The Rising Son

by DerkAndFullOfErrors

Summary

A secret hidden right under their noses.

A young Jon Snow realises his worth in the world and vows to make something of himself.

People always did wonder what unknowns existed west of Westeros....

Notes
Run of the mill Roberts Rebellion prologue with tweaks and changes to suit the story.

My first time ever writing fan fiction, just wanted to write a somewhat story based on the wild ideas that have been running through my head. Don't expect a polished masterpiece with a deep plot line, just expect random servings of mild crack and silly, nonsensical dialogue.

Relationship tags will be updated only when they occur in the story.

Game of Thrones off season can conjure up some mad scenarios.

Hope you find my ramblings entertaining, have fun reading it and don't get angry if its not up to your standards, just move on if that's the case. Different strokes for different folks and all that.

I have no upload schedule due to real life being a thing but my plan is to finish it by time season 8 arrives.

I do not own ASOIAF/Game of Thrones.

Enjoy.
The Rebellion was over but at great costs throughout the entire realm, the major houses, the minor houses, the smallfolk and even the land itself. King Aerys II Targaryen more commonly referred to as “The Mad King” had been removed from power by force and the realm was about to begin its road to recovery. Even with the late Robert Baratheon’s attempts at getting revenge and justice for his assumed kidnapped betrothed, House Targaryen remained the ruling family of the seven kingdoms. King Rhaegar Targaryen, first of his name had been crowned shortly after his father's death along with his Queen Elia (Martell) Targaryen but both monarchs had hoped for a third to be crowned on that day alongside them.

Lyanna Stark was the breath of fresh air that their stagnant marriage had needed, both Rhaegar and Elia were good friends but romantically indifferent towards each other, which was not helped by the fact that the maesters had advised for Elia to not birth anymore children after the struggles of birthing her first child Rhaenys and the expected problems they predicted would occur when birthing her second, Aegon (with the later almost killing her). At the Tourney of Harrenhall both Rhaegar and his newly announced pregnant wife Elia along with their appointed Kingsguard for the day Ser Arthur Dayne and Ser Barristan Selmy had witnessed (without her knowledge) Lyanna chase off a group of Riverland squires with nothing but a stick and her wolf-blooded bark after she had caught them beating down one of her father's bannermen.

Lyanna would later go on to procure a mismatched set of armour and enter the lists with only one task in mind, unhorse the knights whose squires were responsible for the beating of her now good friend Howland Reed. She was dubbed “The Knight of the Laughing Tree” and would succeed in her task demanding that the fallen knights chastise their squires in order to ransom back their horses and armour. Shortly after, Lyanna would sneak away to remove her armour but would find that she had been followed by non-other than the crown prince himself Rhaegar and his sworn sword Ser Arthur Dayne.

Rhaegar and Elia had a pretty good idea on the identity of the mystery knight, so when the forever paranoid King had claimed and was whole heartedly convinced that the mystery knight was an enemy, Rhaegar on the advice of Elia had announced to his father that he would attempt to find this knight for him alongside Ser Arthur and would return with them if he was successful. Obviously Rhaegar and Elia just wanted to make sure nothing would happen to Lyanna but also wanted to meet this beautiful northern soul to hopefully get the ball rolling on Rhaegar and Elia’s brand-new plan.

You see, from the moment the pair had seen Lyanna’s protectiveness towards the vulnerable, the love she showed towards her family and friends, the aura of freedom she seemed to radiate whenever they saw her smiling whilst caring for or riding her mare, the happy tears she would shed when she heard Rhaegar’s harp, her strength and sheer devotion to justice when knocking a grown man off his horse and her overall wild beauty had left both monarchs smitten. And with both of their feelings towards the northern beauty being mutual, they both decided to try and revive their relationship by proposing an addition to their marriage bed that not only helped with creating more heirs thus taking the pressure off of Elia but also introducing a beautiful soul into their lives that they were both slowly but surely starting to fall for.

They had come to the conclusion that they wanted her and the plan was to simply make her want them. It began when Rhaegar and Arthur discovered her removing her armour...
*The snap of a twig*

“Who goes there?” Lyanna spoke out.

“Just me and my sworn shadow my lady” Rhaegar japed as Arthur rolled his eyes.

Lyanna’s eyes widened “Your Grace? I....I Heard your father had made me a wanted man, are you here to turn me in?” She tried to make light of the situation but she was already trying to conjure up an escape plan.

Rhaegar could already see she was spooked and looking for an out but he had to take control of the situation and hope their plan hadn’t been ruined before it had even begun, Elia would kill him. “No, I'm not here to hand you in I'm afraid, I'm actually looking for a treasonous man who my father has claimed to be his greatest enemy, you haven’t seen him come by this way have you?”

That earnt him a chuckle from the lady and he could already see some of the tension leave her body. “What about him?” nodding at Ser Arthur “Is he gonna turn me in? He is kingsguard after all, the job description is in the name”.

“Unfortunately for my father Ser Arthur here is MY sworn shadow and unfortunately for Ser Arthur shadows aren’t known for their power of speech or capturing enemies of the crown, your secret will never leave his lips even if he tried”. Rhaegar japed receiving a look from Arthur who was trying to not give Rhaegar the credit of seeing him grin.

“Bit of a shit kingsguard aren't you then?” Lyanna boldly replied earning a stunned look from Arthur and Rhaegar with the later trying and failing not to grin at her reply.

“Well...that’s...that’s, look your lucky I'm his shadow” Arthur replied, completely caught off guard by her response.

“You're right, they really aren't known for their power of speech” Lyanna replied as she subtly admired the dashing smile the prince was currently blessing her with.

With that Ser Arthur huffed and looked away, Rhaegar burst out laughing and Lyanna began to giggle, it was one of the loveliest sounds Rhaegar had ever heard. They carried on with their conversation with Arthur contributing from time to time speaking about what they’ve been up to at the tourney, what their friends and family are like, what their homes are like and what their plans are for the future, that’s where the conversation took a bitter turn for Lyanna.

“My father has decided to betroth me to an oaf a drunk and a whoremonger, a man I have no plans on marrying.” Lyanna spoke shaking her head. “He can’t marry me off to that Baratheon idiot if he can’t find me can he now” Lyanna smirked.

This could be a problem, he and Elia were unaware there was a betrothed in the way and if this Baratheon turned out to be his brash, ill-tempered cousin Robert it could become an even bigger problem. “What do you plan if your father forces you to marry him?”

“I love my father, but if he thinks he can force me to marry that pig on the recommendation of my brother then he’ll have to deal with the consequences. I won’t marry Robert to just become some trophy wife of his as he leaves me to run his household singlehandedly as he whores himself around the seven kingdoms. He’s already got a bastard and it wouldn’t surprise me if there's more out there” Lyanna spoke passionately.

So, it was Robert...big problem indeed but what scared him more was how determined she sounded about avoiding this marriage. “You still haven’t said what your plan is if you were forced by your
father?”. He dreaded her answer.

“I’ll leave it all behind, whether I go into hiding here in Westeros, go east to Essos or see what is west of Westeros, I’ve always wanted to go on an adventure” She smiled. “I would rather sail into the unknown, high chance of death than spend the rest of my life with that man”.

Rhaegar had believed every word she’d said and knew she would go through with those plans, he had to act and act fast for his, Elia’s and by the sounds of it Lyanna’s sake. He informed her of his wife’s wish to meet her and get to know her as well and hoped he wasn’t being too forward and scaring her away, but to his relief she seemed to be genuinely interested in personally meeting his wife.

He and Arthur had left after leaving an open invitation for Lyanna to speak with him, Elia or both whenever she wanted stating all she had to do was to let Ser Arthur or Ser Barristan know that she wished for a private audience with them. It hadn't taken long for Lyanna to take up that offer and the three of them were enjoying sweets, fruits and Dornish red along with relaxed conversation and even a bit of flirting between Elia and Lyanna that very night.

“I must say, it must have been something very controversial to get Arthur’s tongue twisted Lyanna” Elia smirked behind her goblet of red.

“Lady Lyanna here has a sharp tongue which Arthur unfortunately for him found out about the hard way” Rhaegar smiled as he peeled his blood orange.

“I wonder what else that tongue can do” Elia mused as Lyanna blushed and Rhaegar fumbled with his orange.

“You’d be surprised” Lyanna returned as Elia grinned and Rhaegar tried to not combust.

And with that their budding relationship started to slowly grow, all three started to enjoy their nightly meets with each night becoming progressively flirty than the last but keeping it innocent even though in their minds all three wanted to push the boundaries with touches and kisses. Rhaegar and Elia knew they had to keep it innocent, they couldn’t force this plan of theirs, it needed to be mutual between the three of them. They also needed to consider a way to get Lyanna out of this betrothal she so vehemently hated the idea of.

The next day was the last day of the tourney, Rhaegar had successfully unhorsed man after man and earnt his place in the final of the joust. Elia had managed to pull Rhaegar away for a few moments to tell him of her idea...

“Yes, you want me to what? Wouldn’t this just incite tension and anger Elia?” Rhaegar answered, worried that this plan of Elia’s could come back to bite them.

“If you win you can split the garland between me and Lyanna, I’ll be smiling throughout the whole spectacle so nobody will see that I’m displeased of your actions, blue roses are Lyanna’s favourite as we found out last night, she would love it”. Elia pleaded with Rhaegar, she was confident this act would get the plan moving a little quicker.

And so, after a thrilling final tilt, Rhaegar managed to unhorse his good friend Ser Barristan Selmy to win the joust tournament and go on to crown both Elia & Lyanna as his Queens of love & beauty. Elia and Lyanna’s reactions were as predicted both smiling towards Rhaegar as he placed the two crowns on each of their laps but what wasn’t expected was the deathly silence that the rest of the onlookers were exhibiting which was broken when Robert Baratheon decided to down his wine, launch his goblet into the crowd and storm off muttering to himself.
Unfortunately, after that Lyanna was kept away from both Rhaegar and Elia by her brothers and they didn’t get to talk to each other for the rest of the tourney. In the end both Rhaegar and Elia returned to Dragonstone to wait out the birth of their second child and Lyanna returned to Winterfell to plan out her escape from her betrothal. To be honest, Lyanna didn’t have to think hard on a plan and decided that she would use the wedding of her brother Brandon to Catelyn Tully at Riverrun as a distraction to collect supplies, ride down the river road and fork off to Maidenpool where she would find a ship and leave for Pentos. She wasn’t naïve enough to think her new life would be easy but it sure as shit would be better than marrying that cunt.

Rhaegar and Elia meanwhile had discussed how they could get back in touch with Lyanna but keep it discrete as the whole realm was watching Rhaegar after his stunt at the tourney. Many moons passed, Elia had finally given birth to his heir who they named Aegon but not without problems, the maesters were right, Elia nearly died and they both agreed they wouldn’t risk a third as it wasn’t worth losing both mother and child. Both Rhaegar and Elia were becoming more affectionate with each other with every moon that passed, with Elia surviving her ordeal and both of them still determined to go through with their plan to introduce Lyanna into their marriage, there was an excitement between them of what their future would bring.

