you wouldn't fuck her if she asked you to.”, she looked really mad, and Jaqen didn't know why. Why was she on the chief's side? Didn't she know better than anyone what the cost of this life of facelessness was?

“Yes, you taught me damn right. You think I don't know anything about what's happened between you two? Or what hasn't happened, should I say… Why is it that you always think you're the smartest person in the room?”, her lips were still crooked in that awful smile, and she was hurting him on purpose, yet he could not place why. And he couldn't place why he let it work, either.

“I know about your manly pride. You and Chameleon are just the same, arrogant boys who only think with their cocks, and the second you find someone you can't have, you have no other goal than to use your tricks and your games to lure them towards you anyway and make it their fault.”, she packed some of the vials that were laying here, and put her coat on to leave.

“It's a good thing the chief decided to take her in the House. This way, there'll be a reasonable mind watching over you two, and protecting her from you. Even if it wasn't my first intent, I'm glad I helped him, in the end.”

She slammed the door on her way out. His jaw was clenched so hard it hurt his muscles.

He took an empty vial, and crushed it in his fist.

_Fuck_, he roared inside, watching a drop of blood trickle down his wrist, but the pain felt relieving.

*They went back to the restaurant part of the building where the chief had taken her the first time she set foot in here. One cup of tea later, he was finally giving her some explanations.

“I'm sorry all of these informations have been dumped on you so quickly. But surely you understood how this place works, right?”

“I do, yes.”, she wanted to sound sure.

“So as you know,”, the old man continued, arranging the buttons of his fancy suit.

“You were first destined for a place as a research co-worker for Iris. But we were also lacking a new field agent for a mission that should happen shortly. We were planning on getting a field agent from another city, but all of the ones who fitted the job's requirements were busy already. We still managed to find one, but in the end… we figured it would be better to find someone more fitting,
even if their field experience was lacking a bit. So that's where you can help.”

She blinked a few times, wondering what he meant beyond his words.

“Of course, since a field agent is a lot more… dedicated to our group, the amount of money you get on the cheque at the end of the mission will increase accordingly.”, he added to her confused expression. Honestly she could not care less about the money right now. Jaqen's voice was in her mind, imploring her to become a research agent and nothing else. And as much as she wanted to respect that wish of his, she wondered why he had insisted so much. And she didn't dare to go against the chief's plans.

“As a field agent you will observe people in real life situations, sometimes interact with them. Each mission is very different so I cannot really explain you in detail what will happen, but everything is perfectly calculated by your research team, every option and reaction from the target, and the research team who takes care of the mission will be constantly in contact with you one way or another, so you have nothing to fear. Your appearance and name will be changed too, to keep your current identity safe.”

“So hum… what's gonna happen now?”, she asked, still confused. She wanted to do the job, she really did. Somehow it sounded almost like.. fun. She wanted to be independent and earn her own money and enjoy the adrenaline of mixing up psychology and real life studies, but… what did he mean by interacting with the targets? Jaqen had once said that sometimes they were killed…. Could that be? No, she could not kill anyone. No, no, that was utter nonsense, they could not ask this of her, she would refuse and flee as far as she could with Jon and Sansa, but she could not-

“I will put you under the tutorship of our common friend Fox.”, he answered, a grey brow rising in what she believed was an unspoken threat if she went against the non-fraternization rules of his House. Or maybe it was just a twitch, but she considered that no-relationships rule anyway.

“He knows already about the plan and the target, and he will explain it all to you.”, his grin was strange, but she couldn't place why. The double doors of the kitchen opened, and a man in a black suit stood between them. *What's the deal with all these guys wearing suits?*

“Now, if you will please excuse me.”, the old chief smiled gently, and raised from his chair. She raised as well, not sure what to do.

“Go to Fox. He'll tell you all about it.”

She nodded, and started walking towards the other door, leading back to the white corridors that smelled of the dentist's.
“Oh, and by the way.”, he called when she was about to disappear in the rat maze.

“Your name is Cat now, sister.”, he bowed his head, and vanished through the double doors.

*Cat*, the name resonated in her head.

It was strange, but she liked it. *Cat.*

Jaqen was waiting at the end of the white corridor. Or… Fox, she'd rather say now. He was wearing the same suit as before, but now she noticed that it suited him quite well, it was classier than the shorts and the tank-tops he always wore in theatre class. His hair was neatly tied in a man bun for once, and an expression she and never seen was ruling over his face. Somehow he looked like these men on fragrance ads posters, with that same immobility and severity on his face. A mix of blankness and seriousness that honestly kind of frightened her a bit.

“Follow me.”, he said when she reached him. And it was weird because his voice sounded like a stranger's. A tingling fear grew in her belly.

They went through white corridors, and reached a door that had a flower and a bunny logo on it. It made Arya crack a smile. It looked like they were entering the door of a middle-school class.

Behind that door were six other doors, three on each side, with either flowers of bunnies on them.

“This is the area reserved to Team B. You're not allowed to go anywhere else than the doors with rabbits on them.”, he turned his head and raised his brows in a way that meant *understood*?

She quickly nodded. *Why is he looking at me like that?* His gaze had never been this cold and distant.

“First door is our training room. That's where we will meet at your training hours. Second door is my room. Third is yours.”

“We have our own rooms?”

He didn't answer and went to the third door. He unlocked it with a card she didn't get to analyse in detail.
Inside it was a small, very minimalistic room. With no window, a little bed with beige covers and a single pillow, one dim and warm light, a toilet, a small sink and a shower, a, empty cloth-rack and beige, blank walls. It's wasn't cold enough to be considered a prison, but it was nowhere near warm enough to be considered comfortable. It looked like a very plain, very boring motel room in a boring country with boring landscapes and nothing else to see.

“You will need this room to rest after training or missions. Don't leave anything here. Even small things. It has to look exactly like this every time you leave it.”

She examined it, closely, every corner and every shadow. She heard him close the door.

“There are no cameras here. Nor mikes. But there are in the corridor, and you're not allowed to take anyone here.”

“Oh… okay.”, she said, meekly. It seemed all so real and unreal at the same time.

“Lovely girl-”, his expression changed, and she almost squealed with joy when she recognized the real Jaqen. But she didn't because he looked distressed.

“Some… things will happen now, and a girl won't have any choice in how they will happen. This man will try to ready you, but… the mission they have is quite advanced.”

“What do you mean advanced?”

He sighed and sat on the small bed. She sat next to him, and it squeaked under their weight.

“A girl will have to pass off as Catherine Canali, the wife of a wealthy business man called Giovanni Canali. Her husband will be on a business travel, and she will go to a hotel, and seduce the target to isolate him in her hotel room, so that no one sees him die of the poison he would have been given earlier that night by another agent who currently works as a cook. He's an aged man, his death will look natural.”

Wow
She lowered her eyes, looked at her hands.

“I'm uh… I'll see him die?”, a little voice asked, and only seconds later did she realize it was hers.

“It will not be brutal. It will be peaceful, worry not, like falling asleep. You will be given another hotel-room by the staff to spend the night in, and someone from the House will be picking you up the next morning.”

It always felt a little strange to hear him let go of his third-person speech, but she supposed it was to make her more comfortable with the situation. She didn't want him to, though. She wasn't a little girl.

“Lovely girl, you…”, he looked around, as if he feared that someone hear him. It was strange to see fear on his face. She wanted to comfort him, tell him everything would be alright, but at the same time she wanted to hide from the threat along with him.

“You don't have to do this. Tell this man, and he'll make you and your sister Sansa and your brother Jon disappear in less than an evening. He'll arrange so that they never hear about Bran and Rickon and Winterfell, and-”

“Jaqen, I don't need you to pull me out of this.”, she lay a reassuring hand on his without thinking about it, she couldn't help it. Her fingers were cold and her touch clearly surprised him, but he did not push her away. She lowered her eyes and took her hand away herself.

“The chief gave me a choice, Iris told me about everything that would happen, I want all of this, I want to help the chief and his studies.”

“A girl doesn't understand-”

“Of course I do!”

There was a beep sound that came from his pocket but he ignored it. His gaze was still severe, but there was a pinch of sadness in it. And that pinch gave her the urge to reassure him again, although it quite felt like they were switching places, but she didn't care.

“The target is an aged man, you said so yourself. I don't see how this could go wrong. Look, you'll be my partner-”
There was another *beep* sound. He sighed the lightest sigh but ignored it again.

“That means you'll be part of that mission too, right? And Iris will be watching and helping, won't she?”, she asked.

He clenched his teeth.

“This man will be helping Iris as a research agent during this whole mission. A girl will be alone on the field dealing with the target, do you understand that?”

She frowned, and it was her turn to be angry and cold.

“Stop speaking to me as if I were a child.”, he tone was dry, and she saw a glimpse of surprise in his eyes.

“I want that job, I want to do that mission. I really don't see why you're so concerned.”

“Because…”, he cursed, probably in German because she did not understand.

“A girl will have to seduce the target and keep him in a hotel room for an undetermined amount of time, there's a lot that could happen in between that time, that implies-”

The thing in his pocket beeped three consecutive times and he pulled out a light up phone, clenching his jaw. The screen was facing him but she managed to read the message anyway. *Get out now.*

“Be sure of what you do, lovely girl.”

He breathed out angrily, and got out. She didn't follow him.

*\*

Back in his room he shut the door and held his head.
I'll kill them all

Where was his facelessness? Where was the boy who had learned to control the boiling thoughts? He did not know. All he managed to think about was that budding life he just ruined because of his madness. And truly she did nothing to help with her own condition.

Maybe he should've tied her up to that little bed and fucked the sweet hell out of her until only a writhing mess would've remained of her. Maybe she would have obeyed with her brows arched in pleasure and only him invading her mentally and physically-God, what was he thinking? She was barely eighteen and she was lost and confused in an organization full of assassins and liars, and all because of him, at that. Of course she didn't understand the consequences of her acts. And even if he had used that… technique on her to convince her to believe him and not the chief and his alluring money, it wouldn't have worked. Some little voice reminded him that even if he should put her at the mercy his body and her own desires, she'd never obey him. No, she'd do the exact opposite of what he'd tell her, with that wicked smile on her face and that sparkling arrogance in her eyes.

Everything was so much easier when he was only her theatre teacher, and she was only a pretty stranger his demonic mind had planned to make scream in a dusty closet behind the training stage. If only she had told him nothing about her, her name, her siblings…and God, if only she had not managed to surprise him every time she talked, maybe he would not care this much about her now, maybe he would not get so angry that she wishes to dally with her precious youth.

Eighteen years old, that was nothing, she had barely lived yet, despite how wise the sorrow she had went through had made her. She wasn't even eighteen yet, she would be in a week. She had not enjoyed the good sides of life, the first achievements, the first jobs as a struggling student, the first real boyfriends and all the feelings that came with them. He had been selfish to want her for himself. He could not make her live all of this, and he didn't know how eighteen year-olds worked anymore. What was he even doing eighteen years ago? Oh right, he was in Brazil, busy indulging the wife of a cocaine dealer who had planned on making a Carnival float explode. Ah, he remembered the woman. He remembered her never ending high-pitched moans and curses in Spanish each time he had rammed into her. Would a lovely girl get vocal too should he do the same things he did back then to that curly haired woman? She would definitely not get this vocal, Brazilians had quite the confirmed reputation, but he would not be against hearing a few dirty words or a string of curses coming from her sweet mouth while feeling her convulse around-damn it, he was drifting away from the point again.

Had he opted for a more regular life, he could have been a married father eighteen years ago, and on this day Arya Stark could have been a friend his daughter brought home for a sleepover or whatever activity eighteen year old little girls are supposed to do. Or she could have been his son's girlfriend, a date he would have tried to sneak into the family home to cuddle with her under the sheets.

Arya Stark would not like either of these possibilities, he knew it, and when he imagined her
decomposed face while trying to curl her hair at a girly sleepover, wearing some pink pyjamas and some flower-scented face mask, he almost laughed. She would not go to girly sleepovers to paint her nails and talk about boys and fashion, and she would definitely not enjoy being sneaked in a boy's bedroom like a little cuddle-doll- No, had she found herself in his house at a late hour in the night, he would have caught her trying to sneak in, sent whichever child of his to bed, he would have put on his most devilish smirk because he knew by the way she always squeezes her knees together and chews on her lip that she loves it, and he would have played the teasing game with her.