Finally, Rhaegar and Elia would catch a break when word got out that Brandon Stark would be marrying Catelyn Tully at Riverrun and that Lyanna would be travelling with his host. Both of them decided that it would be best for Rhaegar to travel up to just outside Riverrun, close to Harrenhall and send a trusted envoy to sneak into Riverrun and hand the note personally to Lyanna instead of using a raven which they did not trust at the time, that note gets in the wrong hands and this whole plan is over. So, after all the planning, Rhaegar decided him, Ser Arthur and a loyal servant they had hand chosen to sneak into Riverrun would ride up to Harrenhall, send the envoy in and wait to see if Lyanna would accept his and Elia’s proposal.

Lyanna would receive the note 4 days before her brother’s wedding and agreed to Rhaegar and Elia’s proposal. She thought about them both, they were both beautiful in their own way, Rhaegar’s mesmerising violet eyes, Elia’s dark eyes that were almost black, Rhaegar’s locks the colour of the stars, Elia’s coal black tresses, both of their caring attitude to some northern girls personal problems, a girl they had never met before and had accepted into their circle of friends with open arms, a girl they had put their necks on the line for by exhibiting a public show of affection in front of the entire realm just because they like her and because she likes blue roses. And now, now they were offering her an out and into their open arms in the form of a polygamist marriage. She must have stared at that note for half an hour and came to the conclusion that yes, she could actually see herself being happy being married to them both, she would have to put up with court but it could be entertaining if she was doing it alongside Elia. Rhaegar can rule whilst her and Elia had fun, she’s always wanted to visit Dorne and imagined Elia would entertain her wishes. She’d also get to share their bed and that conjured up all types of images in her mind's eye that caused her to blush.

Surely her father would agree to the marriage, yes, it’s a bit unconventional to say the least but her daughter would be a Queen of the seven kingdoms and not just the Lady of Storm’s End. Robert would just have to get over it, probably in between the legs of some whore no doubt, it still amazed her that her sweet brother Ned had vouched for that man. She would of course have to inform her father of her choice via raven, whether he consents to it or not is none of her concern, if he was willing to sell his only daughter off for some political gain with no interest in her wishes or happiness then she was willing to take charge of her own life whether she hurt his feelings or not. So, with all that she’d decided to go through with it, she gathered her belongings, handed off her note for her father to be sent via raven and left in the dead of night to meet up with Rhaegar and Arthur where the three of them met up with Ser Barristan who had escorted Septon Maynard from Kings Landing at Rhaegar and Elia’s request. The group would then travel to the Isle of Faces to perform the wedding ceremony and then onto Dragonstone to meet up with Elia and their children.
Obviously, it had all gone wrong when Brandon Stark and a host of young nobles had come to their own conclusion and rode all the way to Kings Landing to demand Rhaegar’s head for abducting his sister. He and his host were subsequently imprisoned in the black cells by King Aerys to nobody’s surprise with the King summoning their respective fathers for the crimes they had committed. Aerys would go on to execute the sons and fathers leaving just Rickard and Brandon Stark alive with Rickard demanding a trial by combat as was his right fully expecting to be fighting a kingsguard and not Aerys actual champion, Fire. Rickard was suspended in the throne room of the Red Keep, a pyromancer lit a fire beneath Rickard while he was dressed in his steel armour. Brandon, with a noose around his neck and a sword just out of his reach, was made to watch his father roast. Trying to reach the sword to save his dying father, Brandon strangled himself to death.

Aerys’s next step was to demand that the Lord of the Vale, Jon Arryn send him the heads of his former wards, Eddard and Robert. Lord Arryn refused the order and instead called his banners, essentially starting a war. Rhaegar, Elia and Lyanna blamed themselves for the start of the conflict although they don’t know how Brandon could have come to such a conclusion and make such a rash decision afterwards, Rickard must have received Lyanna’s raven and known before the summons from Kings Landing came through that Lyanna had left wilfully with Rhaegar so what had happened for everything to go so wrong? This was all a misunderstanding at the highest order, and Lyanna’s Father and Brother had paid with their lives because of it.

Lyanna was heartbroken to say the least with the only thing managing to get a smile out of her being the news that she was with child. Rhaegar and Elia were ecstatic with the news that there would be even more children in their new little family, the three of them discussed baby names all the while trying to be strong for each other in these trying times. 2 moons would pass where Rhaegar would receive a summons from his father to come back to court along with Elia and their two children with the excuse of “I need them close to keep those dirty dornish loyal”. Rhaegar and Elia decided it would be best and the safest for Lyanna to travel to a privately owned keep in Dorne named The Tower of Joy where she would be guarded by ten loyal soldiers from Dragonstone along with her very own kingsguard, Prince Lewyn Martell who had grown fond of Lyanna after getting over the shock of Rhaegar taking another wife and seeing just how happy Lyanna made his niece.

Eventually, Rhaegar, Elia and their two children along with Ser Arthur and Ser Barristan would arrive in Kings Landing where they would find out that Robert and his allies had been winning battle after battle and that Rhaegar would be soon leaving to command the royal army. Rhaegar and Elia were relieved that they had gotten word of Lyanna’s arrival at the tower and that she would be safe to progress through her pregnancy but they were also worried about Aerys and his paranoia and unpredictability, especially around Elia and the children. With Rhaegar departing soon, anything could happen to them when they are gone so Ser Barristan stood up to the task and promised to protect Rhaegar’s family which they both happily accepted. Two moons would pass and with that, Rhaegar along with Ser Arthur, Ser Gerold and Ser Oswell would march with the royal army towards the Trident.

Rhaegar would call for an audience with Lord Robert Baratheon, Lord Eddard Stark, Lord Jon Arryn and Lord Hoster Tully to try and come to an understanding and explain this whole misunderstanding, nobody came and so the Battle of the Trident would proceed as planned. It was a bloody battle with both sides losing great numbers but with a thrust in the armpit with one sword and a slash to the throat with the other, Ser Arthur Dayne would end the life of the would-be usurper, Robert Baratheon and subsequently cripple the command of the rebel troops and ultimately end the great battle. Soon after Rhaegar had Lords Stark, Arryn and Tully and all the other lesser Lords bend the knee and swear fealty to him and not his father stating to them his plans to remove his father from power and end his rule of tyranny. He also explained the entire situation involving Lyanna and her apparent “obduction” and stated it all as being a misunderstanding that got way out of hand. The Lords reluctantly accepted his terms, explanation and his plan to take the capital, although Lord Stark
was secretly not buying anything that came out of the crown prince's mouth about his sister.

Rhaegar along with the royal army, Eddard Stark and his personal host would go on to march up to the capital where they would meet up with non-other than a certain Tywin Lannister who had tricked Aerys into opening the gates to the city and proceeded to kill all of Aerys’s loyalist guards and take control of the city for Rhaegar’s arrival. When the host finally got to the Red Keep they made a beeline for the Throne Room where they would witness Ser Jaime Lannister knocking out the King of the seven kingdoms with his mailed fist and following that up by putting his sword through the back of an escaping pyromancer. With that, Rhaegar ordered for Aerys to be thrown into the black cells to await his execution and sent Ser Gerold and Ser Oswell to retrieve Ser Barristan and his family. Rhaegar wasted no time and sent a raven to Lord Mace Tyrell who was told to end the siege of Storm’s End and another raven to Stannis Baratheon who was holding Storm’s End stating that his brother had fallen in battle and all his allies had bent the knee and that he should do the smart thing and follow suit.

With that Rhaegar got started on fixing Kings Landing, starting with the removal of all the wildfire caches hidden underground. With Rhaegar being occupied to the realm at that given moment he decided to inform his good-brother Lord Eddard of his sisters' location in Dorne. With an order stamped with Rhaegars personal wax stamp, Eddard Stark along with his six companions: Howland Reed, Willam Dustin, Ethan Glover, Martyn Cassel, Theo Wull, and Ser Mark Ryswell marched south to this so called “Tower of Joy” to retrieve his sister with the full intention of bringing her home to Winterfell and not Kings Landing. The plan was simple, arrive at this tower, kill the guards so there’s no witnesses, burn the bodies, collect some of their ashes, retrieve Lyanna, send her north with his host, arrive at Kings Landing alone with an urn of his “sisters” ashes and a bullshit excuse of a “misunderstanding” when questioned on why he had to fight the guards stationed at the tower. He would then return home with his sister where she would be kept away from the public eye, safe and surrounded by what little family she had left and especially kept from Rhaegar and the poisonous pit they like to call Kings Landing.

As Eddard and his host approached the tower they noticed five guards outside, these odds were okay with Ned who dismounted in front of the guards and asked them the whereabouts of his sister, not even bothering to show them the sealed message Rhaegar had given him. Their reply riled Ned up with them stating that she was under the care and guard of the royal family, with that Ned unsheathed his sword and all hell broke loose. The fight was bloody but over rather quickly, all five Targaryen guards had been dealt with but at the cost of Theo Wull and Martyn Cassel’s lives. Unfortunately for Ned and the survivors, six more guards would emerge from the tower with one wearing the distinctive armour of the kingsguard.

Prince Lewyn saw the mess that was left outside the tower and instantly engaged in combat with the first man he came across who happened to be Ethan Glover, they traded blows with each other but it was obvious that Prince Lewyn was the better swordsman of the two, half a minute later Ethan Glover had been defeated with a slash straight across his throat. Prince Lewyn moved on to Ser Mark Ryswell who was getting the upper hand on one of the Targaryen guards, with a sword through the chest, Ser Mark defeated the guard but was taken by surprise by Prince Lewyn who claimed the upper hand from the get go. Ser Mark never recovered and with a miss step to avoid a strike that never came, lost his sword hand to Prince Lewyn with an overarching strike. Prince Lewyn put the man out of his misery by piercing his heart.

With one final strike, Ned defeated the last Targaryen guard. All five guards were dead at the cost of Lord Dustin, Ser Mark and Ethan Glover with only him and Howland left standing to face the last survivor, Prince Lewyn Martell. The fight ensued between Lord Stark and Prince Lewyn with Ned telling Howland not to get involved between them, Prince Lewyn heard this and fancied his chances a bit more. Unfortunately for Prince Lewyn Martell this was all just a bluff with Howland
manoeuvring behind the kingsguard with a dagger in hand. Both Ned and Howland knew it was not
the honourable thing to do but they had to get Lyanna back at all costs. And with that, Howland
buried the dagger in the back of the kingsguard’s neck and Ned finished the rest.

As soon as Prince Lewyn fell, Ned dropped his sword to the ground and all but sprinted up the stairs
to the tower. Ned informed Howland to keep watch to make sure there wasn’t any returning guards
they had to prepare for and entered the tower alone, dagger in hand. As soon as he entered the room
where noises could be heard he was hit by the intense smell of blood and sweat, with the source
laying in a bed in front of him, his sister.

“Ned?...is...is that you brother?” Lyanna whispered out.

Ned rushed to the side of the bed where he could get a good look at his sister. He grabbed hold of
her hand and instantly grew concerned with the lack of grip he received back.

“Yes....It’s me Lya.....I'm here for you.....I'm here to take you home” Ned explained, trying to be
strong but failing as a look of concern took over his visage.

“I don’t....I don’t think that’s gonna happen big brother....” Lyanna managed to get out as her
bottom lip started to tremble and her eyes started to fill with tears.

“Don’t talk like that, you’re going to be fine...” Ned replied as he looked down at the blood-stained
sheets she was laid in. There was too much blood and it seemed to be still flowing to his horror. “Is
there a maester or anybody here who can help?” he asked her. He looked around the room and
yelled for somebody to bring her a maester or a nurse or anybody. “Bring her some water,
somebody!” Lyanna squeezed his hand with all the strength she had and he turned to look at her.

“It’s too late big brother.....I think my time is coming....just don’t leave me......I don’t want to die
alone” Lyanna rasped out as the tears flowed freely from her eyes.

“You're not going to die, stop talking like this!”

“It's all my fault...father’s and Brandon’s deaths are on me....I hope they forgive me when we meet
again”.

“Lya, stop...you need to save your energy....stop blaming yourself for all of this”.

“Prince Lewyn had to deliver him, the nurses were returning from Starfall, they should be back soon
but he was early”.

“You....you have to promise me Ned......promise me that he’ll be loved.....promise me that he won't
be blamed for any of this.....promise me he’ll be cared for by his family”.

“What...what are you talking about, Lya?”

As soon as he asked her this he heard the little whimpers of a baby, a baby that was resting inside a
small makeshift crib. He had a little wisp of dark brown hair, tiny button nose and a furrowed brow
almost as if he was concentrating.

“His name......his name is Jaehaerys......Jaehaerys Targaryen.....you have to keep him safe
Ned.....he’s so small” Lyanna got out as she let the tears consume her.

He could see she was struggling to hang on and desperately needed him to make that promise "I
promise Lyanna, I’ll love him, his siblings will love him, he won’t be blamed for any of this, he’ll be
cared for by his family”. Ned vowed.
Thank you......big brother”.

Ned took his eyes away from Lya’s little boy and looked at Lya, her eyes were closed with a slight smile on her face. He took a hold of her hand as her breathing slowed down. “Lyanna?” He whispered but received no reply as her chest stopped moving and her face slackened. She was gone.

Ned sat there for a few moments trying to collect himself after what has just happened, he took a deep breath, stood up and went outside to sort things out with Howland, when he reached the bottom of the stairs he could see that Howland was preparing the bodies to be burnt. So much death for nothing, was he right to withhold Rhaegar’s order from the guards? He came to the conclusion that if he hadn't fought then Prince Lewyn would have no doubt followed the babe until he was in Rhaegar’s arms. He did the right thing...for his family.

As Ned was fussing over the little one, Howland burnt the bodies and gathered the ashes to return to their respective families, Lyanna wouldn’t be burnt, her bones would return to where they belong, the Winterfell crypts with the rest of her family. The little family that he had left was all that mattered to him right now and that included Lya’s son. He’d made a promise to her and he would keep it, he would have to claim him as his own, the life of a bastard wouldn’t be easy for him but it would be better than a life of whispers and loneliness in Kings Landing away from his real family, he just hoped his new wife would forgive him.

He hoped the babe would react well to goats milk, they weren’t gonna wait for the nurses to return, it was a risk but it had to be done. He needed to ride hard with Howland to Nightsong since that was the closest place he could think of where he could hire a wet nurse discreetly. Ned and Howland would have to hide any house sigils and clues to their identities when entering Nightsong, find a wet nurse and leave as soon as possible.

After gathering the Lyanna’s remains and the ashes, explaining his plan to Howland, riding to Nightsong and successfully finding a wet nurse, him, his adoptive son who he had been calling Jon named after the man who was like a second father to him Lord Arryn, Howland and the recently hired wet nurse travelled to Kings Landing where Ned informed Howland to keep Jon and the wet nurse out of sight whilst he went to the Red Keep to do something that he dreaded.

He had to use Lyanna’s body to help with his lie, a lie that would go on to devastate Rhaegar and Elia who would end up crying on each other's shoulders as Lord Stark replayed the events to them of the whole misunderstanding, Prince Lewyn believing Lord Stark was still loyal to the rebels, that he was there to take Lyanna away from her husband and wife and return to Winterfell with her, the battle that would ensue because of it all and the losses of both Ned’s bannermen but also Prince Lewyn along with all the guards that were stationed there. He handed them the ashes of Prince Lewyn and hit them with the hard news that Lyanna had birthed a stillborn girl and that he’d spread her ashes at Summerhall on the way there. They’d appreciated the sentiment and agreed with Ned that the best place for Lyanna was with her family. They looked devastated and Ned felt like shit throughout the whole ordeal, it was cruel but it was the best for his family and Jon, Ned was the Head of his family now, he had a duty and he’d still not forgiven their family for what had happened to his, he was bitter and, in his mind, rightfully so.

He offered his condolences, explained that he had been away from home long enough and made a swift exit with Lyanna’s body after Rhaegar and Elia had said one last tear felt goodbye to her. They took a ship from Kings Landing to White Harbour and from there he and Howland would say their farewells to each other and ride back to their respective homes.

He approached Winterfell dreading Catelyn’s reaction to Jon but also excited to see his new-born child. Catelyn’s reaction turned out to be muted but he could see she was holding her tongue and
didn’t agree with his actions one bit, he would just have to live with the guilt for the sake of his family. Seeing Jon and his new son Robb laid in their cribs babbling nonsensical noises at each other was what it was all about now, his family, the future.
In the last chapter a reader made a comment about pairing tags and I’ve made the decision to leave it in your hands.

I will add the tags for Jon’s pairing/s if that is what the people want but only Jon’s pairing. I’ve only seen one comment about it so far but if it’s a popular request then I'll oblige.

I only wanted to hide them so it didn’t ruin the surprise but at the end of the day I know what’s going to happen and if you want to know then I don’t see a problem.

Hope this clears things up.

Also a fair warning, strong language will be prevalent throughout this story, sorry if that’s a deal breaker for anyone.

Other than that, enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jon

14 years, 14 years Jon had lived in Winterfell with the Starks and the majority of that time he’d felt misplaced and experienced a lack of belonging. He didn’t hate the Starks, far from it in fact, he loved his brothers and sisters but he always found himself on the side lines, in the shadows, a plus one if you will when it came to actually belonging in the Stark household. There was a lot of reasons for that but in the end it all boiled down to that one word...

Bastard.

It was bullshit, how in the world could anybody with an ounce of logic in their head blame somebody for the situation of their birth? But they did and that was just the sad reality of the world they lived in. The parents, a majority of the time would get away with a slap on the wrist and an earful from the missus and the bastard in question would be ridiculed and pushed under the feet of the “better” more powerful people in today's society.

And they wonder why bastards snapped and caused wars.

Not this bastard though, no, he would never usurper his siblings for their positions, even if a certain
stuck up trout of a woman thought otherwise.......cow.

No, let me take that back, that’s being a bit harsh, cows are at least somewhat useful with their milk and their meat and their leather, a lot more useful compared to that thundercunt. Sure, she loved all her children unconditionally and she kept the keep running like any normal lady would but the moment Jon would cross eyes with the woman he would get a reaction out of her like he’d shat in her morning porridge, and if he was being honest, he was at his wits end with the whole situation.

He was currently returning from the rookery where Maester Luwin had tasked him to deliver some scrolls to Lord Stark when all of a sudden Lady Thundercunt came...well...thundering towards him with a scowl that could curdle milk.

“And where do you think you're going, bastard?”

“Just delivering these scrolls to my Father”. Jon always referred to Lord Stark as father whenever he was talking to her, he knew it pissed her off and he couldn’t for life of him care.

“THATS Lord Stark to you bastard”.

“Lord Stark...father, same thing really”

“You will refer to him as Lord Stark, am I clear bastard?” Catelyn seethed.

“Well he fucked another woman and I was the by-product of their coupling so by logic he is my father but I suppose that’s too hard to grasp for lesser more dim-witted creatures wouldn’t you agree Lady Cuntlyn?” His blood was up and he was swinging wild, he was getting his last hits in before he left this place, he knew he’d get an explosive reaction out of her and he braced for impact.

*SLAP*

“How DARE YOU SPEAK TO ME LIKE THAT, BASTARD!".

Jon braced for the slap and was able collect himself “I apologise Lady Catelyn, it was a mere slip of the tongue. Not unlike us bastards to bring shame upon ourselves by merely opening our mouths is
Lady Catelyn yanked the scrolls from Jon and brushed past him towards Lord Starks solar “Your father will hear about your disrespect towards me, mark my words”.

Jon picked up on her slip up and couldn’t resist getting the last word in as he headed out towards the godswood. “See, you're learning, you do know he’s my father”. And with that Jon shut the door behind him, not waiting for the reaction Lady Catelyn was no doubt going to send his way, he didn’t care. Gods it felt so freeing to not give two shits sometimes. He knew Lord Stark would be having a word with him before the day was out but he was another person he was starting to get tired of, mainly the secrets and lies whenever the subject of his mother came up. He would ask him the next time they talked who she is and whether she was dead or not, it would probably be the last time he gets the chance if he was being honest with himself and if he still refused to talk about her then well, he supposed it was never meant to be. He knew for certain though, he would never forgive the man.

Ned

Ned was quietly reflecting on the week's events when suddenly Cat came thundering in with a face like a tomato. ‘Now what's he done’ Ned thought as he braced himself for another earful of hate towards Jon who as of late showed little interest in anybody's thoughts. He wasn’t sure what had started all of this misbehaviour from Jon, yes, he knew he’d inherited the wolfs-blood from his mother but so had Arya and Rickon and they were nowhere near as rebellious as Jon had been as of late. Coupled with Jon’s sharp tongue, another inheritance from his mother and his adamant nature, Jon had been a pain in the arse, especially in the yard where he would smack people silly with his obviously gifted martial talents without an ounce of remorse, he’d broken Theon’s nose and two of his fingers the last time they faced off and the lad now refuses to spar with Jon anymore. Robb was worried, Sansa thought he was an uncouth brute, Bran was confused with the change of behaviour and Arya and Rickon just found it all bloody hilarious.

Was it him coming of age? Ned noticed Jon had started to sprout up, taller than Robb now and the same height as himself, having to remind him to keep his facial hair tidy as that was starting to appear on his face that was now devoid of baby fat. People always said that bastards were forced to grow up faster than a trueborn but he didn’t think it meant physically. People were also starting to whisper that he was Brandon’s son and not his, based on the fact that every aspect of Jon was starting to outgrow Ned. Muscles, hair, height, you name it, Jon was outgrowing him in it. The girls around Winterfell and Winter Town were starting to take notice of him as well, watching him spar and exercise but every time Ned caught sight of the girls giggling at Jon he would notice that Jon was completely oblivious to it.

He hoped it stayed like that, he didn’t need more headaches.
Speaking of headaches, his wife was currently wailing at him about his “hellborn bastard”. He had to admit, she was getting creative when describing Jon as of late.

“That insufferable boy has to go Ned, he’s just disrespected your wife and the Lady of Winterfell. He has lost all manners and respect for his betters and he’s getting worse with everyday that passes”. Catelyn said as she slammed the scrolls she was holding onto his desk.

Ned sighed as he prepared to defend Jon the best that he realistically could “He's going through the change Cat, we were all moody at that age, he’ll grow out of it”. He knew it was a weak argument but he honestly had no other explanation for Jon’s change in demeanour.