He would have trapped her in the kitchen, bent her over the ridiculously prim and neat kitchen counter top all pretty American houses have, he would have pulled up her skirt and ripped her lace panties off (yes, he decided that she would be wearing a skirt and black lace panties, despite the fact that he doubted that she had ever owned a single skirt) and toyed with the glistening wetness between her legs until she would have begged for him, and only when she would have been dripping with want, only when he would decide that she had pleaded enough would he force himself in her from behind and start pumping in and out like the starved beast she transformed him into. He would plunge deep and slow, and she would have to tip-toe to take him all in. Her breathy moans would fill the ridiculously prim house until they would change into screams and supplications for mercy and wake up the ridiculously stilted neighbours. And even then he would not be done with her. Oh no, he would smack her bare bottom and watch it redden in delight, and after he spilled himself in her he would have gotten on his knees and devoured her so young cunt, dined off their mingled juices and-

Shiße, worauf denkst du denn?

He threw his head back, and rubbed his tired eyes. Maybe four days without sleeping was a bit much. Fuck- what if his sister were right about him? All he ever thought about was that physical want eating him up. Maybe he needed a dose of the purple powder in the care team's store. He hadn't taken any in quite a while, and he could feel his nerves suffer from it.

No, a man swore he wouldn't touch that thing anymore

It had been almost two months, since he hadn't touched the purple powder. Shade of the Evening, was it's fancy name, but really it was just drugs to make all the field agents forget that they were just tools, and get their minds to drift off after all the stress of the missions. It had been a while since he had wanted to stop being dependent of the care team and their tricks, but giving up the powder had been very tough, and to this day he often wondered if his debauched thoughts were not a consequence of his lack.

He tried clearing his thoughts, closed his eyes for a minute. Surely there was a solution to this situation, if only he took the time to think about one. He could not force Arya to do what he wanted, that, he was sure of. She was right on one point, she was not a child anymore, and no one would let him drag her out of this shithole, not ever herself, now that the chief had convinced her that all the work they did was for honourable research purposes. Of course the old man had forgotten to tell her that working for him was the only future she could ever envision, but it was too late for him to fix that now that she knew about this place and how it worked. But she had made her own decision, as he had made his own decisions hears ago…. And if she said she was fine with distracting the
target… there was nothing he could do but oblige and watch her do it. What a torture this will be he thought, but then realized that the chief probably did it all on purpose. Make him watch and hear a stranger get so close to her when he wasn't allowed to look at her for too long looked like too much of a coincidence to not be the old man's doing. Fuck

He went to the big library when he couldn't manage to change his mind n his own, and picked up a few books there. He liked the silence here, it was different from the silence in the corridors or in his individual chamber. It wasn't as heavy here, it felt normal and it helped him think, most of the time. But he didn't stay there to enjoy his thoughts slowing down. He went back to his team's part of the basement, to the training room where she was waiting for him.

A quick glance at the camera hidden in the top left corner indicated to whoever was watching that he was ready to begin. He knew the surveying team would be attentive to every word that would slip out of his mouth, and out of hers too. The first lessons were always the most watched over, especially with new recruits who weren't allowed to know too much.

“`The date fixed for the mission is in three days. During that time, a girl will learn how to become Catherine Canali. She will have to learn some really basic italian and some speech patterns to better seduce the target. A man has to ask you again: Are you sure you want to do this?”`

A green boy in him woke up and hoped for half a second that she'd stand up and take his hand and beg for them both to flee as far as they could, but he stifled him and crossed her serious gaze.

“`Yes.”`

Chapter End Notes

I didn't forget about you Jonrya shippers, some Jon moments are coming I promise (and some real Jaqarya moments as well, don't worry). I just need to install my angsty drama and then we'll focus on the rest. But I wanted to make a little survey here, what's your favourite book genre? Tell me in the comments! And tell me what you thought about this chapter! :D
Hi! It's been a while again. To be totally honest, I've been struggling with this work a bit, and kept on writing, erasing, writing again, erasing again and so on. So this is just a small baby update because I really needed to post something to feel like I was progressing. I hope you enjoy it! Don't hesitate to leave a comment!

Also, I wrote a canon-compliant Jaqarya one-shot, check it out and tell me what you think! It's very fun and light-hearted compared to this ;)

Late again, Jon thought as he heard Arya's key turn in the lock of their apartment. If she was trying to go unnoticed, she had failed. *When did she sneak out? Haven't seen her since lunch*

“Where are you coming from?”, Jon tried to be casual, looking at Arya kicking her way out of her snickers. Nymeria was near his feet, and shook her tail after noticing her mistress getting in. *You tell her something,* he mentally addressed the husky, *It's past ten pm*

“I went out with a friend.”, she answered. A friend? All the friends she ever talked about were boys. Ah- what were the weird nick-names she gave them? There was Lommy, Hotpie, little Jerry and oh-yes. *Gendry.* That Gendry name he had heard quite a few times. From her mouth and from Sansa's, and Sansa had a gift to see these kinds of things. Could she have been on a date with that Gendry boy?

“Gendry?”, he asked, a brow lifting. He pretended to not care by continuing to read his book, but some voice in him kept asking questions. *How is he like? Is he smart and strong?* She deserved no less. He wanted to meet him, she had talked about him quite a few times indeed. He wanted to see what made him so special to her, what made her want to go out during a holiday evening, when she usually loved to snuggle in her bed and watch her shows until an indecent hour of the night, and then come sneak in his bed and speak with him when she still couldn't find sleep. He loved those evenings. It had been a while since she hadn't done it though, not since the last holiday.

“How do you know?”, she asked, and slipped on the sofa with him after giving the dog a scratch behind the ears.
“You speak about him a lot.”, he said, circling her small shoulders. A confused look was in her eyes, but she snuggled against him. He liked to have her near, it felt like… this was where she belonged.

“Hmm.”, she simply answered. *Like, really, how is he like? What's making her so... weird?* Jon kept asking himself. “Is Sansa better? That diner we ate in at noon didn't quite agree with her stomach last time I checked on her.”, Arya continued.

“She skipped dinner but she said she was fine. She went out with a guy she met at the sports hall, so it musn't be that terrible.”, he chortled.

“That guy she keeps texting? Ah, what's his name again… he's a boxing teacher right?”

“Sandor something.”

“What do you think about him?”, she asked, trying to read the page he he was at. That question startled him. Right, what did he think about Sandor? He knew him, he had seen him and even talked with him a little bit when he had gone at the sports hall to do some bodybuilding. He seemed like a decent man, a bit harsh in his words, but Jon had never wondered what he genuinely thought about him.

“Well... he can't be any worse than this Joffrey she's told me about.”

“That was the beginning of High-School, she's way past that now.”, Arya answered. Jon smiled. Yes, San had changed a lot. As a child she always dreamed of princesses and fame and boys. Now she was way down on earth. He worried not a single bit about her.

“You've been skipping theatre.”, he noted, expecting a reaction from the younger one. He didn't want to fight again, he just wanted to… see how she handled the subject now.

“I won't ever go back.”, she answered, not bothering to rise her eyes from his page. *Is she even reading? It's a super boring history facts book, she hates those.* It did not matter. She said she wouldn't ever go back to that old pervert, and that felt somewhat like triumph. *She's starting to understand,* part of him was proud of her. *Aye, but we got that Gendry boy now,* the other part said, but he stifled it. She pretended to read for another minute, and then left, off to the bathroom, and he closed his book and retired to his bedroom.
Later in his bed he tossed and turned, unable to find sleep. Usually Ygritte was here warming his bed on Sunday evenings, because they both didn't work on Monday mornings and they could sleep in and have some louder pillow play while Sansa and Arya were gone from the flat. But with their recent argument he doubted that would ever happen again. And as expected on holiday evenings, another lady came to crawl in his bedroom.

“I can't sleep.”, she said, and her wet brown hair shone with the lights that passed through the curtains.

“Aye, come here you.”, he moved aside, leaving her some space in his bed. He knew she found his bed more comfortable. He had a king size while she still had some toddler thing. Well, not actually a toddler thing, but she looked like a toddler in it because of how short she was. She snuggled up against him. Yes, he loved this kind of evenings.

“Do you have any holiday for Christmas?”, she whispered. She didn't need to. Sansa had not come back from her date, and they were the only two in the flat. But he whispered as well, he liked how intimate it sounded, like they were hiding from the rest of the world.

“I reserved Christmas eve and the morning of Christmas day.”, he answered. He had taken these measures as soon as he had arrived here. He knew Sansa and Arya had kept the tradition of sipping hot chocolate while watching some old movie after moving to LA, and kept it even after dad's death, when they spent Christmas just the two of them. How awful must that be, he thought. Even if he had been far away with strangers, he had always spent Christmas with loads of people, even when he worked, it had always remained a cheerful day. Now imagining the two of them sitting on a couch by themselves in this tiny flat wasn't as cheerful, especially when it was impossible to forget that the couch was a three seats thing, and that however they might have sat, they must have noticed the blank space. And it was their first Christmas without their mother… he would have never forgiven himself if he were not here for them this time. Arya's broad smile at his answer made him a thousand times more convinced by his decision. He had been right to push his request to his chief, if that was enough to make her smile this much. He took her in his arms, and buried his nose in her wet hair.

“Why is she talking about her?"

“No idea. I don't think you'll see her hang around here anymore.”, he said. He would have liked to see her reaction. He didn't know why. He didn't even know if she even had any reaction. Why would she, in the end? How was she supposed to react to him dumping his girlfriend? He'd never know, her face was buried in his chest. His own reaction though was quite clear. He was happy. Relieved. He didn't feel like a toy anymore. Sometimes it felt weird to think of himself as a celibate,
but he liked the freedom.

She said nothing, and kept her face hidden. At some point she squeezed him tighter. *Shouldn't she be saying that she's sad for me or something?* He asked himself. But he forgot about it. He hadn't really expected her to be sad for him. A few minutes after her breathing was steady and regular against his chest, he allowed himself to breathe in a whiff of the smell of shampoo in her hair again. It was spicy with fruit. He kept her locked in his embrace, and drifted off to sleep.

When he woke, she had disappeared. He looked for her for a few seconds, the time he needed to emerge from the sleepy haze, and realized the flat was dead silent. He was partly relieved, partly confused. He sighed. *Good,* he thought bitterly. At least she didn't feel the morning hardness, or so he hoped, because that would have been an awkward situation to experience with his little sister. *Little sister,* he almost laughed. He tried to stifle the sneaky voice in his head that told him he would have almost liked to see how she would have reacted to his morning hardness. *Good, it's good that she left,* he convinced himself once again. Because on top of that uncontrollable erection situation, on mornings his mind was always in a weird state figuring out the line between dream and reality, and had he woken with her in his arms, he knew he would have been tempted to kiss her. As a thoughtless reflex, of course. He always kissed Ygritte when she woke next to him.
Arya sighed. Again. She turned around, looked at herself in the mirror. She never wore lacy lingerie and it was freaking itchy and uncomfortable. And, okay, fine, it was doing what it was supposed to be doing. Her little boobs looked rounder, she kind of felt like a sexy precious princess, and it revealed a lot more than she was used to, so much she felt even more naked than if she were actually naked. She thought back on that time she had had to burrow a swimming suit from Sansa to go swim with Jon. She turned around, admired the pearl white skin of her butt cheeks. God, I can't believe what's happening.

She put the red dress on top, which was so tight it felt like a latex glove on her skin. The heels were tricky, but she managed them quite honourably. Ugh, she wanted this mission to be over already, and snuggle up in her bed at home. And she hadn't even put the make-up on yet.

“I'm ready.”, she said, back in Iris' lab.

“Are you sure everything is fine? If you don't want to do it, this is your very last chance to say no.” the blonde completed. Arya only nodded.

“I'm sure.”

Yeah. Despite her awful Italian, the very odd lessons of flirting, during which she had learnt nothing but a few horny catchphrases that felt very odd to act in front of Jaqen, and the overall what-the-fuckness of this whole situation, she was ready to do it. Because it felt like being useful, and it was the only somewhat structured thing in her life right now.

Iris smiled and nodded too, seemingly content. She pulled out a small lipstick from a cabinet, and twisted the opening to reveal a little vial filled with a reddish liquid. Yes, exactly like in a spy movie.