“No excuse Ned, Robb is going through that as well and he’s remained a respectable young man unlike his bastard half brother who’s been an uncouth brat. Send him to Castle Black with his uncle, I bet Benjen would love to have him there with him and Jon can do his duty by channelling that wolfs-blood of his into repelling wildlings, everybody wins”.

Ned sighed, “He’s not going to the wall Cat, we’ve been over this several times, if you wouldn’t send your son to the wall don’t expect me to with Jon. He can make that choice himself when he’s older but at the moment he’s not going anywhere. I'll have a word with him and tell him to pack it in with these mood swings and to take his aggression out on a straw dummy instead of an actual person, it’s the best I can come up with at the moment “.

Catelyn was clearly unhappy with his response and was holding her tongue but she replied with a curt “As you say my Lord, by your leave” and exited his solar. Ned had to get Jon to start cooperating with him more, he knew he was getting colder with him because of his constant rebuttals about his mother but Ned was not ready to tell him, he was scared of Jon’s reaction if he was being honest so he kept putting off, telling himself that he would tell him soon and with his recent behaviour, anything could happen when he found out.

With that he rose from his desk and made his way out to the yard where Jon would no doubt be, he prepared himself for his talk with him, absolutely anything could come out of this he feared. Unfortunately when he arrived at the yard he couldn’t spot Jon but he saw Robb, Bran and Theon instead so he approached them to find out where their brother was.

“Robb, Bran, Theon, none of you have seen Jon have you? “

“Hi father, sorry he’s not here but we saw him heading towards the godswood, he didn’t look pleased”. Robb replied as Bran nodded his head in agreement.
“What’s new? He’s always been a miserable bastard”. Theon replied with a smirk on his face, Robb and Bran didn’t look impressed when Theon referred to their brother as a bastard. “What? He’s a bastard, no changing the facts, not my fault he can’t handle that”. Theon defended.

“He’s only acting out because people enjoy reminding him of his birth every chance they get, you included”. Bran defended, Ned was proud of his children’s protection of Jon. Always protecting members of their pack, unfortunately Jon seemed to be going the way of the lone wolf as of late and the famous stark saying didn’t calm any of his fears.

“Enough, the godswood you say? “ as Bran nodded. He thanked them and headed towards the godswood, dreading the conversation he was about to have, he knew Jon would turn the conversation towards his mother, he always did when he was getting a talking to, an effective defence mechanism Ned had to admit.

As Ned entered the grove he noticed Jon was nowhere to be seen, he wondered where on earth he could be. As he approached the heart tree he started to think about Jon and ultimately about Lyanna. Gods he missed her, she’d know what to do with Jon and Jon would listen to absolutely everything she said whether he liked it or not. She’d have told him to stop acting like an idiot, had a spar with him and took him out for a ride in the wolfswood, all with a mother’s touch, something completely foreign to Jon in reality. He always asked himself if Queen Elia would have been a mother to him, if he was wrong to do what he did. It was a waste of time thinking like that now though, the ink was dry.

With his prayers finished, Ned got up from the heart tree and made his way back to the yard to see if Jon had returned through there and low and behold he had. Jon was currently sparring with three of Winterfell’s guards, well, sparring was not the word for it, Jon was throwing more punches instead of swinging his sword. Ned spotted Robb, Bran and Theon again as they were watching the fight unfold, all three of them didn’t look best pleased, Arya and Rickon on the other hand, who had clearly snuck out of lessons, were cheering Jon on with every punch he landed.

“What in god’s name is happening here?” Ned asked Robb who had a worried look on his face.

“Jon was coming from the godswood just as you entered and accidently bumped into one of the guards” Robb explained. “The guard told him to watch where he was going and called him a ‘daft bastard’, him and the rest of the guards thought they were funny and just started laughing”.

Bran butted in “Jon asked if the guard cared for a spar to work some of that attitude off, told them all three were welcome to come spar with him. Obviously, the guards wanted to bring Jon down a peg or two so they agreed, 5 minutes later the spar became this, Jon’s already broken Todd’s nose for his
‘daft bastard’ comment and now he’s just throwing them around”.

“You should be on Jon’s side, he’s just standing up for himself like any Stark of Winterfell would. I would have done the same if I was in his shoes” Arya defended as Rickon nodded his head in agreement.

“I am on Jon’s side Arya, I'm just worried that he’s gonna bite off more than he can chew one day and get seriously hurt”. Bran replied with genuine concern for his brother, the sight warmed Ned’s heart.

“Well it doesn’t matter anyway, Jon’s already won and left”. Robb intervened.

Ned looked to the yard to see the three guards dusting themselves off and grumbling something incoherent as they walked off to lick their wounds. Jon was nowhere to be seen. “Now where’s he gone?” Ned thought aloud, Theon came to his aid informing him that he saw Jon walking towards the stables. ‘Oh no you don’t you little sod, that was your mothers' trick that, taking her horse for a ride to avoid being reprimanded for something she’d done’. All Ned heard as he made for the stables was Arya calling Theon a grass and Bran asking Robb if Jon would be ok. Ned was getting worried now, Jon seemed to be lashing out at every chance he got and a pattern was emerging, it all revolved around that one word, bastard. And Ned felt like utter shit about the whole situation he’d put the lad in.

He got to the stables as Jon was saddling and packing a horse, a sudden sense of dread taking root. “Where are you off to?”. Ned asked him as Jon realised he wasn’t alone in the stables.

“Just going to take a ride through the wolfswood to clear my head that's all, why what's up?”. Jon replied as he carried on with his task.

“We need to have a chat Jon, I need to work out what's been going on with you lately”. Ned answered. “Catelyn came into my solar earlier telling me that you’d been disrespectful and vulgar towards her, then I catch you in the yard brawling with the guards, you’ve apparently broken one of their noses, the same thing you did with Theon last week. I would blame it on your entrance into adulthood but that's not a good enough excuse” Ned sighed, “What on earth is up with you as of late?”.

“Not much, you?” Jon replied nonchalantly.
‘Little shit’ Ned thought as he huffed, Ned had lost the conversation before it'd even begun. “Are you gonna tell me what is wrong with you or are you gonna carry on with the snide attitude?” Ned was always known for keeping his cool but he was losing it with Jon at the moment, he needed answers and Jon was the only one with them.

“I’ll tell you what, I’ll answer your question if you answer mine, do we have a deal?”. Jon replied casually with a slight upturn of his mouth, ‘sneaky sod has me cornered’ Ned thought.

“And what is your question?”. Ned asked but he already knew what was coming.

“Who is my mother?” Jon said stone faced and unblinking, directly into Ned’s eyes, Jon’s eyes the exact shade of silver as his mother ‘Promise me Ned’.

“I can’t tell you right now, look you need to stop asking me, I’ll tell you when the time is right”. Ned rasped out as he stared at Jon. Little reaction was received from Jon, Just cold resignation and exasperation. He’d expected Ned’s answer.

“Then we seem to have reached an impasse Lord Stark”. Jon replied, he looked bored of the whole conversation as he continued saddling his horse. He’d played Ned so easily, he knew Ned wouldn’t answer his question about his mother and used that to protect himself from answering Ned’s question, Ned sighed, he’d been played by a 14 year old, a 14 year old who was clearly beyond his years already. Something stood out though.

“You can still call me father when it's just the two of us, you know that right?”

“I'm afraid you're misinformed Lord Stark, I have been informed recently to only refer to you as ‘Lord Stark’ from now on from non-other than the Lady of Winterfell herself. I wouldn’t want to disrespect my Lady’s wishes now, would I?”.

“Jon.....”

“If that is all my Lord, I would like to get back before the sun goes down so I need to leave now, with your leave of course”. Jon interrupted with a cold diplomatic tone, Ned hated this.

“Fine, but be back for supper”. Ned replied, resigned at the conclusion of their conversation. Jon had been spending a lot of time in the wolfswood lately, he would always return calmer and more
responsive whenever he returned, Arya had asked if she could go with him but Cat had killed that idea off instantly. Ned couldn’t for the life of him keep Jon caged up as of late so he allowed it, for Lyanna.

Jon nodded and galloped out through the gates towards the wolfswood, Ned had flashbacks of his sister doing the exact same thing with the exact same grace many many years ago. Ned was officially on Jon watch now, he’d lost Lyanna because he wasn’t paying attention, he wouldn’t lose her son the same way.

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**Jon**

“What's wrong with me? What's wrong with ME?” Jon seethed as he rode through the woods towards a small grove he enjoys resting at. ‘It's always me isn't it, I'm always what's wrong, I'm the problem, never anybody else, probably all that bastard blood corrupting my common sense eh’. Jon took a few deep breaths and calmed himself down as he dismounted his horse and unpacked his food he’d brought with him, just some hard cheese and some dried beef. He hitched his horse to the tree and sat down and lent against it, placing his bow and quiver down next to him as he closed his eyes and let the sounds of nature calm his simmering blood.

Jon spent his time in his thoughts thinking about the plan he had conjured up to ultimately make a name for himself. He knew the chances of survival were pretty slim but anything in life that was worth something was never easy, if he pulled this off he wouldn’t be known as the Bastard of Winterfell any longer but as something greater instead, Jon thrived for the adventure, the freedom and the recognition of his own feats. He wanted to create his own stories from his real-life experiences, he wanted to share those stories with his family and friends, he wanted to mean something for crying out loud, he was sick of just being somebody's stain. It was going to be a rough few months he knew but he had already decided what he was going to do.

He’d researched the closest place to Winterfell that could provide him with a solid ship, not too small, not too big, it was only him after all. The condition being that this place had to be on the western coast of the north, one on the eastern coast would do no good for his plans. He’d decided on the Stony Shore, he just had to get lucky with the boat, he may end up having to steal one if it came to it. He would make the journey with another person into the unknown but he came to the conclusion nobody was daft enough to go along with his mad plan.

He’d also done his research on navigating using the stars, his rope knots for his sails, the most efficient way to fish while out at sea, that was going to be a big one, if he couldn’t fish properly then he might as well not bother with the whole idea, he’d be dead within a fortnight without those skills, he’d be taking plenty of supplies but they wouldn’t last forever.
Jon was so lost in his thoughts he nearly missed the sound of rustling leaves and snapping sticks. His horse became spooked and the reason was slowly making its way into the grove right in front of Jon, a large and angry looking grizzly bear.

The first thing Jon did was cut his horse loose and sent it on its way in the hopes he could retrieve it after, if he survived that is. He grabbed his bow and his arrows and rolled out of the way just in time to avoid the charging bear and losing his arm there and then. The beast collided with the tree and shook it to its roots, gods this thing was big, must weigh at least eight, nine hundred pounds, it was huge. The beasts mistake gave Jon the chance to fire three arrows into its back legs, one in its left leg and two in its right, that’ll hopefully slow it down and give him more time to pick his shots. The bear responded with a pained roar in Jon’s direction, it made for Jon but it was evident the animal was laboured in its movement.

Jon made for another arrow, pulled his bowstring back and fired, he was aiming between the beasts eyes but missed and struck it right in the muzzle. The bear didn’t react well to that as it cried out in pain and tried to claw the arrow out itself. This gave Jon the opening to finish the job but as he reached out for one last arrow he realised one thing, he had no arrows left. ‘Where are the rest of them!? ’ Jon thought, ‘who steals arrows? *sigh* *Arya*. Jon knew she practised in the godswood with her bow, no doubt “borrowed” some arrows and forgot to put them back ‘Suppose it serves me right for not checking’, hopefully this wasn’t the reason Jon didn’t survive, the guilt would smash his little sister to pieces if she found out. Jon sighed “Better make sure I survive then”.

Dropping his bow and empty quiver, Jon flanked the distressed grizzly and slowly pulled his dirk from his hip. The bear was too busy tackling the lodged arrow in his muzzle to notice Jon approaching from the rear and with the small opening he needed, Jon mounted the bear from behind and drove his dirk into the side of the beast's head resulting in the instant death of the struggling animal and the collapse of both the bear and Jon onto the ground. “Thank the gods” Jon said as he removed the dirk from the bears head, he just laid there on top of the warm body of fur and caught his breath ‘what a rush’. Making a quick decision, he began skinning the bear with his dirk ‘I've always wanted a cloak made of bear fur, this will hopefully keep me warm whilst I'm out at sea’.

Jon managed to finish skinning the animal but not without making a huge mess, the ground and himself was covered in blood and would no doubt attract some more predators his way if he didn’t get a move on. Jon moved to strap his bow over his shoulder, placed his dirk back on his belt, draped the bear fur over his other shoulder and started his brisk walk back towards Winterfell. Hopefully the bear carcass that was left would be a welcome distraction for him to get out unscathed.

Twenty minutes into his journey back he caught a glimpse of movement out the corner of his eye ‘oh gods now what’, he was out of arrows, this would be a close combat encounter and Jon wasn’t confident he could take on another bear or a wolf or whatever it was without his arrows. He didn’t have his sword either because that was still on his horse, he would have to use his dirk and his bare hands, ‘Could I batter a wolf with my bare hands?’ Jon wondered, ‘no, probably not you fucking idiot’ Jon concluded, Jon really needed to get a better grip on his wolfs-blood or he would end up
fighting something he really had no right fighting...and suffering the consequences.

The beast he would be fighting emerged from the bushes and trees and thankfully it wasn’t an adversary, it was his horse, ‘the gods are really looking down on me tonight’. Jon swiftly mounted his horse, checked to see he still had his belongings and rode off towards Winterfell. Within fifteen minutes of riding he’d exited the woods and was trotting through Winter Town, he was garnering some queer looks and some whispers but that was probably because of the bear fur and the layer of blood he was caked in and not the usual reason, it’s not like he gave a fuck at what they said about him anymore, fuck ‘em, he was more interested in getting to his chambers and sorting himself out, he was in dire need of a bath and it couldn’t come sooner.

Ned

Ned was on his way to the main hall accompanied by Robb when Jory, Captain of the household guard, appeared at the end of the corridor with an odd look on his face, ‘Now what's the matter? I cannot wait for my bed and for this day to end’.

“Lord Stark, Lord Robb” Jory nodded as he greeted them, “Lord Stark, you wished for me to inform you when Jon had returned”.

‘Finally’, Ned thought, “Thanks for letting me know Jory, I assume he’s in the main hall for supper then?”

“Err...not exactly Lord Stark, Jon’s gone to his chambers to wash up, he was in a bit of a state when he returned” Jory replied.

Ned went numb, “In a state? What kind of state? He’s okay, isn't he?” Ned had all sorts of scenarios playing through his mind, Lya wouldn’t forgive him.

“He’s okay Lord Stark, Jon assured me that none of the blood was his” Jory announced, Lord Stark didn’t look pleased with the casualness of the statement so Jory explained, “He returned through the gates unrecognisable from a distance, he was covered from head to toe in blood but he assured me it wasn't his blood. Told me he got ambushed by a grizzly and confiscated its skin for spooking him” Jory chuckled, “I wouldn’t have believed him if it weren’t for the huge bear pelt he was carrying with him, told me he wasn’t too clever at skinning large animals and made a huge mess of himself”.

“He killed a grizzly on his own?”, Robb looked shocked but impressed.
“Like I said, that pelt he’s got proved his word, a fine trophy”, Jory finished as all three men reached the main hall.

“I'm gonna kill him, is he trying to give me a heart attack?’, He was impressed with such a feet but my god did he want to throttle him for getting into that kind of situation in the first place, ‘Oh Lya, have you made him extra difficult just to punish me?’.

“Don't you start getting idea’s Robb, it's difficult enough keeping an eye on him, I don’t need you joining in with his escapades. I’ll be having a word with him about getting into ridiculous situations as of late” Ned finished.

The three men entered the main hall together, Jory took his post by the door whilst Ned and Robb walked up to the high table and took their seats. Catelyn was sat in her spot with Sansa to her left with Bran sat next to her, Arya and Rickon were sat all the way to the right side of the table and it was clear by the look Arya was giving Sansa that something had happened.

“What's all this then?” Ned asked as he and Robb took their seats.

“Children being children Ned, nothing to worry about” Catelyn replied as she took a sip from her goblet.

Ned turned to Arya “What's the matter with you then little one?”

“Sansa said Jon should just leave and go live in the woods that he likes running off to, she said if he was gonna act like a wild animal he should go live with them” Arya answered, burning a hole in Sansa’s head with her glare, “Maybe I'll join him if that happens.”

“You will do no such thing young lady. Now eat your meal and stop trying to start an argument with your sister” Catelyn said.

“I wasn’t being cruel, I was just saying that if he enjoys going to the woods all the time he would feel more suited there, especially with his recent behaviour” Sansa argued.

“He’s not some stray dog you can just get rid of because you don’t like him, he’s a living person and
he’s our brother!” Arya passionately argued back.

“Arya, I won’t tell you again, eat your supper and stop with this nonsense about your half-brother” Catelyn warned.

“He’s got two arms, two legs and a head, he looks like a full brother to me” Arya returned as Rickon giggled at her response.

Ned took charge of the situation “Enough, it’s been a long day and I just want to have a nice quiet supper with my family, is that too much to ask?”

“Sorry father” Arya and Sansa said in unison as Sansa looked down but Arya was still giving her a death stare.

“Alright then” Ned finished.

It was relatively quiet for a good few minutes as people ate their food and quietly chatted but that was broken when Robb decided to share Jon’s story with Arya.

“HE DID WHAT!?” Arya exclaimed as Catelyn glared at her.

“Killed a grizzly bear apparently, still haven’t seen the pelt myself yet but I trust Jory wouldn’t lie about something like that” Robb explained as the rest of the table took notice of the conversation.

Arya’s eyes lit up, “Wow, I can't wait to see it. I bet the story is even better”. Arya looked excited at the prospect of the seeing the pelt and hearing a new story and Rickon looked like a ball of energy ready to explode at any minute.

“What happened? Jon saw a grizzly bear?” Bran asked, obviously missing parts and unable to hear properly being sat at the other end of the table.

“Yeah, and he killed it and skinned it for its pelt” Arya replied, looking proud of her brother.
“Really? That’s amazing”. Bran looked equally amazed at Jon’s antics.

Catelyn told them both to quieten down and finish their supper, Arya didn’t look best pleased with her mother shutting down her conversations whenever Jon was the topic of discussion but complied.

As the family was just coming to the end of their meal the main door slowly opened and Jon snuck in and claimed one of the seats near the entrance, he looked freshly bathed with his curly dark hair still showing its dampness. Ned was the only person to notice him enter so he took the chance to observe him from a distance in the hopes of seeing any subtle signs that would explain his recent attitude. He had a rough idea what it was about and Bran earlier seemed to have the same idea, that one word, bastard.

To start off with he was sat on his own, right in the dimly lit corner of the room, he’d always been a boy who enjoyed the peace and quiet of his own company so that wasn’t a red flag. He called over one of the maids to ask her if there was any supper left, she replied that she would fetch him some, looked down and blushed as she walked away to tend to her duties. Ned wasn’t surprised at the girl's actions, Jon had been filling out and maturing rather nicely if the reactions from some of the girls around Winterfell and Winter Town were anything to go by, he just hoped Jon wouldn’t fall for the temptation. Thankfully Ned was the only one who noticed the girl as Jon seemed to be in a world of his own at the moment.

He seemed so lost in his thoughts, Ned really wished he could help him but he wouldn’t talk him, and when he looked like he was about to open up he would ask about his mother. Ned would tell him but he was very confident Jon would take it the wrong way and rightfully so Ned mused. In every scenario that ran through his head, every single outcome had a negative impact whether it be him or Jon. Ned was sure the rest of the family would be shocked but accepting with the revelation but If Jon decided to leave because of it they wouldn’t forgive me.

Ned returned his attention back to Jon as the maid returned with his supper, again, he seemed to be concentrating really hard on something, his furrowed brow and his famous brooding expression a dead giveaway. He was tapping his finger with no rhythm what so ever, was he counting something?

The quiet study of Jon was broken when Arya noticed him and broke the silence.

“Jon!” Arya shouted as she shot up from her seat and made her way towards him.

Catelyn tried to stop her from acknowledging Jon but one look from Ned was all that was needed to silently warn his wife. She was trying too hard to separate her children from Jon and it was slowly
wearing Ned down, she had managed to create a barrier between Sansa and Jon but was evidently not successful yet with the rest of them as Rickon too shot up and ran across to his older brother.

“What can I do for you my lady” Jon replied with a smirk. “ooo, now then ya little monster” Jon said as he lifted Rickon so he could sit on his lap.

Arya replied with a punch to Jon’s arm “Don’t call me that stupid, you know I hate all that rubbish’.

“Can we see your bear?” Rickon butted in, a look of excitement on his face.

“My bear?” Jon replied confused.

“No Rick, he’s got a bear pelt, he didn’t bring the bear back with him.....you didn't did you?” Arya said questionably.

“Sorry but the only grizzly beast that’s in this keep is sat on my lap” As Jon tickled Rickon, filling the hall with his laughter.

“Stop!....STOP!, I surrender, I surrender’ Rickon replied as Jon stopped his onslaught.

“So, did you really kill a grizzly bear?” Arya asked.

“I did, but I didn’t go searching for it. I was ambushed by it and the only way I was to escape was if I could vanquish my furry foe” Jon replied as he exaggerated his voice to help charm the story to Rickon who was staring at Jon like he was one of those heroes from his stories.

“What happened next?” Rickon replied as Arya took a seat next to Jon. He could see in his peripheral vision that everyone apart from Catelyn was also listening in on Jon’s tale.

“Well, all of a sudden, the great beast bolted towards the tree I was sat under and nearly caught me if I hadn't rolled out of the way to grab my bow. You see, I needed to slow the grizzly down so I put a couple of arrows into its legs, grizzly bears are incredibly fast for their size, when it ran into the tree I swear I felt the roots shake under my feet” Jon continued, capturing everyone’s full attention, even Sansa couldn’t help listening to a good story.
“I went to finish the fight with an arrow in between the eyes but the beast moved just as I released my arrow and it hit it, right up its nose” Jon continued as he tapped Arya’s nose. Rickon giggled and Bran had a smile on his face.

“Now I don’t know about you but when I've got a really nasty bogey up my nose I make it my mission to extract it from its lair, so you can imagine what the bear was trying to do with an arrow up there as well” Jon explained as Arya and Rickon started giggling. Sansa made a face and Catelyn stared daggers at Jon.