“Here, you slip this in his glass, a few drops only, he mustn't notice a change in the taste. It'll make
his level of testosterone go through the roof. He will be insatiable after that, so you should take your
time and do some chit-chat if you don't want to have any intimate interaction before he has his
stroke.”, she said as if it was the most casual conversation one could have, stretching out the
disguised lipstick.

“You can take some too if you want, it'll make things easier for you too.”

Arya threw her a confused look.

“You're not allowed take anything that'll make you not think straight on a mission, like alcohol or
drugs, but a few drops of this will only increase your level of oestrogen, the hormone that controls
your libido if you will, and give the impression of drunkenness to your body without slowing your
thoughts down. I give it to everyone who goes on missions like this, it makes the talking and the
body language easier. But careful, it's still a libido thing, it increases want. I doubt that a man like the
target will be to your taste, but don't be surprised if you find some guys cuter than usual. Just don't go
talk to them, do you understand? You must focus on the mission.”

“Okay…”, agreed Arya, taking the little vial in her hand.

“What if I put more than a few drops?”

She chortled.

“Well, if you consume too much it'll transform you into a thirsty beast. You take as much as you
want and you go as far as you wish with the target, but don't forget that he's going to have a heart
attack at some point, so make sure to be gone before you find yourself stuck with a lifeless cock
between your legs.”, she joked. That wasn't really in Arya's plans, she didn't know why she had
asked that. Just curiosity, maybe.

“Careful though, this thing is powerful, it works quickly but it only lasts for so long. The more you
take, the shorter it lasts. Once you got it into his glass you must waste no time dragging him into the
room, alright?”

She nodded. She was kind of excited to finally go on that mission, after all of these endless lessons.
The flirting had been the worst. Pretending to flirt with Jaqen- No, Fox- had been way worse than
trying to do it for real when they were just Arya and Jaqen, and even more so when he pretended to
be an old and perverted man like the target was. When she failed at faking the right tone or when she
said something too silly he didn't hesitate to tell her how bad she was being, instead of teasing her by
saying she looked cute, like he would have done when they were just the student and the sexy
teacher secretly making out in the closet. But she had gone through the awful flirting sessions, and
she had even learned some Italian. Of course she'd never be able to brag about it because it would
make no sense that Arya Stark knew Italian, but she still felt kind of proud.
The plan for tonight was simple. She had told Sansa she was at Gendry's for the night to work on the exam that came after winter break, and Gendry was in Texas visiting some family so there was zero chance that San or Jon would cross paths with him and discover that she wasn't actually with him. Sansa had raised a curious brow when her little sister had told her that she'd spend the night at the guy's place, but Arya let her assume whatever she liked. Gendry was a cute boy, and her sister would find out soon enough that it was just plain friendship between them, so in the meantime she could assume whatever she wanted if it amused her. It provided a good enough alibi for her to leave her alone.

During the evening, Catherine Canali would be roaming the playroom of the hotel, where there was a small casino hosting a party night. Another member of the House of Black and White, who got a job as a maid, would poison the target's meal. She didn't know how, she had asked Iris but she had refused to answer. It made sense, Arya had thought. She didn't need to know about poisons. Later the target would meet a young lady and take her to his room. He would die there of a heart-attack. He was old, it was believable. Clean, quick, prepared. The plan was simple.

“What did the man do?”

“Sorry?”, asked Iris, clearly confused.

“The target, why are you guys killing him? I understood that most of the time, this isn't how this House works, the chief has told me that we mainly observe people. So what did he do that he should be killed about?”

The blonde took a breath in and arranged some vials.

“You uh… I can't tell you. Not now. Maybe when the mission is done. Now you have to focus on what you have to do, not on what he did.”, she answered coldly, but then smiled a bit to reassure her. Arya nodded meekly, though she still wanted to know.

“The only thing I can tell you is that we know where he is now, but that never lasts. We've been planning for this for a long, long time, so make sure you're concentrated on what you have to do.”

“I see…”, Arya stared blankly at the white wall in front of her. Only then did she start to realize that this wasn't just a game to shoot her with some adrenaline. This was serious. Some real guy was gonna die, and she was about to take part in that.

“And uh… why me? I mean, I imagine there are tons of agents more trained than I am, why did you pick me?”
Iris' eyes fell low, before she realized it and recomposed her face.

“The man has… preferences. He likes his women…”, her lips twisted in a weird smile, and her nose wrinkled up a little.

“Young. And you look quite juvenile. He's going to enjoy you a lot, so be careful about how you manage your time.”

She looked at her for a moment, and then resumed on washing her little glass vials.

“I'm sorry.”, she added, before nervously tucking a golden curl behind her ear. She took a breath in, and looked around, as if to check for cameras or mikes. Of course they were in her lab so there were none, but maybe it was a reflex. “Originally, I was supposed to do it. I'm sorry it fell on you.”

“But… you're not a field agent?”

“I used to be…”, she murmured.

Arya waited for further explanation, but it did not come. She wanted to ask her what happened, but she feared her curiosity would unnerve her. She kept her eyes on her, hoping she'd tell her anyway. She sighed and, after a few seconds of silence, eventually did.

“I used to be a field agent, before toying with poisons and informations. My… co-worker and I grew feelings for each other.” Her face was totally blank, but Arya saw the struggle in her eyes to keep it so.

“On our last mission together he almost got killed trying to protect me. I would not have survived without him. The research team had instructed that he let me go, for the House's safety and confidentiality. Secrecy is what's most important here, it's what allows us all to work. But he refused. Now he was transferred to another city, I became a research agent, and we'll never see each other again. It's good, I guess.” Her gaze drifted away. “At least the House didn't kick me out.”

“They do that?”

“Well… I've only heard it happen once… Usually they just transfer people to other cities or countries, but I was a young recruit at the time, I wasn't really an important element, and since I held
no secret of importance, they could have just refused me the access to this place and… there was no way I could ever have come back. It would have been as if nothing here ever existed for me. And what could I have done? Who would have believed me had I claimed there were offices under that fancy restaurant that hid an organization of psycho killers?” she sighed a laugh. “But now I'm quite safe from that. For the important agents who know the secrets of the organization, the chief is ready to do things the sickest men we base our researches on couldn't even imagine. There's a reason he's so good at finding them, you know.” her pretty eyes went back to Arya.

“Please listen…”, her voice became quieter “It's hard to fake feelings. But it's harder to fake the lack of them. So… be careful about what you say and do. It's easy for them to erase you once they've gotten what they want from you, but it's hard to build yourself afterwards, especially when you grow attached to the wrong people.”

Arya kept staring at her. She wasn't entirely sure what she meant, but somehow it made bells ring in her. It was a warning. But she didn't dare to tell her she was already helpless when it came to growing attached to the wrong people. Iris took a deep breath in, and acted as if her previous words had never existed.

“These missions are not the funny ones, not with men like him. But you musn't be afraid. Fox and I will be watching through the cameras and we'll be listening thanks to your ear-bud. Nothing can go wrong. And if there's an emergency, just use the cell-phone in your clutch.”, she said softly, and for a brief moment she almost reminded her of Sansa when she warned her about stupid stuff.

“I'm not afraid.”, Arya said, her voice grave. She truly was not afraid, just… apprehensive.

“Good. Now go prepare yourself, you still have hair extensions and make-up to put on, and the connected ear-bud. You'll see, it's fun when Meg puts it in, it goes deep in your ear so that it's invisible, and the first time you hear someone speak through it, it's like the voice is straight out of your head”, Iris smiled.

Five hours later, The Twins Hotel, LA

“So young and already married?”, the target asked with his old, rusty voice, assessing the band of gold on her left ring finger. *The target will love taking this as a challenge*, Meg had said.

Getting his attention had been much easier than expected, and Arya almost regretted getting to this point so quickly.

“Such a waste…”, the way he looked at her made her want to puke.
“What did you say your name was again, sweet-heart?”

“Catherine.”, she put on her most assured face.

“Catherine Canali. But you may call me Cat. And yours, Sir?” she asked with a fake smirk, though she knew already. Well, she knew the fake name he'd give her. He was a wanted criminal, after all.

“Good.”, said Iris in her connected ear-bud. The sound was very hushed, and it had been a funny sensation indeed, to hear voices as if they were spirits in her head. Iris and Jaq- Fox only rarely spoke. Fox had not said a thing actually, and had Iris not told her that he was with her, there was no way she could've guessed. Only Iris had been giving out some encouragement words here and there since the beginning of that very long evening.

“Walder Frey. Ha, mister Canali lets you wander here all on your own? He must not be very smart, ha!”, he allowed himself another long stare at her cleavage. Ugh- this push-up bra did wonders, and the red dress did a most excellent job at showing it. Meg worked miracles indeed, and Arya wasn't even sure if she needed to say anything, or if she even needed to poison him to make him go upstairs. A chill ran down her for the thousandth time when she thought again about what awaited her in just a few minutes.

“Now would be a good time to head to the bar.”, Iris announced.

“Fox hasn't waited for you, he's been sipping on his cocktail like a brooding baby since he's arrived.” she joked before giggling.

*You guys have cocktails as well?* Arya wanted to ask, but her lips were sealed and her gaze on Walder Frey. Arya knew Iris' jokes were a means to lighten the mood and make her less nervous. It worked. Comparing Jaqen to a brooding baby was quite an image. How I'd love to be with them quietly sipping on cocktails without that creepy grandpa lurking on me... she thought, but then no, she liked being on field. She felt like the spies in the films. Eventhough her job included no deadly fights or cyber genius demonstrations, she quite liked feeling her heartbeat fasten in some weird way. Ja-Fox! made a low grumble in her ear-bud and she repressed a smile. She knew his brooding was very much not a joke, he wasn't as excited as she was for that mission, but she'd prove him he was wrong and that she could handle it all.

“Should I get us drinks?”, she said to Walder Frey, biting her lip like she remembered to do and pretending to look at him like he were the most handsome man she had ever seen. She hated the way it worked so well. God, and he was such an ugly man. He only had a few strands of piss-yellow hair left on his oiled scalp, he had small, vicious eyes and a mouth full of crooked and golden teeth. His suit was clean and looked expensive and almost elegant, if not for the stench of whisky and cigar it was coated in. And he looked at her with these filthy eyes, like she were just a doll he owned serving for his entertainment.
“Did you ask him? Wait, I think our line is getting fuzzy. Do you hear me? If you can, poi-Zzzz”

Wow, wait, what?!

“How about we go to my suite? I have a bar up there…”, Frey said downing another glass of whisky, and she concentrated to keep her breathing even.

Wow, that’s straightforward-

“Sh-arrrrrk-...gzzzu-bjbjjjjj-”, the ear-bud cricked and cackled and almost made her ear bleed. She focused hard on not cringing. Her heart was hammering in her chest now and the blood in her ears went boom boom boom and her mind was going like fuck fuck fuck.

What? What do I have to do?!, she begged inside, but there was no one to hear.

“Kzzzzzz- dsss- fi...”, the stupid thing continued to shriek in her ear.

Fuck, no no no

Seeing her not respond, Walder Frey traced the roundness of her left breast with his nasty finger. Arya almost slapped him and backed away, but she remembered just in time that she must react positively to him. She squeezed her glass of virgin mojito so tight the thing almost broke right in her hand. She scratched the side of her ear with her other hand, hoping to fix the darn thing.

Don’t let me down now, please, what do I have to do?!, and the man’s hands fell on the curve of her waist. She looked at her watch. 11:36.

God, just make him die already!

“Excellent idea…”, she answered in the softer voice she could with this outburst of rage and disgust in her. Oh my God what am I doing?! The fucking ear-bud, how could it not work?! How am I supposed to-

It was a bit early according to the plan, but a little voice in her mind whispered that the quicker she’d take him to the room, the quicker the mission would be done. And if the communication was really broken, at least the plan wouldn’t be screwed up because she did nothing. Yeah. Her plan was good. Let’s go upstairs.
When he had his back turned and started heading towards the elevators she shivered in revulsion. Her hand found the fake lipstick in her pocket. Apparently she would not need it for him, but she would definitely need it for herself, to make it easier. She wasn't sure if she could hold herself from punching him for a very long time.