“So, with the beast distracted I reached for another arrow to finally put it out of its misery but as I went for another arrow I realised I was out, some of them had magically disappeared” Jon said. He slowly turned to Arya who had the decency to look guilty.

“I was gonna put them back I swear...I just forgot...sorry” Arya explained. She gave Jon her famous wide-eyed look whenever she tried to get out of trouble.

Jon accepted her excuse and carried on with his tale, “Well, since I'd run out of arrows, I had to rethink my strategy. Unfortunately, my sword was on my horse and that had bolted away so all I had left was the dirk on my belt” Jon explained “As the bear was busy with the arrow up its snoot, I had the opportunity to jump the bear from behind and thrust my dirk into its head, thus vanquishing the beast” Jon finished.

“Weren't you scared?” Rickon asked.

“I was, but you remember what father told you?” Rickon shook his head.

“It is the only time a man can be brave when he's afraid” Jon explained, Ned was surprised Jon had remembered him saying that.

“Did you take its pelt?” Arya asked.

“I did, but I made a huge mess of myself in the process, blood everywhere” Jon chuckled. “I’ll show it to you both before you go to bed, it’s so thick I’ll probably lose the both of you in it” Jon said with a grin.
We’ve both finished our suppers so we’ll just wait here for you to finish” Arya suggested, clearly fishing for Jon to get a move on with his own meal.

“Give me 5 minutes and I’m all yours” Jon replied.

And with a clear of his bowl and a nod in Ned’s direction, Jon and his two shadows left the hall.

“He is alright isn’t he father? He barely acknowledged our table, didn’t you have a word with him earlier?” Robb inquired when the three of them had left the hall.

Ned sighed “I did have a word with him, I think he’s just feeling a bit unwanted at the moment. Ser Rodrik had suggested grooming him to be the next master-at-arms after he’s retired, I agreed with him, it’s no secret Jon is very gifted when it comes to swordplay and it would not only give him more purpose that he feels he’s lacking at the moment but it would also keep Jon at Winterfell for years to come, something I think you and me both have been worrying about recently”.

“If you say so father” Robb replied but didn’t look confident with Ned’s plan.

“Do you not think that would help?” Ned asked.

“I don’t know, it just seems to me that he can't wait to get out. He’s already got one foot out the door with all the time he spends in the wolfswood and mother and Sansa aren’t exactly welcoming with him.” Robb said and continued, “If he’d heard Sansa’s suggestion about living in the woods he wouldn’t have taken it as an insult, he'd have taken it as a genuine possibility for him, he’s already proven he can handle himself out in the wild if that story about the bear is anything to go by and I'm concerned he’s gonna realise that there's nothing stopping him from going through with it” Robb finished.

Ned had a lot to think about.

Jon

Jon chuckled as he watched Arya and Rickon run ahead of him towards his chambers, a sadness washing over him as he realised that tonight would be the last night he spent with them for a while, ‘I can't be thinking like that, I have to leave for my own sake, no backing out’.
As he followed them into his chambers he realised he’d left all the books about sailing and fishing he’d been reading from the library all over his desk and unfortunately Arya picked up on them pretty fast.

“What are these?” She asked suspiciously.

He had to think fast on his feet “Just some light reading, was interested in how to fish efficiently in the rivers”. He hated lying to Arya but he had to, if she found out the real reason he was learning to fish she would tell father then Jon would be made a prisoner in his own home.

“Oh okay” She accepted but Jon knew she was suspicious, “Sooo, where’s this pelt?” Arya asked but Rickon had already found it.

“Eww, why’s it so wet?” Rickon asked as he had the thing draped over him.

“Get that off Rick, I washed it in the bath tub after I’d used it myself and left it to dry in front of the fireplace” Jon said as he removed the pelt from Rickon, his tiny body emerging from its depths.

“You should have heard the maid when she came to clean out the tub, she sounded like she was gonna throw up when she found all the blood and bits left in there” Jon chuckled.

“Are you gonna make a cloak out of it? Sansa might help if it involves anything with a needle and thread” Arya asked.

“I haven't decided yet but most probably, I've always wanted a bearskin cloak” Jon proclaimed.

Arya went and joined Rickon who was sat on Jon’s bed and looked up at Jon with those slate eyes of hers almost as if she was trying to find something.

“Are you okay Jon?” Arya asked in such a sincere way it almost made him tear up. ‘I shouldn’t have favourites but I just can't help it with Arya’.

“What makes you ask that?” Jon asked.
Arya was clearly thinking on how to word her next sentence, “I don’t know, lately you’ve just looked...fed up with everybody that’s all” Arya answered.

“Is this about me breaking squidkid’s nose?” Jon replied.

Arya chuckled “No, not that, he deserved that, he deserves a lot more but you were the only one to bring him down a peg.” Arya then continued, “No its more...you just seem more outspoken whenever somebody mocks you”.

“Father says it’s the wolfs blood coming through, apparently I'm going through ‘the change’ so that’s probably why I have a shorter fuse” Jon answered. “Your parents are gonna go insane when it happens to you two” Jon chuckled as he deflected. Arya was hitting too close to home with her evaluation of him.

Jon has had wolfs blood all his life but he’s had to learn to control it, him coming of age had not changed his situation with it either so he knew it wasn’t that, it was more a self-loathing issue he had and he'd realised he had to discover himself to be truly happy.

Arya didn’t look convinced, “Are you sure?” She asked as she nibbled on her lower lip.

“I'm positive Arya, I’ll be fine honestly, I’m getting annoyed with this conversation and I haven't bitten your head off so it's not like I'm going insane is it?” Jon replied. He wanted this topic of conversation over for many reasons, the main one being the fact he could feel his soul being chipped away bit by bit every time he lied to his little sister.

“Yeah but that doesn’t count, I'm your favourite sister and you love me” Arya replied cheekily.

“Hey! What about me?” Rickon exclaimed.

“You're my favourite sister and I love you too Rick” Jon smiled.

“Good” Rickon replied with a smile as he carried on playing with the bear fur, completely oblivious to what Jon had just said.
Jon looked through his window and knew he needed to get a couple of hours sleep in before he departed. So, with that he caught Arya and Rickon in a big group hug which lasted longer than his normal ones and escorted them back to their wing of the keep, ‘The family wing’ Jon thought bitterly. He said goodnight to each of them as he hugged them one last time before making a swift getaway back to his chambers before he became a teary mess ‘Stay strong Jon’. He returned to his chambers and collapsed on his bed, he just let the tiredness take hold of him.

Jon later woke up groggy and miserable, it was pitch black out. He must have had four or five hours sleep, he wasn’t sure but he knew it was time to get packed. He got up and picked up the books he had borrowed off his desk and carried them under his arm, he then grabbed the empty sack he’d managed to obtain, exited his chambers and made his way towards the library.

Jon, a master of keeping to the shadows all his life managed to return the books to their rightful place without a problem. His next task was to acquire some rations for his journey, he knew he’d have to restock at the Stony Shore so he didn’t plan on ‘borrowing’ much. With that he made his way towards the kitchens but not without nearly getting caught by a guard, he managed to dart into an alcove just before the guard came around the corner into the corridor he was in ‘close one’.

He arrived in the kitchens and quickly filled up his sack with apples, hardtack and some dried beef jerky. He didn’t grab any water as he’d already filled three skins up in a stream he knew about in the wolfswood earlier that day.

With his sack full he made haste back to his chambers, keeping an extra eye out for patrols. Back inside his room, Jon tied up his sack, washed his face in the bowl of water that was left for him in the morning and proceeded to change into his warmest clothing, all black of course. Jon then placed the six sealed notes he had written individually for each of his siblings and his father on his desk so that they could be found the next day...when he’ll be long gone. The notes themselves were just him saying that he’s sorry he didn’t say goodbye in person, that they aren’t the reason he left and that he will always love them and he hopes they will one day forgive him for leaving. His father's note explained that he didn’t want to come in between him and his wife anymore, that he felt stagnant and useless in his day to day life, that he just wasn’t happy anymore and that he wanted to enter the world and make a life for himself and not others. Jon also mentioned that he didn’t understand his reluctance to tell him about his mother and that he hoped the information he kept from Jon was worth it for whatever the reason. Jon shouldn’t have written the last part about his mother but he was too bitter at the thought of it all.

Jon pulled on his boots and pulled on his black cloak, with a bow slung over one shoulder, his bear pelt rolled up and hung over his other shoulder, a quiver full of arrows on his back and his sword and dirk strapped to his hip, Jon grabbed his sack of supplies, a bag of gold dragons he’d been saving up for the year and headed out of the keep. He knew if somebody saw him he was busted so he hurried down towards the godswood and made one last prayer to the old gods, a prayer keeping his family safe and another praying for a fruitful journey on this suicide mission he was going on.
As soon as he was done with his prayers, Jon jogged to the stables and saddled a horse for his journey. He packed his sack of supplies and his gold in his saddlebags, tied the bear fur on the back of the saddle and led the horse out and towards the hunter’s gate. He knew this was the less guarded gate and he knew how to distract the guards. With the kennels being close by, Jon rattled the hounds up by banging on the bars and he led his horse down the side of the maester’s turret and hid in the shadows. As the guard on duty, who happened to be Todd who he had broken the nose of earlier, walked towards the kennels to see what the commotion was about, Jon mounted his horse and bolted out the gate before Todd knew what had even happened.

Jon must have galloped towards the woods for five straight minutes before he realised he’d got out before anyone had seen him, the lack of bells ringing being a giveaway. He made one last look at the only home he knew, the home he had outgrown ‘or had it outgrown him?’. If he survived his adventure he might see it again but he was kind of coming to terms that this might be the last time he sees those grey walls.

He knew he was gonna miss it but it was mainly the occupants that resided there that he was going to miss the most, it was also because of some of those occupants that he’d decided to take on this venture in the first place. With a deep breath to steel himself, he turned his horse towards the woods and began his journey into the unknown.

To a new beginning.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks again for the feedback on the previous chapter.

Just a heads up, there will be more POVs other than Jon and Ned in the future but as of right now they’re the two characters that are moving to story forward for me.
I decided to use a couple of visuals in this chapter and will probably carry on using them in future chapters.

The source of the images were from a simple google image search.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

6 moons later...

Ned

Ned sighed as he finished reading over the ravens he’d received earlier that day, nothing unusual, same reports he’d been receiving from all his bannermen. If Ned was being honest he was hoping for some mention of anything to do with Jon.

Before Ned could lose himself in his thoughts there was a knock on his solar door, Ned told whoever it was to come in and was greeted by the face of his captain of the household guard, Jory.

“What news Jory?”

“The scouts you sent a moon ago have returned my lord” Jory replied.


“I’m afraid they couldn’t find anything my lord, they said the hounds lost the scent near a small river in the wolfswood about a week out from here. Said they’ve been looking for weeks in the surrounding areas but found nothing, it was clear the lad didn’t want to be followed.”

‘Six moons. Six moons and barely a trace left of him’ Ned sighed “Tell them I appreciate their efforts, pay them the gold dragons for at least looking for him and make sure they get a warm meal and proper ale in their bellies before they return home.”
Jory nodded as he left the solar and left Ned to his thoughts. ‘Where are you Jon? Where did you go?’ The scouts had said they’d found nothing which means they didn’t find a body or blood or anything. Ned hoped that was positive news and that Jon was at least okay wherever he was. It had been six moons, he could be anywhere, he could be in Dorne, north of the wall or even Essos by now. Ned had specifically ordered Lord Manderly to search all incoming and outgoing ships for a man matching Jon’s description but had received reports from him that nobody matching Jon’s description had been spotted.

Ned sighed again, he found himself doing that a lot lately, at the age of 33, Ned felt twice his age with all the recent events. He thought he was gonna have a heart attack when the news that his son had gone missing reached King’s Landing and that The Crown was helping him in his search, it was a double-edged sword, he wanted him found yes but if Rhaegar, Elia or anybody who’d met his sister looked into Jon’s eyes then whispers would spread.

Ned leant back in his chair and reached into the draw of his desk, he found the note straight away, the note written by Jon specifically for him, the contents of which kept him awake for many nights of the week.

Dear Lord Stark,

I write to you with a heavy heart, I write in the hopes that it will grant closure to both you and I but I fear only one of us will receive such a thing.

As a son you have treated me like one of your trueborn children to a certain extent. I have gone needing for nothing whether it be food, shelter or education. I have grown up with my half-siblings that at times felt like full-fledged siblings and I am eternally grateful for that.

As a bastard you treated me with as much affection as you dare, you have been balancing your marriage and your wife's wishes with the wants and wishes of a bastard boy. This situation wasn’t ideal for anybody.

I came to the conclusion that something had to change. Your marriage couldn’t realistically change without ripping the family apart so that was never going to happen, as much as I appreciate daily reminders from your wife of the situation of my birth I had no control of, I do not wish to cause tension between the pair of you.

With that I realised I had to leave, leave for the benefit of your marriage, leave for the benefit of my future and leave for the benefit of my own sanity. I almost didn’t want to leave without finding out news of my mother, the woman I'm pretty sure I will never know the identity of.
I don’t understand your reasoning for withholding that precious information from me but with the sheer amount of times you’ve denied me, I assume there must be a good reason for it, in the end, I hope it was worth it.

If me leaving makes me a disappointment to you, if you think I’m just running away from my problems then, I’m sorry.

This maybe the last time we speak and if so then, I love you.

Jon.

Ned wiped a stray tear away at the last part of the letter, Ned’s parting gift to him was another denial about his mother and Jon’s parting gift was him saying that he loved him ‘Did I ever say that to him myself?’. Ned closed his eyes in shame, wondering if he’d said it spoke volumes.

He wasn’t the only person to receive a letter of their own, everyone in the family received one, even Sansa, but Cat and Theon received no such thing as to be expected. He remembers when the family found out Jon was gone.

6 moons ago...

The sound of clashing wood could be heard from his solar, he always enjoyed seeing the boys spar after breakfast.

Ned got up from his chair and made his way towards the balcony overlooking the yard.

When he looked over he could see Robb sparring with Theon with Bran and Rickon watching on.

With Theon yielding after being sent to his backside, Ned made his way down to them.

“Good morning my lord.” Ser Rodrik greeted.
“Morning Ser Rodrik.” Ned replied.

Robb turned to his father with a grin as he helped Theon back to his feet. “Did you see me send him into the dirt father?” Robb asked with the grin still plastered to his face.

“I did, but don’t get overconfident Robb, first mistake in a fight is to underestimate your opponent. Plus, I think young Greyjoy here is ready to go again.” Ned replied as he saw the look on Theon’s face.

“Too right I am, Stark over here got a lucky break that’s all.” Theon replied.

Ned noticed that Jon was nowhere to be seen which was unusual for a lad who loved a good spar. “Where’s your brother Robb? Would have thought he’d be sparring with you as well”. Ned didn’t miss the face Theon pulled whenever Jon was mentioned.

“Jon? I’m not sure father, I haven’t seen him since last night.” Robb answered.

“Not even at breakfast?” Ned asked.

Robb shook his head, “Nope. He wasn’t even at breakfast.”

“Unusual, not like Jon to miss breakfast, he seems to eat like a hungry wolf as of late.” Ned replied with a chuckle.

“Probably needs to store all that energy for when he cowers away into those woods.” Theon answered with his trade mark grin.

“...or break noses.” Robb replied whilst smiling at Theon. Theon didn’t look pleased at that remark and tried to catch Robb off guard with a swing but Robb had already seen it coming and parried thus carrying on with their spar.

Ned asked Bran and Rickon if they’d seen Jon, Bran said the same as Robb that he hadn’t seen him since last night but Rickon’s reply worried Ned a little.
“He walked me to my chambers and gave me a big hug goodnight like the ones you give us papa. I squeezed him back extra hard so he wouldn’t cry.”


“I don’t know, he just looked extra sad last night so I tried to hug it away for him. I think it worked but he was already leaving before I could see his reaction.”

Ned did not like this at all and got a dreaded case of foreboding, “Don’t worry Rick, he’ll be fine, I’ll go check his chambers see if he’s arisen from his beauty sleep.”

Ned heard Bran and Rickon giggle at that as he made his way up to Jon’s chambers, it wasn’t like Jon to sleep in late so the last thing he expected was to see him still asleep.

Ned knocked on his door to see if he was decent but received no reply, he knocked again with the same outcome. He slowly opened the door whilst still letting Jon know that he was coming in but it was for nought, Jon wasn’t there.

Worrying.

Ned left the chambers with haste and went to the godswood to see if he was there, nothing. Main hall, nothing. Stables, nothing. On his way to see the guards who were overwatching the gates he saw Arya making her way towards the yard.

“Arya, you haven't seen Jon around have you?” Ned pressed.

“No father, why? Is he in trouble?” Arya asked.

“Nobody has seen him since last night, he didn’t turn up to breakfast this morning and Rickon said he looked upset last night.” Ned replied. Arya looked worried.

“He might have gone into the wolfswood, he does spend an awful lot of time there, have you asked
the guards on duty if they've seen him leave?” Arya asked.

“I'm just on my way there now, go and have a look around, see if you can find him and if you do tell him I want a word.” Ned answered as he went towards the Hunter’s Gate to talk to the on-duty guards.

Unfortunately, when he asked them he was told nobody had entered or exited through the Hunter’s gate or any of the other three gates this morning. Now Ned was getting very nervous as he walked towards his solar and his thoughts were confirmed when he saw Arya running through the corridor towards him with a handful of sealed letters and a face full of tears.

“Father! Its Jon, I...I found these in his room...he...he’s gone” Arya cried.

Ned ushered her into his solar as she hugged his side, “What do you mean he’s gone?” Ned replied, he felt like the walls were closing in.

She handed him six letters, all sealed apart from one which had Arya’s name on it, the rest of which had the names of all his children and one had his name on it.

‘What have you done Jon?’

Arya was still crying as he read his letter and he knew why, Jon was gone, and as much as he tried he couldn’t fault his reasons.

Ned had sent out scouts to search the wolfswood but reported back with not much of a lead. Nobody took the news well, well not nobody. Catelyn had almost brushed her hands clean of the whole situation stating that “If he wants to go out into the world and make something of himself then so be it.” and that “We should respect his wishes.” but nobody agreed with her, not even Sansa to everybody's surprise. Arya screamed at her mother and blamed her for everything whilst storming out of his solar that they were all in, Rickon was silently crying into Ned’s side, Sansa looked regretful and Robb and Bran just looked distraught and disappointed.

Ned had already planned to send scouts, he was going to find Jon and when he returned he was determined to make Jon feel like he was in a home, a home he promised his sister that her son would be a part of.
‘I’m sorry Lya’

Present day...

Ned was broken from his thoughts when Jory knocked and entered his solar.

“Lord Stark, there’s been a deserter from the nights watch…” Jory left the rest unspoken.

“I’ll be with you shortly.” Ned replied as Jory left and shut the door behind him.

‘Duty calls’ Ned thought as he rose from his chair and exited his solar felling melancholy.

Jon

“CUNT!”

That was the fifth fish that had escaped his hook, each one that escaped gained an increasingly more aggressive name. ‘Twat’ was his previous adversary, he preferred ‘Twat’ to ‘Cunt’, ‘Twat’ was bigger and seemed to have a more cooperative attitude but ‘Cunt’ was boisterous and rebellious. Jon was also quite sure he was going insane.

“FUCK YOU THEN FISH! I DIDN’T WANT YOU ANYWAY YOU FUCKING FREAK! YOU FUCKING STINK! FUCK YOU!”

Yeah, he was losing his mind.

Jon huffed as he calmed his breathing, exerting precious energy calling a fish a freak was not the smartest of ideas, ‘why am I so angry towards a dumb fish?’. Heading towards the front of the ship, Jon leant his arms on the railing and looked upon the horizon in the hopes of seeing some sort of land or anything. He’d believed he’d seen land hundreds of times in the past week or so but his eyes or his mind had deceived him, it was all starting to get disheartening.
He was wondering if all of this was worth it, If the moment he finds land he’ll just keel over and die from the first thing he comes in contact with, wouldn’t that just be hilarious. He remembers the whole journey he would have took just to die and he remembers the very beginning of his adventure...

*Roughly 5 moons ago...*

The Stony Shore looked as miserable as Jon felt, if Winterfell *looked* grey then the Stony Shore *felt* grey.

“Shithole” Jon whispered under his breath as he hitched his horse, gathered his belongings and made his way towards the poor excuse of a dock. Finding a decent ship was his main priority but at first glance he was not very optimistic.

Jon knew he needed to find an inn to sort himself out, he stunk, he needed a good meal and he needed a bed. So, with that in mind he made his way towards a building that look like an inn, it also looked like one of the only functional buildings in this heap.

As he stepped inside he was hit with the smell of sweat and fish, the floor felt damp and the room in general was unlit apart from the few candles that littered the individual tables and the bar. It also seemed that a fresh batch of fishermen had just docked and were getting settled in to the already busy establishment.

He found a quiet corner and called a maid over to take his order, he quickly found out that the inn was completely full ‘*fuck me*’. He ordered a fish pie and ale and started to mull over ideas on what to do next, no rooms meant he was sleeping in the woods again and with the weather looking as miserable as he felt, he figured he’d be waking up wet.

The maid returned with his fish pie and his ale, “Thank you.” Jon said as he handed over the coin to the young maid who accepted it with a smile and a blush. The meal itself was tasty, fish was obviously fresh, the pastry was crumbly and golden and Jon had no idea what the sauce was that was in it but he still wolfed it down with zeal. However, the ale...not so much, it tasted like a fermented puddle and Jon was pretty sure there was a chunk or two in it.

The general peace of the inn was broken when a loudmouth’s voice rose above everybody else's.

“Aye, should have heard the little lassie, the way she was crying and screaming you’d have thought...
I’d gutted her HAHA...Well I gutted her in a sense but that’s beside the point HA!” A scumbag of a sailor gloated to a fellow sailor at the table next to him, the sailor in question not looking remotely interested in what the he was saying.

Jon’s mug creaked from the pressure with how hard he was squeezing it in rage ‘fucking disgusting pig’. Taking a deep breath through his nose, Jon attempted to calmed his ire.