Fortunately, there was another couple in the elevator, so he did not start to grope her during the long ride to the last floor. But as quickly as they got out he placed a hand on her butt and started mumbling something so close to her face that she almost got drunk merely on the scent of his breath. Some people at the end of the corridor caught them. From a far it looked like another couple and a lonely business man. *Ugh*—she felt the disgust stir in her stomach. *Just die…*

It turned out Walder Frey's penthouse suite was twice the size of Catherine Canali’s, with big windows that looked down on the lights of the neon city. Arya noticed the change in her breath when she passed the door, how her heart started racing in her chest. *No no no,* she started to regret. *I shouldn't have done that I should've waited for Iris and Jaqen's instructions, why is this fucking thing not working?!!* She took a few breaths in and tried to calm herself. *This will go well, this will go well…*

She needed something to drink. Something strong. It was forbidden on missions, but if the chief wasn't happy about it he may as well distract that guy himself.

She went to the bar when he was busying himself in the bathroom and quickly downed a first glass of whisky. She almost spat it all out and strangled herself with it. It was very strong and Arya hated whisky. It tasted of old men. But she forced herself to swallow and served two other glasses, before getting her secret ingredient out. Her trembling fingers made her pour a little more than she intended in her own glass. *Fine.* It would be fine. She wasn't comfortable at all with the situation and this would make it easier, it could do no harm.

He came out of the bathroom stumbling and collided on the bed with a hard thud, still those filthy eyes fixated on her, and licking his lips at God knows what thoughts. She stretched him out his glass and downed hers in one quick move.

“Ooh, I like that…”, he said after watching her drink up.

“Now show me these titties, they've been calling me all night.”, he sat up, dragged her with a force that was impressive for an old man, and spun her to stand with her back towards him so he could undo the dress.

“W-wait–”, Arya started to panic. She tried to control the heavy breathing, her trembling fingers but
She wandered in her thoughts for long seconds, searching for a subject to speak about to keep his hands off her but her mind was buzzing and fully blank.

And damn it, this lipstick potion was totally useless!

She took her little vial out and drank more, directly from the fake container.

He was struggling with the back of her dress, but each time she felt a button come undone she started to panic more. She felt dizzy from the alcohol already and sick from his nasty licks on each part of skin he exposed, and she wanted to throw up and run away but now it was too late.

“Wait, should we put some music- I can dance for you-”, God why the hell did I say that?

He paused, his hands on her waist.

“That’s a damn good idea.”, he grumbled, and she stepped away from him. He trembling fingers fidgeted the stereo, and she pretended first to not understand how it was working. Make it long… she thought, take your time… she pushed two more buttons, turned some keys, but at every look at her clock it looked like someone was milking the seconds. Her breath was shaky again when she heard him unbuckle his belt- shit-should she press the emergency button? She felt the weight of the phone in her dress, it would be easy, three quick little clicks on the button and they’d know immediately that something was wrong… But another look at her watch and no- 11:54, only six minutes left until he dies. Iris had been very clear that everything was very coordinated and that there would be no delay. She could do it. She would do it.

When Walder Frey got tired of seeing her pressing every button of the stereo he rose from the bed, and a chill ran down her spine when she felt him yank the top of her dress and ease it off her shoulders. She grabbed his wrists before he could snatch away her bra.

“Wait-”

“It’s a little late to think about your husband now.”, he laughed, started to lick the skin he had access to with his grossly wet tongue.
“We can do without music, my Viagra pill will only last for so long baby.”

Talk about something for fuck's sake, it wasn't that hard during the lessons, she thought, Shove him away! Don't let him do this! but her own body refused to obey.

He easily drew back his wrists from her hold on them, and let the dress fall to her ankles. The phone inside the pocket made a quiet thud, and she wanted to pluck it out and call. But she didn't. Why did she not? She wanted to, so, so much. Where was her strength?

What am I doing?, she thought as she felt the weight form in her throat. She felt cold, cold and dirty and his fingers on her breasts were undelicate and she never wanted to get that strange feeling ever again.

“Now be a good slut and get on your knees-”

A knock at the door interrupted him. He growled, and his tone resonated in her head. The way he had said slut made her want to cry. Surely the lipstick potion toying with her hormones had something to do with her mood swings, she usually handled insults way better. She crossed her arms around her almost naked form when she felt him take his hands away, but she was still unable to move properly. Arya, what is happening to you?! A voice screamed in her mind, but her body was petrified.

The person on the other side of the door knocked again, so hard Arya thought they would make the door go out of the hinges.

Walder Frey strode towards the door, furious. She wanted to puke. She inwardly thanked whichever employee who decided to knock at such an hour because they would spare her a good two minutes of hell and they would probably loose their job for that. As soon as she felt him away from her she took a shaky breath in and tried to not feel as dizzy. If she did not die of shame tonight, then nothing would kill her, she was sure. She tried to breathe and calm herself down, in vain. The inner voices were calling her a slut, and his gross touch was still ghosting on her skin. The aphrodisiac concoction only made her feel more disgusting and sick, and the alcohol was probably not helping either.

“I swear that if this is a joke-”, Frey kept fuming as he made his way to the door, and for the first time since she had met him, Arya did not only see the disgusting grandpa in him but also the dangerous man. She heard the lock open and hoped that whoever was there had a very long speech to make.

“Who the hell do you think you are, to disturb-urgh”, his shouted words got lost in a strangle.
For a few seconds there was just silence. Arya's eyes grew wide. From her spot near the bed she did not see the entrance. Quick! Should she hide? Who was-

“Jaqen?!“

He looked almost like Jaqen. Only she had never seen Jaqen look this mad. He was holding Walder Frey from behind, gagging his mouth with his arm and restraining him from fighting back with the other. She tried to cover herself with the dress and hid the bra in her clutch as quickly as she could, feeling the shame rush to her face, making her skin look as red as the dress she was wearing.

“Jaqen, wh-”, she mumbled, confused. Why the hell was Jaqen here? And-

God

The aphrodisiac was working.

Oh God, it was working so well.

Please not now-

She felt herself burn suddenly, had to look away and squeeze her knees together because the wetness was now tingling. She willed her eyes to remain on Walder Frey's agonizing face. Maybe it'd turn her off. He had started convulsing and having his heart attack. About damn time. But shit- she could not let her eyes travel too far because if they met-

Oh God he looked so handsome.

His mere presence in the room, the simple thought of him was enough to make her quiver. She rearranged her dress to cover her poking nipples and quickly put her hands behind her back and clenched them into fists. He was holding the old man through his convulsions. She must not look at him, she must not think about him, she must not touch him at all costs because she'd be unable to stop. Fuck- if only she had some kind of rope to tie herself up with to prevent herself from doing anything- oh no thinking about ropes was a really bad idea. Very kinky images started to pop in her mind and she could not help but feel her mouth water and her body arc at the mere thought of him
using these broad and strong hands of his to pin her down and get out that marvellous member hidden in his pants to-

“Cat, can you hear me? Call 911.”

She shook her head and took the phone. It beeped a few times, and she tried hard to force her mind to focus on anything else than him.

“This is 911, what’s your emergency?”

“No, no thank you, I will take care of her. I think she just wants a quiet night of sleep now, right honey?”

Cat only managed to nod at her husband.

The Arya trapped inside was going crazy. She was sure her cheeks were a bright red. And she could barely stand on her feet in these high-heeled shoes and on these wobbly legs, ready to give out any moment. Not because of the shock. They all believed she was shocked and had wrapped her in one of these survival blankets that look like foil. It only made her sweaty and more uncomfortable. Even Jaqen believed she was shocked. But she was only fighting against herself to not push that dork on the huge bed and ride him right there in front of everyone. And maybe invite this cute doctor to join them. *Fuck-* she was loosing the battle.

Only half an hour prior she was about to puke at how disgusting that old man was. Now they were wrapping his dead body and all she could think about was how bad she wanted to be fucked by the redhead pretending to be her husband.

“Is she alright?”, the cute doctor asked. Damn, he was handsome too. He had wide hands and a square face. These hands could work wonders, she knew it by the delicate way they handled the folder. A blue vein popped out slightly and Hmmm-These hands reminded her of Jon.

Oh wow. *Jon.* How marvellous would it be if Jon were here. Just her, Jaqen and Jon, all three of them on one of these huge beds, one behind her, one in front of her, trapping her between their muscled bodies like she belonged to them. What a high that would be.
“Ma'am, you are in no way responsible, we can let you spend a night at the hospital if you're not-”

“I'm fine.”, quick, quick, she needed to trap herself somewhere and hide from the rest of the world (especially from good-looking men with shoulder-length red hair with a white streak of white in it and a sly smile) and get out once the aphrodisiacs would have left her body. God- she had never been so wet, her lace panties were sticking to her crotch and the beast in her lower stomach begging to be released was unbearable. And the fucking images would not stop fusing in her mind, images of him on top of her, her on top of him, him behind her, above her, inside her…

“I'm...tired. And a bit shook. It'd like to go back to my room now.”

A few minutes later, she closed the door of her hotel penthouse. She had walked by so fast that she had removed her heels on the way. And an incredulous Jaqen had been trailing behind her.

“Lovely girl, are you sure you are-”

“Jaqen…” she turned her back to him, hid her face in her hands. The make-up would smudge. Never mind. She had bigger problems. Like fight the urge devouring her. It almost hurt, like everything was concentrated in her lower area. Like low, slow and painful death. And damn it, was it her clit pulsing like that? Is this even normal?

He put a hand on her shoulder, and it was the end. The contact made her tremble and she almost fucking moaned for a mere hand on her shoulder.

“If it is death that shook a girl so-”

Her glassy eyes met him, serious and wondering.

“Jaqen I-” God he was so sexy, she traced his perfectly square jaw, toyed with the hem of his dress shirt and felt the warmth of his body turn her even crazier.

She plunged forward to plant her lips on his but he didn't lower his head and she was too small. She pushed him further inside the room, wrapping her hands around his waist, wanting to feel more of him.

“Jaqen I need you... need you inside me, now…” he looked bedazzled but that made her grin.
“Please…”

“Arya what are you-”, he found the lipstick in her pocket, and somehow understood.

“Who gave you this?”

“Please Jaqen, please…”, she begged once more, as if these words were the only two she could remember.

Her cheeks burned and his scent of warm ginger and cloves made her want to devour the soft flesh in the nook of his neck. She did, there was little she could restrain in her actual state, and God he tasted even better than she imagined. She pressed her body, quivering and whimpering, against his, hard and so manly, and she wanted to explore every inch of him so bad right now that little groans escaped her throat. Her hands travelled everywhere, feeling the muscles react under the annoying clothes. She wanted to rip them off and just enjoy the feeling of skin rubbing against skin, like two sweet poisons melting together.

The air of the room became suddenly stifling and hard to breathe in. She closed her eyes hoping to feel him more, tugged at the fabric of his dress shirt, wanted to yank it off his perfect body and lick the golden skin underneath and brush herself against him until he would cede and give in to the desire driving her mad.

“Please, I need you…now…”

She was not joking. She did not pay attention to the desperate din of her voice, so unlike Arya Stark or Catherine Canali or whoever she was supposed to be right now. She felt like an animal and he was a need, a craving. She felt her knees go weak at the contact of their bodies, she was totally unmindful of anything else going on in the world.

She opened her eyes again and watched the way his lips moved so close to her face, his hot breath kissing her skin and his lower plump lip teasing her so sexily. Pure torture. She ran her thumb on it, testing it's smoothness. He must have been talking, but she could not hear a thing and she was sure he was speaking nonsense, for his tone sounded authoritarian.

“Is a girl listening?”
No, she was not. Her fingers were all over his lips, and she was wondering and trying to imagine how they would feel against her own. At some point she decided she may as well experiment to confirm her guesses, but she could not get him to cooperate and lower his head. She sighed in discontentment, she wished she had kept the high heels on. He was so much taller than her, she almost felt like crying.

“Lovely girl, look at you…”

She did not wish to. She knew she would only find herself ridiculous. Even the little sounds of whimper she made exasperated her. But she had no control. All she could do was beg again and again, rocking her hips against his, wrap a leg around his waist and continue to nip at the small area of uncovered skin she could reach when she tiptoed. The pull in her belly hurt, the searing warmth was spreading in her and devastating everything, she needed him to rescue her…

And was she so undesirable right now for him to push her away like that?

She was still wearing the sexy princess black lingerie panties underneath her fancy gown, and she was sure he got a peek at her poking nipples from the position of his gaze right above her cleavage, she could feel them brush against his torso. He always called her lovely, was she not lovely enough for her to deserve him?

“A girl has drunk too much of that-”

She groaned, and managed to pull his face to hers and plant a sloppy kiss on his so tempting lips to hush him.

“Why do you care?”, she spoke against his mouth, which she had open in surprise.

She pressed onto his groin, and achieved to slip her tongue between his parted lips thanks to the distraction. Something stirred in her stomach when their tongues made contact. When he tried to pull back she sighed against him, she could feel herself tremble from the inside and if she would not have him right now, she was sure her nerves would start to pop one by one. The wetness between her legs was making the lace tickle and stick to her, she squeezed her knees together hoping to erase the unease, but it helped very little.

She could still taste the sweetness of the concoction still lingering in her mouth. She wished she had more hands so she could touch him all over at the same time. When she led her hands to his buckle, he caught a tight grip on her wrists.
She felt another wave of the poison kick in as his admonishing gaze was on her. Her vision blurred, and there was a circle of haze around her field of view that made her head warm up. She licked her swollen lips and groaned again.

“Am I not pretty enough?”, she asked in a small voice before continuing her exploration of his neck with her lips, not at all troubled.

His grip loosened, and she caught a broad hand before taking it to her mouth and suckling two fingers. She moaned and swirled her hot tongue around his slightly calloused fingers, and she could hardly hide her grin at the thought of how they would feel inside her.

“Lovely girl…”, he grounded.

She knew by the hard and throbbing feel of his bulge so poorly hidden underneath his trousers that her appearance was not the problem.

“Jaqen please… This could be so great… just you and me, don’t think about the House, they’ll never know…”

The poison rushed through her veins, she felt the warmth radiate from her wanting body like a fire consuming everything.

“A girl is not in her normal state, she will regret this-”

“Iris said it only increases want…”, she purred.

She looked at him through lidded and glassy eyes as she guided his hand underneath the silky skirt. He did not resist, as if allured by some kind of enchantment.

An electrifying wave of thrill travelled in her as she felt his fingers brush against the side of her thigh. *Please, come closer babe I need you closer, need you, need you, need you*…
“Jaqen, I want you…d-do you not want me?”

She felt her cheeks burn more, but she wasn't sure if it was because of the poison this time.

His eyes widened for a fraction of a second, her heart was racing, she was quite sure he could feel it too. She unconsciously held her breath when she felt his hand move upwards, she saw his own restraint crawl away from his face as his shoulders relaxed a bit.

“I'll kill them all.”

He kissed her on the lips, took her jaw between his hands and she felt triumph sprawl through every of her muscles. She slipped her fingers to the buttons of his shirt and started undoing them, one by one, her fingers shaking with excitement.

“Arya, no.”, he stopped her, caught her hands in his and broke away from her face.

Her eyes met his, lost, confused, cold.

Oh my God

And then it was lucid. What am I doing

The sharp edges of image before her hurt her eyes. She was begging like a depraved, and he said no but that hadn't stopped her. Burning tears of shame bathed her cheeks before she had a chance to hold them. She felt cold suddenly. She was freezing. And her belly switched inside out, making her want to puke.

Oh my God

“Ja-Jaq-…”, she was out of breath and she couldn't believe what had just happened.

“I'm s-sorry…”, she cried. She felt like a child throwing a tantrum, and she wanted it to stop but she could not. It was like she was watching the scene from another perspective, like she was spectator and her life was a really bad film she had been forced to watch. And she hated the protagonist, she wanted to spit at herself.
“I— I don’t know what—...” *Oh my God what's happening to me?*

He wrapped his arms around her, and the tenderness surprised her.

“Shh…”, he soothed her while smoothing her ruffled hair.

“Everything is perfectly fine.”

He carried her weak frame to the bed while she mumbled apologies in between sobs. He nestled her in the fluffy pillows, his deep and low voice still soothing her with soft words, telling her that everything was fine, that the poison was gone now…and she felt even more like a powerless child which made her want to hurt herself.

*I'm ridiculous…*

She wiped away the tears, and felt that her face was swollen. He laid on the bed next to her, as if to survey her. He got close enough for her to feel his warmth but not as much as she'd like.

A few minutes passed, and her body was fully cold now, her mind at peace again. Her breathing was calm again, as if it had all been a bad dream and she was waking up in her bed at home with him watching over her sleep.

She wanted to snuggle up against him, and circle her arms around him. Nothing sexual, that carnal desire had completely left her already, taking away whatever energy she had left. She wanted just a hug, and feel good in his arms, safe in this strange place.

They stayed silent, observing each other, only their eyes moving as if they were staring at wonderful statues in a museum. He did look like a Greek god of marble, she though naively. Something untouchable, fathomable, not even real.

“Is Jaqen your real name?” The question came out of the blue, but he did not seem surprised by it. It would seem normal that he'd choose a different name when he was out on a mission. She wanted to know. Jaqen suited him so well, and she wanted to know more, more about him, although she dreaded that he would not answer her.

“Yes.” His eyes looked through hers, as if unveiling. Even in the dark, she could see the speckles of bronze in the sea of blue.
“How come? I thought this whole theatre teacher thing was for a mission?”

“This man… he was born as Jaqen H'ghar. He's already told a girl under which circumstances he entered the house, and he has been in the order for quite a while, since he was eighteen, and he's thirty-eight now. But all this time he was working with the chief and the others, he had to keep the illusion that the real Jaqen still existed, he could not just simply disappear. Sometimes, to keep that illusion includes going on missions under his real identity, and pretend that Jaqen H'ghar became a travelling comedian.”

“Hmm”, she nodded. “And is that what you would have liked to become, had not all that stuff with the house happened?”

He smiled, and Arya believed she saw some nostalgia in it.

“Much like a girl, for a very long time a man did not know what he would do with his life. But… I would have liked… being a painter. Or a book editor, maybe, and hold a little library. Or maybe even a photographer.” His voice sounded different, yet so much like him. “A man always loved art, even as a boy. Theatre, comedy, even poetry and painting, he just loves… art is so eerie, and yet so meaningful. It doesn't mean to hurt, you know? It's just there, mindless of the rest of the world yet deeply connected to it. We decide if we stop to watch it or not, and it needs us to live, yet it's independent from our judgement. It's just… there, and it's beautiful. A man would have loved living from art.”

Arya smiled. “My Dad told me something like that once.” She blushed. She hadn't really meant to say that out loud, but it didn't seem to unsettle him. “He loved to read. He wrote some stuff too, but I never dared to read it. His works are still at home, in England…”

“A girl loves to write too, doesn't she?”

She bit her lip, thought on the miserable pieces of texts that lay in that hidden part of her drawer in the flat.

“When she first came to a man's theatre class, the first exercise… a man thinks that's what drew him to you first. The texts. Yours were different. Raw, and stylish. It felt like you knew exactly what you were talking about.”
“Really?” She squeezed her knees together. “It wasn’t the impression I had. Like, at all. Most of the time, I just feel like I’m making it up on a crumbly base, you know… without any kind of sense or pattern. I kind of dreaded to show it to you actually, but you didn’t really ask, you just read it.”

“Maybe a girl should trust herself more, then.”

He lay a hand on her cheek and caressed it gently. God, she wanted to kiss him. She bit her lip, and moved a tiny, little tiny bit forward… His breath was soft and warm.

She looked in his eyes and… no, they could not. He would tell her they could not, and hearing it one more time might break her.

She wanted to tell him she needed him, in her life, everyday, that she wanted to keep talking about art, or discover more about the real him, or stay there with him in that little bubble forever. Later, she told herself, she’d tell him later, when they’d be in better conditions. She kept her lips sealed, and let her cowardice wash her to sleep, his hand still soothing the side of her jaw.

* 

Back in the House of Black and White, Jaqen strode through the corridors like a lion trapped in a cage.

The lovely girl was back at her own home since early this morning. He had not known what to do when they had woken up, still dizzy from the previous evening. He had not known what to tell her, how to fix it all. Even though nothing felt broken, just… stagnant. As if they were both stuck.

The morning passed silently, and they only exchanges looks while she prepared, and when she got in the cab that would drive her back, she had let a sad look linger on him while he watched her go. He proceeded then to walk back to the House then, his only refuge, wondering on the way how the hell he was supposed to get out of this situation now. There was no way the Chief would ignore the fact that his most important agent left his service to rescue her. Fuck.

He went to his sister’s lab, unsure what else to do, who to talk to. He wanted to fix it all, he truly did. He didn’t know how, he didn’t even know what was to be fixed, but he wanted something better, for him and for her, right now.

He ignored the fear deep inside, roaring that the only way to make her life better was to go back to the time he hadn’t met her yet. But he could go away, start fresh. Again. Like he had done all his life, for each new mission. He was tired of starting fresh. He wanted to find a direction now, and a path
which they could share, maybe…

The chief's face flashed in his mind. That freaking man would decide, just like he had decided everything else for him since they had met. He wanted to change that, but he felt like a helpless child. He did not know how.

“Why did you give her the libido thing?”, he asked, entering Iris' lab. “You perfectly know it only works on women and that she would take some, why did you tell her it was for Walder Frey?”

She was surprised at first, and then her eyes went low.

“The chief told me to.”, she whispered. “He said she had to take it, and the best way to make her was passing it to her as a friend would, and make her believe it was for her own interest.”

“Why? Why does he do this?”

She raised her eyes and frowned.

“Have you not understood yet?”

His phone beeped, and there was no time left to chat. What have I not understood? He usually liked to believe he saw right through people's schemes. And the chief had never been one foolish enough to hide his from him. What was the old prick doing?

Chief: In my office, rn

Great. He would figure out soon. He sighed angrily, got out of the lab without granting his sister another look. In the corridor in front of the office he crossed paths with his brother Chameleon. The door of the office was closed, so he waited with him. They leaned against the wall together, in dead silence.

“It's about this girl is it?”, his brother asked, and his voice was unbearable. Jaqen didn't answer.

“You should have done it.”
“Done what?”

Chameleon chortled.

“Humped her.”

_Shut up you honour-less fucker_, he clenched his fist, and remembered the lack of drugs were making him so aggressive. Maybe they were even the ones making his mind foggy and preventing him from unravelling what the chief was doing with the lovely girl and him.

“You should have forgotten about those new codes of yours and fucked her.”, the brother continued to speak, but this time it was more than for him to bear. He readied his fist, ready to fly it in his handsome face. But when he saw his brother's gaze, he didn't find the usual playfulness. He was dead serious. It made his arm weak. The door opened, and Chameleon vanished.

Jaqen entered the room. The chief was sat, serious, and acted as if he had not seen him. Jaqen stayed silent, and waited. After a few seconds, the chief pulled out a usb key, planted it in his small computer, toyed with some keys, and the room filled with sounds.

At first buzzy sounds. Then hushed sounds. The sound of kisses. His kisses on her skin. And her rusty voice, begging for his touch.

_So her ear-bud was working_, he assessed the old man with a poorly hidden rage.

_Fucking bastard_

“The rules were respected. Nothing happened, this man swears it on his honour.”, he defended himself through clenched teeth. The chief stopped the recording, and twisted his fingers.

“And what shall I do with your honour? What is it worth? You should have forgotten your honour a while back. I formed you to be a weapon, not a knight. To this day, I thought I had reached my goal.”, the old man raised a grey brow.

“Keep your honour, Fox. I know nothing happened. I expected so.”

There was a second-long silent, and Jaqen cursed himself. He started to understand the chief’s
strategy. How could he have been so blind and stupid?

“Tell me what this sounds like.”, the old man's tone was severe and cold. It had always been, when he didn't hide behind his fake paternal mask.

“I put you two in a room, and shot you both with aphrodisiacs. I have to say your taste needs some sharpening as well these days. You didn't even notice funky taste in your cocktail last night.” Jaqen was boiling inside. “Anyway. You both are attracted to each other, even sober. But you didn't do anything. You, Fox, the man I've known and have been sheltering for the past twenty years and who has enjoyed more intimate missions than we can both count, didn't lay a single finger on her.” He opened a drawer, and lit up a Cuban cigar. The smell filled the small room. “I won't even bother to ask you why, frankly, I do not care what your answer is. You have disappointed me, son.”

Jaqen clenched his teeth.

“You used her as a tool.”, his tone was deep and raw like the grumble of a beast. “Only to test my devotion to you.” Of course. What better way to know if he had feelings for this girl than to trap them in a room, and see if he had enough respect for her to ignore the desire running through him?

“And you failed.”

“What will happen to her?” he dared ask. When the old man shrugged his right shoulder, it took Jaqen his entire strength not to fly his fist in his jaw.

“In what kind of wicked beast did this little girl transform you?”, he laughed. Jaqen stood up, and left.

His brother had been right. He should have done it.

And at this point, he knew. He'd never see her again.
No one. She had been standing before the gate of the House of Black and White for almost an hour now, waiting for Chameleon or Iris or someone. But there was nothing, and the huge building seemed to mock her. *They said 7pm every night, what are they doing?*

She tried to look around, but there were no familiar faces. *Should I call Jaqen?* She wondered, but decided it was probably not a good idea. He'd either not answer her, or they'd get in trouble for entering in contact outside of the House.

She thought about the mission from Saturday night. *I hope he didn't get in trouble because of that.* She was kind of flattered by the idea that he would risk his position for her, but at the same time she hated it. She didn't want him to be in trouble, and she wanted to prove the world that she could handle shit on her own. But she had to admit she would've struggled a bit more without him, and maybe a deadly mission wasn't the best way to start taking her independence.

*Anyway.* It didn't matter now. The mission was over, and her apprenticeship would resume to make her a real field agent. Unless they had all disappeared or something, because ten minutes later the area was still empty and dark.

She watched a few cars drive by, and sighed. She looked at her phone. Damn, 9:16, that's why she was starving. Usually her training would have been over by that time. She pinched her lips, and started to head back home.

*Did they forget about me?* She wondered. She looked back at the marble stairs, and the people on their furry mantles walking by. She shrugged. She'd come back tomorrow, maybe they took a day off. They had no way to contact her anyway.

“Mornin’”, Sansa said, the next day. “You've got mail.”

“Mail?” Arya frowned. Who could send her a letter? She dealt with her bank on the internet and the only people to know her address were the ones who had come here before. Lommy never sent anything from the countries he visited on his exchange student thing and Gendry was definitely not the type to send letters.
She picked up the envelope, before realizing that Sansa was pulling out a tray full of cinnamon buns from the oven.

“They’re still hot,” the red-head said, too late because Arya was already trying to swallow one of them whole.

“Mmh…”, she said, chewing down quickly and blowing through her nose to ignore the burn.

“I got some time off for Christmas so I might cook a little more these days. It’d be nice for you to stay with us for dinner.”

“I'll-”, she swallowed, and giggled at her sister's grimace. Mum grimaced like that too when she spoke with her mouth full. *Arya Minisa Lyarra Stark*, she would've said. *Manners!* It felt good to think about her without being sad.

“I'll do what I can,” she said, sitting on one of the stools. Nymeria was just behind the counter, trying to get one of the buns too, but Sansa didn't let her.

She took a butter knife and started to open the envelope. A cheque fell down and she caught it just in time. There was a post it note at the back of it, and that was all.

“What are you even doing every night?” Sansa resumed. “You weren't there Saturday, you wouldn't answer my calls and you only came back yesterday super late. I know you were with your friend Gendry, but could you at least text me when you're not coming back home for the night? I'm not asking for much, just a little message. You can thank Jon for helping me not freak out too much. And then you did it again yesterday evening, I was worried you know, you usually co- Are you listening?”

*3500 dollars from The House of Black and White*, Arya stared at the piece of paper. She examined the post-it note. *For your services. Do not try to contact us again. Thank you.*

She rose her eyes to her sister, confused.

“I'm sorry,” she said. She hadn't been listening but it was probably the same lecture as always. “I have to go.”
“Arya!”, she heard her shriek when she ran to her room to put on a pair of pants.

“I'll be back before the night I promise.”

She put her jacket on and slipped through the front door. Nymeria shook her tail and tried to follow but she told her *not today girl.*

She ran to Essos Boulevard, ignoring the cold sipping through her jacket. By the time she reached the restaurant, some rain had started to fall down. She hated the winter rain here, and it had been years since she hadn't seen snow. But she found no will to care right now. She stopped before the closed electric gate, her nose runny and her breath heavy.

She looked around. No one was looking at her. She quickly climbed the barrier, and landed on the other side. There was a truck in the back courtyard, and people were bringing in vegetables, just like the first day she found this place. She hid behind the bushes, and managed to go all the way to the underground door without getting noticed.

She figured it was probably locked. But, maybe per chance, who knows, she tried to open it anyway. It creaked and opened.

She entered, suspicious. It was colder, and darker, and she was pretty sure the corridors weren't white anymore but some shade of grey. She made sure to not loose sight of the exit door to not get lost. She opened one of the doors in the corridor, but instead of seeing a small empty room or an office like she would have expected, it was full of crates and broken chairs.

*What the-*

She tried a few other doors. The same. Tables, piles of tin cans, a laundry room full of clean white tablecloths. But no sign of computers or labs or anything related to spies.

*Wait-*

Even the cameras had disappeared from all the rooms she checked. Everything had vanished.
She stepped back, slowly toward the exit. *Had it even been real? Or had she dream about it all?*

She frowned, her mind was blank. She took the same path to get out of the backyard, and found herself back in front of the big fancy entrance. In her hand was still the cheque and the note.

How could everything just vanish like this? And Jaqen? Why did he not- how could he- he couldn't be gone right? *Oh my God- what if Jaqen was gone too?*

She ran to the theatre classroom. It was quite far from Essos Boulevard, but she ran through the freezing wind and this thin and wetting rain. Her coat and her hair were drenched when she finally reached the old building across the street of her school, she was out of breath and her legs felt shaky.

It was Tuesday. It was the holiday but maybe someone would be there. There had to be someone.

She crashed through the door, and ran again down the stairs. The door of the classroom was closed. She tried to force the doorknob. She knocked it with the tip of her boot.

*Useless,* she regained her senses. *It's useless, he's not here.*

She picked up her phone and scrolled through the contacts. She called him. It beeped. Once, twice, thrice.

“The number you are trying to reach is no longer available.”

She hung up, called again.

“The number you are trying to reach is no longer available.”

Again.

“The number you are trying to reach is no longer available.”

She stared at the closed door. She slowly dropped her hand to her side, and the phone to the floor.
No, she thought.

She looked at the phone, screen down against the ground. She let herself sink to the cold tiles too, back against the wall and held her head.

*How could everything be gone just like that?*

She sighed, but refused to let the pain in her throat take over her. She felt so confused.

*Had it even been real?*

An image of him flashed in her head. His red hair, the curve of his smirk, the feeling of his lips against hers. *How could he disappear just like that?*

The pain shot sharp in her throat again. *No. I will not cry.*

She rose her chin and looked at the ceiling. It was dirty. Stained with humidity, yellow marks and… blurry. She choked on her tears. She didn't even allow them to roll all the way down her cheeks before wiping them away. She stood up, picked up her phone, and headed home.

*Gone.*

The street looked weird, with her thoughts so loud.

*Gone. Just simply gone.*

*What did I do wrong? How could I ruin every single thing I do? This was so perfect, I would have worked with Jaqen and… and… it would have been so great, and now it's just… gone.* Her eyes were on the ground as she walked.

She got home before midday. At least it made Sansa happy. She wished Jon were here, but he didn't come back until the night. She looked for any occupation to keep her mind off what had just happened. She knew she'd never see any of them again. Iris had warned her. The House had erased
her, now that they didn't need her anymore—*whatever*.

She spent the afternoon reading that sci-fi book in her bedroom. When dinner time came she emerged from her cave and sat at the dinner table with Jon while Sansa was busying herself in the kitchen again. Arya's thoughts were still fuzzy, but she hadn't lost her composure again in the whole afternoon. She was sort of proud, despite the fact that she still kind of could not believe it. But somehow, looking at Jon's dark eyes eased that awful feeling. She smiled at him, glad to see him come home.

“What is she making?”, he whispered, concerned. He put the plates on the table and she followed him with the glasses.

“Vegan squash pasta or something.”

He wrinkled his nose and made her giggle, but her laugh died quickly. *They freaking erased me.* *Jaqen freaking erased me. How the hell do I move from that?*

“Are you okay?”, Jon asked, and she shook her head vividly. He looked like he didn't entirely believe her, and she wished he had hugged her, but they sat down before Sansa showed up with a pan.

“Stop making those faces.” She lifted the lid and the pan was full of regular mac and cheese. “The squash is only for the brave.”

They laughed while eating, and Jon recounted them his day at work. Sansa spoke about this Sandor guy she had been seeing for a few weeks now, and Jon teased her about him. Then they turned their gazes to Arya, obviously expecting some story from her too.

“I uh… I spent the week-end at Gendry's.”, she mumbled, before stuffing her mouth with pasta.

“Yeah, you've said that already, but what did you do?”

She kept chewing, thinking about a lie she could tell them. Apparently it took a little too long. Sansa smirked and Arya knew exactly where this conversation was going.

“Arya…?”
“No, we didn't do anything. He's my friend. We played on his nintendo switch and watched Nightmare before Christmas with his flatmate.”

Both looked convinced by her answer. She sighed.

“About Christmas, I'll go buy a small tree tomorrow, so we can decorate it,” Jon said. “I hope they still have a few, Christmas is only in a couple of days. If I find a fresh one we could even leave it for longer, this way the apartment will be decorated for your birthday as well Ar, and for New Year's Eve.”

“Do you guys mind if I invite a few people over for New Year's? Not as much as for my birthday, I promise. And you could invite people too, it could be fun. Would Gendry like to come?”

“I…”, Arya looked at their expectant faces. Do they really think Gendry's my only friend? Well, he kinda is, but… “I'll ask him.”

Sansa turned her eyes to Jon, and he looked embarrassed.

“What?”

“I uh… I don't really know how to say this.”

“You have a new girlfriend you want to invite?” Sansa asked, and Arya's heart beat a little faster.

“No, I uh…”, he put down his fork, and looked at them more intently. “I have to pack my things, I won't really have any time to help preparing a party. I'll be moving out in January.”

Sansa and Arya stared at him.

Before she could retain it, Arya scoffed. Then giggled. Then laughed. She laughed so hard her cheeks hurt.
“You're kidding?”, she managed to ask. Their astounded faces did not help with her bursts of laughs. “Jon you can't just say that you're leaving.”

She kept laughing, and Sansa whispered Arya quietly. Both looked surprised by her reaction. Even she did not understand it. But what the hell? Jon couldn't be leaving, what was going on?

“Sorry.” She tried to calm her breathing. She wiped away a tear from the corner of her eye. “I'm sorry. Just- Jon, you're kidding, right?”

He pinched his lips and smiled. A sad smile. She stopped laughing.

“I've just been mutated to England. I've been wanting to go home since I left Winterfell, I can't refuse…”

Arya lost her smile, and now that, that sounded real. The weird feeling in the air vanished, and she sank in her chair. She looked at her empty plate, feeling like every strand of her life was slipping through her fingers.

“And I'll be closer to Bran and Rickon,” he continued. All she heard was that he was leaving her. He too. “And I'd like to meet my birth-parents as well. But I'll visit, I promise.”

She scoffed again. She picked up her dirty dishes and stood up.

“No you won't. And we won't either. I know us.”

She put the dishes in the sink, and went to her bedroom without another word.

She laid down on the bed. She had a headache. She stared at the ceiling, until all sounds vanished around her. She didn't find sleep. She just stared, for hours. No tears came. No joy either. No reaction from her outer body.

Her thoughts though wouldn't calm down. This is your fault, for expecting too much every fucking time. And look at you now. She couldn't even feel the pain these thoughts tried to trigger. I should be used to people leaving now.
She hugged her pillow. *When will you understand the only person you can rely on is yourself?*

She looked at the clock. *2am.* Damn, she was getting good at doing literally nothing for entire hours.

She stood up. Her legs felt a bit wobbly and her mind felt like it was completely falling apart. She got out of her room. She sneaked to the kitchen, and in that cupboard above the fridge she knew there was a bottle of tequila. *Only one glass,* she thought. She rarely drank, so that'd be enough, just to numb her a little and not feel so awful inside for a moment. She uncapped the bottle and took a sip. It burned her throat, and she thought it would suffice. She didn't even like the taste.

Usually alcohol made her giggle, but now there was nothing to cheer her up, and the view of the living room was not really entertaining. She walked aimlessly for a minute, sat on the couch. It was too quiet.

She stared at the emptiness before her. No. *No.* She could not let him go just like that. Not him too.

She stood up, and went to Jon's room.

“Jon.” Her stomach twisted into a knot, but she untwisted it. He wasn't sleeping, she knew it. She heard him turn toward her, and felt his eyes on her.

“I don't want you to leave.”

“Arya…”, she heard the sheets move around him, and he came closer to her. He sat on the edge of the bed, and she didn't want to look at him.

“I love you small jello. But I really have to go…”

*He doesn't understand,* a weight hurt in her throat.

“Come here.” He took her waist, and she hoped he didn't feel her shiver. He lied down again and pulled her on the duvet next to him, and squeezed her tight. She inhaled his scent and closed her eyes. They stayed quiet for a wile, but then she decided she didn't want to be quiet.

“I have something to ask you.”, she began, and she knew he felt the seriousness in his tone.

“Do you remember Sansa's birthday?”

She tensed up, and a cold hand grabbed a hold of her heart when she asked herself if she should
really ask about this strange dream. They were finally okay, their relationship almost like what it used to be eight years ago. Would she really mess it all up because of a stupid dream, that was probably the result of some sick fantasy of hers?

“I do.”, he answered casually, but uncertainly.

She breathed in, and looked at him. And then she decided. Yes, she would risk messing it all up. *If he really is leaving, then I don't have much to lose.*

“I have… a strange memory haunting me since that evening. You know, when we went to bed and started talking, do you…remember what happened?”

He hesitated, she knew he was. Then he scoffed quietly.

“Aye, I have a strange memory too, but that can't be.”, he smiled like a fool and she felt a curious fear burst in her.

“Tell me yours, I remember you were pretty drunk too, we'll have a good laugh.”

“I'm not sure it'll make us laugh.”

“Come on, it can't be worse than mine-”

“I kissed you.”, she said before reason shushed her.

He stared. She expected to see disgust in his eyes, or realization, or confusion, or *something*, but really it was just a stare, that felt like the longest stare ever. Had she just ruined everything? *Damn it-*

“I thought it was a dream.”, he said, looking confused.

“And it didn't disturb you? Why would you dream about that?”

“No, I don't know, dreams are weird and I was drunk, and… -”
His look travelled from her eyes to her lips, and for half a second she felt an electrifying jet run through her when his eyes got lost near her cleavage, which she hadn't even noticed was pretty exposed in this pyjama tank top. Suddenly, she was very conscious about the places their bodies touched, his big arms around her frame, their knees brushing, and his once pleasant warmth became... something more. Not comforting anymore but forbidden, thrilling.

“And, I don't know... I hadn't seen you in a long time, and we had just discovered that we weren't related and... I don't know...” He clenched his teeth, and sighed.

“Do you... ever feel like it's never going to be the same between us? Not since Sansa's birthday, but since... we reunited. I mean, you and me. Like, we will never be the same... I tried to fix it, I swear I did. I just... couldn't... forget... You've changed so much, you're so... so...”

He looked lost. Very lost and sorry. And she probably looked the same. His eyes were dark, two dark orbs looking into hers as if looking for an answer that she did not have. Her limbs shook, just like when she was stressing out for an exam she had not worked on.

She had no answer but perhaps she had a solution. She put her hand on the side of his jaw.

She planted a probing kiss on his lips. They were full and soft and she had a strange feeling in her stomach, like the one you get during a dream that makes no sense in which anything could happen. She wouldn't have been that surprised had her middle-school teacher burst into the room on a winged lama- that was how strong the feeling was.

He gently took her neck and an uncontrolled moan resonated in her throat. He pressed his mouth further against hers to deepen the kiss. Oh- this felt good. She wasn't ready to feel how good it was.

Stop, a voice ordered in her head and she ignored it.

She sighed against him and angled her head slightly. The sound of their soft kisses was like a caress to her ears, and there was no way she could ever cease.

His hand left her neck, he took a strong hold of her waist and sat her astride him. She giggled and watched a smile grow on the lips she had just explored. She felt her heartbeat accelerate, her need of air increase. She needed him more.

She plunged forward again. She cupped his jaw with both hands and he held her tight against him, their embrace now needy and fervent. She traced his beard with her fingers, and his moustache
tickled her lips. He sighed and let a small groan escape him. She rolled her tongue on his lower lip and he opened for her, before their tongues mingled. Damn, that felt good. Better, even. A fuzzy sensation shook her, and she had more and more difficulty to control the excitement rushing through her. *I want him, I want him, I want him*, she kept repeating herself, and before long, her hands were on his broad shoulders, and tracing the abs through his shirt. *How far will we get?* The question created a pull in her lower belly, and when she opened her eyes to look at his, burning with lust, that pull almost strangled her.

They heard Sansa outside, close the door of the bathroom. A burn of fear ran through her, and they broke away, before they both looked at the closed door of his room. They heard Sansa's steps, heading towards her room, closing her door. When the flat was silent again, he took her chin and resumed tasting her.

*Shit*- she suddenly felt like crying.

She broke away again and closed her eyes. She took a deep, shaky breath in and *no*, she would not weep.

“Jon-”

*What the hell is happening?*

She looked at him. He seemed as disoriented as her, driven by instincts and curiosity, his reason trying to make sense out of all this mess. She pressed her lips against his once more. She couldn't help it, just in case this would be the last time it would happen.

“This is not… right.”, she whispered.

She squeezed her eyes shut again and leaned her forehead against his. *Damn it*- why must she always mess up everything?

“No…”, he answered quietly.

She opened her eyes again, and there was a gleam of light in his dark eyes.
Why did that answer make the thrill in her rise? The lust roared in her, and she felt herself throb. No, I'm not ruining everything.

She plunged towards him and devoured him without further thinking, snaked her hands underneath his shirt. She needed him, needed to feel his warmth and his skin. Maybe she was crazy, but right now her body was pleading and she didn't care how wrong it all sounded. And he probably took the same decision for his hands were now untying the strings holding her sweatpants.

She got rid of his shirt. She uncovered the sculpted abs and bit her lip, her mind lost in the fever of the moment.

In one swift move her tank top was on the ground too, and she felt his hot breath brush against her clavicles. She shivered when she felt the bristles of his beard against the tender flesh of her breast, and a jolt ran through her when his mouth closed on her hardened tip.

Her long fingers got lost in his dark curls, and oh how can this feel so good? Her head felt light and she felt herself tremble all over inside. When she couldn't hold her thoughts together anymore she pushed him down on the pillows. She moved aside and took off her sweatpants, her breathing heavy. Oh my God it's happening. She tossed them on the ground and noticed him watching her as she slid her panties off.

“Take your bloody boxers off”, she commanded, and when he obliged she felt the heaviest thrill ever run through her. She examined his form, splayed on the bed. He was so strong. His muscles were defined, and so was the v line that led to the hairy spot above his manhood. He was hard and flexed. He fumbled through the drawer of his bedside table and pulled out a condom. She bit her lips and felt her blood sing. He put it on and she straddled him. He kissed her again, and when his hand slipped down there her heart pounded her chest. She was already wet and he toyed with her easily.

She unconsciously held her breath and damn, he was skilled with his fingers. He pressed his thumb on her clit and made her arch her back. It felt so strange to have a foreign touch surround her so, but she was definitely ready for more. She touched him as well. She felt terribly inexperienced at first, but when she took his manhood in her hand and started stroking up and down he didn't show any sign of displeasure so she kept going. He pushed two fingers in her and kept playing with his thumb, circling and going in and out and “Ah…” “You're okay?” “Yes, keep going…”

She started to loose her breath, and she buried her face in his neck. She felt the climax come, bit by bit, second after second, but she needed more, more. His breath became uneven too, and he gently chased her hands away from him, brought her closer and slid the tip of him against her entrance.
She looked in his eyes and slowly she lowered herself, his thumb still against that soft spot, working miracles. She held her moan, and she expected pain, but it was bearable. Once he was in she stopped for a second to wonder at the sensation. It felt intimate, so close to him, she had to look away. She rocked her hips, began moving, chasing that burst of pleasure. Quickly their moves became erratic, and more sighs came with them. Her movements were fluid and he guided her hips, all the while nibbling at her skin and circling the bundle of nerves until she couldn't hold it anymore.

She trembled and felt a wave of distress crash in her. Her mouth opened and she let out the faintest “Oh”. She bit her lip. She really didn't want to get loud. But ah, it felt so good, so relieving, and every time he plunged in again she buzzed a little more. He reached climax too and sighed in release. They stayed locked a few more seconds, the time they needed to come back to earth. She reached out for his lips and kissed him again, before climbing off him. She let herself fall on the cushions, her breath still heavy.

He stretched out a piece of fabric and she cleaned herself with it, before tossing it on the ground. He threw the condom away and collided on the mattress next to her. He shot her a look, and they giggled. Oh my- She closed her eyes and put her hands on her face. The euphoria was hard to control. Oh my God. She had lost her virginity to Jon.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this chapter! Let me know your thoughts in the comments!

Disclaimer: Arya is going to get some well deserved me time after this. She needs some time to grow as a character before going back to the romance plot ;)

Christmas arrived a couple of days later. They watched an old movie just the three of them and ate popcorn. Jon got her a skateboard wrapped in some taped newspaper that made her laugh, and she and Sansa got him one of those fancy grooming kits so extra it clashed against their miserable tree. She had eyed Jon whenever she could over the days that followed their nightly frenzy, and a couple of times she caught him eyeing back, but Sansa was always around so displaying any kind of affections was out of question, and in all honesty, Arya didn't want to show anything outside of the bedroom. She had liked spending a night with him, loved it even, and when she could she'd do it again because she hated sleeping alone now because it forced her to face a petrifying solitude that she had not known before and she didn't know where it was coming from. But she didn't want them to be a couple. A few times she had imagined casually kissing him, to say good morning maybe, or hold hands while walking, or go to a restaurant just the two of them while wearing nice clothes, but those ideas made her feel strange, and wrong. So she kept a reasonable distance, thinking about how awesome it would be to feel him against her again, his beard scraping her skin and his hips rocking against hers, and she decided that before he left they had to do it again, but she waited for the moment that felt right to go back to his room in the middle of the night.

New-Years arrived, and that moment still wasn't there. Sansa's friends came over, she pretended she had asked Gendry to come and lied to Sansa that he had something else planned (in truth she hadn't even texted him since the beginning of the holiday). Jon wasn't into the party and neither was she, but he was official bartender again so she spent the evening keeping him company and drinking that sweet cocktail he made until her head spun and she was blabbering out nonsense. The more she drank the more it felt right to drag him to her room by the hem of his shirt and wolf him down, but when in the middle of their conversation she almost called him Jaqen she admonished herself, and went to bed on her own.

Two nights after New Years Sansa was out, and it still didn't feel like it was right to go to him, but when Arya was in bed staring at the ceiling she stood up and went anyway because it was just freaking too easy to not spend the night alone. When she was alone she thought about those feelings inside of her and she didn't like how they confused her. He didn't seem surprised when she opened his door without knocking, and before he even said a word she was crawling on him naked. He went down on her, and since San wasn't here she allowed herself to get a little louder, and his tongue there felt like an amazing oblivion. This night was better than the first time, and this time they didn't have to clean up the sheets in a hurry the following morning because of bloodstains, so that was nice too.

She went again the eve of his departure, because she wanted him, and he was there, and because it felt like a stupid waste to not enjoy his presence one last night. Only when she opened his door she didn't feel as good as she had the two previous times.

“You're leaving tomorrow,” she whispered, standing in front of the bed, and she felt like a soaking
wet puppy glooming on the rainy street and she hated it.

“Yes,” he said sweetly, and she wanted to slap him. She was mad, she was furious, because he was leaving, and all he could say was a sweet yes, and all he could do was stare at her propped on his elbows, his ridiculously cute face watching hers, and his godforsaken cock calling her cunt to make her forget about it. She wanted him to be mad too, she wanted him to hurt her so she had a reason to not miss him. He could be mean, he could say nasty things to her, and she started making up a fake dialogue in her head, in which he called her all sorts of names and spat them right at her face like you'd throw rocks at a clingy dog you wanted to abandon. But that only lasted for a couple of seconds, because his eyes on her were fucking adorable and full of sadness, and she knew that even if she asked him to be mean he would never be, because he was Jon. He was her Jon. No, that sounded wrong and she didn't like it. He wasn't her Jon, just like she wasn't his Arya. He was just Jon and she was just Arya, and she wanted just someone between her legs right now to distract her from the questions and the made-up plots in her head, and he happened to be there and possess the right tool for that.

She didn't show him her disappointment, she just wanted to feel his skin against her one last time, because she knew despite all the pinky promises they had made to each other that none of them would call, and so they wouldn't plan a visit until the forces of nature would bring them back together. It was their way of coping with sadness. Tucking it away until they forgot about it, and she didn't know any other way and she knew he didn't either.

She pulled up her shirt, and tugged down her sweatpants. She wasn't even wearing panties. She let them drop to the ground, and he moved to reach out for her waist. He pulled her towards him and kissed her. His kisses were soft, and lovely, but they weren't what she needed right now, so she pulled back. She snaked her hand in his boxers and stroked until he was hard.

“Can you go hard?”, she asked, when his muscle was tight and hot between her fingers. “Please?”

“Hard?”, he tried to smirk, but it looked more like some weird grimace, and she knew it was fake and that he didn't like to do it hard. He liked it sweet and voluptuous and romantic, but now she needed something else. She nodded.

“Hard.” She repeated. “From behind.”

His brows twitched, almost like he wanted to frown but refrained it. He nodded as well and stood, and excitement was tingling in her belly. She bent over on the bed, propped herself on her elbows and bit her lip when she heard the foil of the condom crack. He coated himself in her wetness and pushed himself in. The stretch felt delicious, and her knee trembled slightly. He caught her hips and rocked, slowly at first, and when she arched her back he went faster. Their skin clapped together, and she opened her mouth to breathe.
She closed her eyes, and for a second it was just carnal, it was perfect, exactly what she wanted. She concentrated on what she felt, and the sound of his grunts added to those fast and wet thrusts filling her ears were so obscenely sweet she could have come just from that melody. He seemed bigger, like that, and it sort of hurt, but it was that particular hurt she sought.

“I can't keep up,” he murmured, out of breath.

“Just a minute,” she pleaded. “Please.” She squeezed her eyes shut and reached down to circle her clit. She forced herself to think about the sensation, just the sensation. A few seconds later she was shaking and frantically tightening her inner walls around him. Her head was light and her blood ran in her veins. He slowed down. He finished on her ass, breathing heavy too, and she felt the warm liquid drip down her thigh. She caught her breath, and let out a quiet moan of satisfaction.

“For fuck's sake…” she heard him swear under his breath.

“What?”

“Nothing.” He bent over her and kissed her shoulder. “Nothing,” he repeated, and reached out for some tissues. He cleaned them both. She kind of ached down there, but it was a good pain, a pain she liked. Her heart kind of ached as well, but it was numb now, and nothing like what she had felt only half an hour prior.

She collapsed on the bed and he crawled next to her, grabbing her by the waist. The two previous times as well he had held her afterwards and cradled her to sleep, but this time she stared at the door and thought about going back to her room to sleep alone. But then he was speaking against her ear, so she forgot about that wish.

“Arya…”

“Hm?”, she asked, still looking at the door, but blankly now. He sighed, and she felt to hot wind in her neck.

“I'm sorry.”
She turned around and put her hand on his cheek. She didn't look at him though. She buried her face in his torso, and hoped her hand on his face would comfort him, because she really didn't want to talk now. She wanted to sleep. She was tired.

“That I'm leaving. I'm sorry that I'm leaving,” he continued, thinking she hadn't heard or something. She took a breath in, and tried to hide her exasperation. She pulled up her chin to look at him and smiled. His eyes were on her, sad again.

*I don't feel anything*, she realized. *No pain. No joy either.* Her hand left his cheek. *Nothing.* Getting no answer from her, he went on.

“I think we should keep this between us,” he whispered.

“Hm.” She nodded slightly. She closed her eyes, and tried to doze off. His body was warm, and she wished he wasn't holding her this tight and this close because it was kind of stifling. Even that smell she loved was sort of too much right now, but she was afraid to hurt him if she simply went away to her room like she wanted to do.

“It's wrong,” he said, when she thought he had been sleeping for half an hour.

“What?” she asked, her voice groggy. She opened her eyes slowly and saw his chest heaving up and down, not quite slow enough to be peaceful but not quite fast enough to be panicked.

“What we did.”

“What?” she played the stupid. *Why won't you just sleep?*

“This.” He motioned between them, frowning a bit in exasperation because he knew what she was doing. “It's wrong,” he repeated, but he didn't let go of her waist, and she could tell by his tone that he was trying to convince them rather than make an observation. “You're my sister. It's wrong.”

She sighed.

“Yes,” she said, but she didn't believe it. She had no idea what was right and what was wrong, she
didn't even know what those words meant. Was it wrong to bang him because he was her adopted brother? Yeah, sure, probably. But would it have been more wrong to live in eternal denial and repression? Maybe. She didn't know, and she would never, so she didn't see why it mattered to call something right or something wrong because it was done and they couldn't do anything about it.

“Let's not tell anyone. Please,” his arms squeezed her tighter. “Let's pretend it never happened. Do you think we can do this?”

She closed her eyes. She expected it to hurt. After a few seconds she realized she only felt empty.

“Sure,” she said, and she wished she cared.

He left the following day, on a Monday morning, on the first day of school after the holiday. He hugged the two sisters in the terminal and promised he'd call as soon as he'd be home, but they all knew it was a lie. Arya skipped class, and when Sansa drove her back home from the airport, the first thing she did was to snuggle up in her bed. No tears came, only an empty feeling. She skipped lunch time, and when dinner time came, Sansa entered the room, and put a bowl of baked beans on the small table, and went out without asking a single question.

Still during the night, her eyes were dry, and she felt nothing. She waited for it, as if a storm was about to rage on, but literally nothing came. The next day she was in class, and resumed her life, chatting with Hot Pie and Lommy during lunch, not quite listening to the biology class, getting distracted during maths class, and at the end of the day she came back home and sat on her bed and she still wasn't feeling anything, and on top of that she was bored.

The next month, her grades had gotten up and Sansa was happy about it, but the smile Arya delivered her was fake. Of course her grades had gotten up, she had had nothing else to think about than those boring lessons. But she wasn't happy, and it felt like there was a hole in her chest whenever she tried to do something to cheer her up a little.

Two months after Jon left it was the end of February, and Gendry showed up with his nintendo switch and they settled on the couch to play. Usually she went to his place when she felt like video games or beer or stupid chat about sports teams or even help with her homework (though that had gotten rarer these days), but this time he came over and claimed their flat screen was bigger and the colours were better and they'd have more fun. At some point he said he had worried to get no news from her for so long, and she apologized, not entirely sure why because he wasn't entitled to know what she was up to 24/7, but she apologized anyway. He said he was happy that she was okay, and asked if they could keep seeing each other despite the fact that she didn't need his help for math and bio anymore, and she agreed because she didn't mind his presence, she even kind of enjoyed it. And so she managed to have company over week-ends and that made that hole in her chest a little less hollow. Sometimes he stayed for dinner, sometimes not, and Arya felt a little dull when he left but
she wasn't sure it was for the good reasons. Sansa always watched them funny when she passed by the living room which had become their dent when he was here, and that one time the redhead cornered her in the entrance a few seconds after he was gone and said he liked her more than she liked him. But Arya didn't believe her because he was her cocky friend who liked to play video games with her and drink beer with her and talk about stupid sports games.

In April, on a Saturday evening Gendry was here again with beers and some game that just aired and he was laughing every time he defeated her. Sansa was out on a model's party night and had miraculously managed to drag Sandor with her, so they weren't there and it felt kind of nice for once. When the boy was done humiliating her at that game, she suggested they watch a movie, and so they did.

The movie had been playing for half of it's runtime, and she hadn't looked once at the screen. Her eyes were on him, on his jaw that the blue light of the TV made appear even more square than it really was, his big arms of bull, and his crotch that looked kind of bulging already though she hadn't even hinted at anything yet and his full attention was on the movie, smiling cockishly at the jests.

“Gendry,” she called, when she had enough. He turned his head, the cocky smile still on it. She took his face and kissed him, and it felt good to have someone against her.

He groaned, surprised, or so she assumed. Her hands slipped to his belt and despite his surprise he was quite quick to catch up with what was happening.

He had condoms in his backpack, because Sansa was absolutely right about him wanting more from their relationship, so they fucked right here in the living room with the sound of the movie still playing, him breathing heavy while he pumped in and out of her, and her buzzing inside for finally feeling alive for five minutes. He was quite rough, and big, and not smooth the way Jon had been, and not anywhere near teasing like she had often imagined Jaqen would be, but she liked it. He filled her up, literally and figuratively, and when she grinned at that thought while climbing up the steps toward climax, he asked her why she was laughing and she told him “nothing”, out of breath, and “please don't stop.”

And he didn't stop. By the end of it she had burns on the white skin above her butt from the unmerciful fabric this shitty couch was made out of, and she was sore in a way she had not been with Jon. He left before Sansa came back, and it was a bit awkward when she was holding the door and waiting for him to get out. He gave her a peck on the lips before disappearing, and when she closed the door she breathed in. Her limbs were still fuzzy and her mind was clear, and it felt good.

The next Monday when they crossed paths at school he threw her a sneaky smile and she felt a lustful pull in her belly. They acted normal in public, and on Saturday, like every Saturday evening, he came back and Sansa was out again, and Arya didn't even pretend she wanted to play when he
started fumbling in his backpack to get the switch out. She wolfed him down the second he passed the door and they didn't make it to the couch.

They added Tuesdays and Thursdays to their schedule, because these were the days Sansa had shootings and Arya had the flat for herself. He kept coming on Saturdays, and when San was there they went to her room and said he helped her with homework.

This went on for three months. Sansa had stopped throwing her questioning looks when Gendry showed up at their place now, and by the way the bed banged against the wall each time they screwed each other there was no way she did not know what was up between them, but she wasn't saying a word about it. That Clegane guy who somehow was around now teased her about it once, said she'd better focus on her grades when he saw she was eyeing Gendry's butt, but she had never been this good at school and it was none of his dam business, so she had told him to shut the fuck up and he had roared in laughter like he always did, and said “She'll be the death of ye, boy”.

During the summer was the most intense. Since there was no school to occupy her, and no homework for her to do, and she couldn't be bothered by any model activity her sister so desperately tried to drag her to, most of it was spend at the flat, fan on, waiting all day for Gendry to come back and ride him until the temperature was unbearable or the highs of the fluttering orgasms were threatening to make her faint. Starks didn't do well with heat, and with the warmth of his body added to hers, everything felt hotter and sweater and dirtier and she loved it so much, because while it was going on it was the only thing she managed to think about. She was addicted, but not the good kind of addicted, not like in the romantic books kind of addicted. The carnal and lustful and not at all personal kind of addicted.

On the last Saturday of summer holiday, Gendry came with tickets for that new cheesy movie that had gotten out, and she told him she didn't want to go with him. He proposed going to a restaurant instead, or go bowling, or just go run with Nymeria together, and she gritted her teeth and refused all of it.

Of course he got confused, because he didn't understand a damn thing about what was between them and he expected more, and she got angry, because she knew exactly what was between them but she knew it wouldn't please him. He yelled that he loved her, and somehow that hurt her.

She told him that he didn't know her, that she was an awful person, and that he should find someone worthy of him. And she hated how stupid that sounded because they hadn't been a couple really, so technically she wasn't been breaking up with him, and she didn't want him away, she just didn't want his bloody feelings. But then he asked her if she was breaking up with him, and she said yes. He stormed off muttering that she was a slut, but he was angry so she didn't take his insult into account, and despite not being a slut she genuinely thought she was a terrible person for hurting him.

A couple of weeks after that she entered college, they hadn't seen each other, hadn't texted, and it
was going to be that way forever, Arya knew. But when she lay in her bed one night staring at the ceiling, feeling that hole she had stuffed with school and sex and video games expand again, she decided she didn’t want to be this way forever.

So the next day she pulled out the cheque from the House of Black and White from her secret spot in the drawer, headed to the bank and got the cash transferred to her account, and then she booked an appointment with a shrink.

Chapter End Notes

Oy, hope you liked it. Please comment! Thanks for keeping up despite the schedule inconsistencies :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!