“Had her on the boat with me, was planning on making her my salt wife, bit young like but a few weeks and I’d have worn her in HA. Crazy bitch threw herself in the sea, never saw her emerge, pity.” The scumbag finished with a belch.

The other sailor that accompanied him finished his ale, got up and walked out. “Oh, BYE THEN! Plenty more fish in the sea, isn't that right darling” The scumbag said as he slapped the backside of the young maid that passed by. The man was clearly drunk...and clearly a cunt.

“Maybe I'll steal you away and make you my salt wife little lady. I've got a nice boat, made of lovely ironwood, stole it from some northern cunt who was sailing on the sunset sea where he shouldn’t have been, prick should’ve stuck to fucking his horse and rolling around in his precious snow HA” The scumbag leered at the maid as she made her way back to the bar.

This perked Jon’s ears up.

With a hasty plan forming, Jon watched the scumbag neck mug after mug of ale ‘How can he drink that piss?’ and then stumble out of the inn 20 minutes later mumbling to himself. Jon decided he was going to take the opportunity that was given to him with both hands. He motioned to the maid and she came over to him, he told her that there was a nice grey palfrey hitched outside with a saddle and everything and that she could sell it to earn some coin for herself, that earnt him a lovely smile and a sincere thank you. With that Jon got up and followed the drunk all the way to the docks, Jon noticed the rather nice ship he was heading towards ‘This will do nicely’ he thought.

The scumbag entered the cabin of his ship, Jon followed him on quietly, storing his belongings in a crate on deck. The sun was going down, so Jon waited an hour on deck before sneaking into the cabin to check on the arsehole’s situation, turns out he was completely out cold, Jon even started whistling a random tune to see if he would wake but the man was out like a light.

Jon rushed back and untied the rope the boat had used to dock, pulled down the sails and coasted the boat out into open water. He’d done it, he’d managed to find a decent boat which happened to have decent supplies if Jon’s first glances were anything to go by, coupled with his own supplies he’d brought with him and the fact that he was stealing back a ship that previously belonged to somebody
in his homeland, Jon was feeling rather pleased with himself right now.

An hour out from inland, Jon decided it was a fair distance for the drunk prick to swim back to shore from, *‘if he drowned then...pity, like a wise man once said, plenty more fish in the sea’*. He walked back into the cabin with his sword and woke the idiot up.

“WAKEY WAKEY, RISE AND SHINE PRINCESS!” Jon yelled as he grabbed hold of the man and dragged him on deck.

“Wha....what the fuck man...who the hell are you?” The drunk asked as he unsuccessfully tried to struggle out of Jon’s grip.

“Captain Jon of the fuck you.” Jon said as he threw the screaming man overboard, spitting down at him as he emerged from the water.

“WHAT THE FUCK MAN?! OY COMEBACK YA PRICK!” The scumbag shouted.

“I’m sorry, what did you say? I don’t speak the common tongue.” Jon replied.

“What? STOP MESSING, LET ME BACK UP AND I’LL FORGET ABOUT ALL OF THIS!” The ironborn frantically replied as he tried to keep up with the boat.

“Eh? Nyke ŋdra daor shifang (I don’t understand)” Jon replied in high valyrian.

And with that, Jon turned away from the screaming man and headed towards the bow of the ship, he looked out to the horizon, “Well, too late to back out now.” and settled into the beginning of his journey.

*Present day...*

Jon was disturbed from his thoughts by the tugging of his fishing rod.

“Haha, got you now you little arsehole.” Jon cheered as he reeled in a bite.
Jon had read all sorts of books on fishing and the different types of fish, the one he’d just caught was a sea bass but the colouring was off slightly. He’d started noticing a lot of oddities with some of his captures lately.

“Well that’s dinner for tonight to go along with my fish desert and my beverage of fish blood.” Jon japed with himself.

Water, a lack of water was slowly but surely becoming a problem. He had some left but he was rationing it so precisely that he worked out that he had one more month before he was completely out. He needed it to rain badly, he had several barrels open and ready for a downpour.

“Fucking fish.” Jon said as he sat down with a huff and started preparing his dinner. He remembers the first week of his voyage when he nearly burnt down the ship whilst cooking one of his first captured fish, Jon chuckled to himself.

He was numb to the taste of fish now and it didn’t make a difference what type of fish he caught it all just ended up tasting the same way, he’d caught the odd turtle here and there but he wasn't eating them, he's not a monster.

Ah, what he wouldn’t do for one of Gage’s famous beef-and-bacon pies back at Winterfell, the ones with the thick onion gravy and golden crust...

“I WANT PIEEEE!!!” Jon screamed into the heavens.

Ned

The pastry was soft and crumbly as Ned tucks in to his supper, one of Gage’s best and with how quiet the rest of the table was being at the moment they too were thoroughly enjoying their meal. Still didn’t ease his concern about what the deserter of the night’s watch had said earlier today though, harping on about monsters and walkers, it's all Ned needed right now.

Ned looked to his right and saw Arya staring into her pie and looking miserable. Jon’s departure had affected everybody in the household in some way or another but Arya had been hit the hardest. She was extremely cold towards Sansa and Theon with the latter even returning from the yard with a few more bruises thanks to Arya and her collection of snowballs she likes to fill with stones. The way she
was with her mother was a different story, she'd flat out refused to go to her embroidery classes saying “It's for old biddies and boring people”. She once asked septa Mordane when she plans on “shrivelling up and crawling back into whatever hole she crawled out of” and has proceeded to pick up the mantle that Jon had left when it came to purposefully pissing off Catelyn.

Robb and Bran have been very similar when it comes to Jon’s departure, both being quiet and overall not as lively as they used to be. Robb has thrown himself headfirst into his lordly duties which Ned couldn’t be prouder of but it was a clear way for him to distract himself from the fact that he misses his brother.

Sansa seems to have changed the least out of anybody at first glance but Ned has noticed her trying to hide her disappointment in herself and it doesn’t get easier for her when Arya straight up refuses to talk to her anymore.

Rickon has been running around like a lost puppy, always asking when Jon was coming home, Theon keeps making snide comments and smirking at his own jokes about Jon leaving and Catelyn, well Catelyn isn't in the slightest remorseful from the whole ordeal, if anything, she thinks the family has just overcome a great upheaval and can now move forward like nothing had happened.

Ned had to inform the rest of the family of the scout's findings or lack of if he was being honest, he knew Arya was not going to take it well. He turned to Catelyn and quietly spoke to her, “Round up all the children after supper and bring them to my solar.”

“Has something happened?” Catelyn asked.

“There will be explained in my solar, away from prying ears.” Ned replied.

The meal had ended and Ned headed to his solar to prepare for what he was about to tell the children, they weren't gonna like it one bit but there was nothing he could do, Jon was long gone.

Sooner than he was prepared for, the children and Cat all made their way into the solar, he could see the questions on their faces already.

“What's happened father? Is it Jon? Have they found him?” Arya asked as soon as she entered the room.
“Everybody take a seat and I’ll explain everything.” Ned replied as everybody took a chair.

Ned sighed and mentally prepared himself for what was to come, “You’re correct in thinking this is pertaining to Jon’s whereabouts” Ned answered as he looked at Arya.

“The last batch of scouts I sent out a moon ago finally returned, but unfortunately they haven’t been able to find a conclusive trail of Jon. I received a raven from Lord Manderly in White Harbour, he too has had no reported sightings fitting a man of Jon’s description. Reports from Castle Black from your Uncle Benjen, The Neck from Lord Reed’s personal scouts and The Crown themselves have all come back negative. Jon has completely vanished.”

He could see Arya tearing up but he had to get through this, “The scouts that returned this afternoon said that if Jon is out there he’s made damn sure they can't follow him, he’s being a complete ghost to them. And unfortunately, I have come to the difficult decision to call off the search and send the men back to their homes, it's unfair to keep them from their families, trying to find somebody who doesn’t want to be found” Ned finished as he looked at the gutted faces of everyone in the room, well not everyone.

“YOU CAN’T, YOU HAVE TO KEEP LOOKING, PLEASE FATHER!” Arya screamed with tears running down her face.

“I’m sorry Arya but the decision has been made. If Jon wants to return home then he’ll come back when he’s ready.” Ned replied.

“WE CAN’T ABANDON HIM, HE NEEDS TO BE HERE WITH HIS FAMILY...I...I miss him so much.” Arya looked down as she finished. Devastated didn't even cut it the way Arya was at this point and her screaming and crying had set Rickon off with the tears as well.

Ned felt terrible.

“Calm down Arya, your making your little brother cry.” Catelyn chided, the total lack of sensitivity amazed Ned at times.

The look Arya gave her mother chilled Ned to the bone. “This is your fault this! He’s gone because of YOU! I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU FOR THIS! I. HATE. YOU!” Arya screamed at Catelyn as she ran out of the solar. Ned called to Jory at the end of the corridor and told him to keep an eye on her, he didn’t want her doing something stupid.
Ned sits back down in his chair with a huff just before Robb asked him a difficult question, “Father, you...you don’t think he’s dead do you?” Ned could see the fear in his son’s eyes as he asked him that.

He needed to shut that kind of thinking down immediately, “He’s not dead Robb, it’s Jon, he can look after himself plus if he was dead the scouts would have found something by now surely.” Ned replied, not a hundred percent positive in his own claims. But he was still refusing to believe in the worst-case scenario.

Catelyn timely intervened, “Maybe we have to come to the conclusion that Jon is really gone. It’s going to impact all of us with the loss but it’s not something that as a family we can’t overcome. Maybe hold a ceremony in his memory so that he knows he’s not forgotten, we can invite some of the lords to attend, lords like Lord Karstark and Lord Manderly. They can bring their whole family along with them as well, we’ll give Jon a respectable send-off.” Catelyn finished with a soft smile on her face, Sansa nodding in agreement.

Ned knew what she was doing and by the looks of things so too did Robb, she’d been hinting about betrothals to both Robb and himself. Robb rose from his seat with a scowl on his face aimed at his mother and ushered Bran and Rickon out of his solar, promising them a bedtime story. Ned couldn’t believe her audacity, there was no way it was a coincidence that the two houses she mentioned happened to have ladies of a similar age to Robb that weren't betrothed.

Catelyn, thoroughly pleased with herself rises from her seat along with Sansa and started making their way towards the door whilst tutoring Sansa on to suitably prepare the keep when holding an event and how a lady is supposed to make sure everything is in order.

“You’re wasting your time Cat, there won’t be a ceremony.” Ned muttered, he could feel his veins boiling from anger.

“THERE’S NOT GONNA BE A FUNERAL BECAUSE NOBODY HAS DIED! AND YOUR RIDICULOUS PLAN TO FIND ROBB A WIFE DURING THIS IMAGINARY CEREMONY WON’T BE HAPPENING EITHER!” Ned yelled as Catelyn stared straight back with a stone face whilst Sansa was taking a step back towards the door.
“It's going to eat you alive Ned, the first step of grief is denial, you need to come to the realisation that Jon isn't coming back. Whilst you’re stewing in your own misery about the boy your children are growing up around you and you're missing out on it all.” And with that, Catelyn and Sansa exited the room but not without Sansa gracing him with a concerned smile which he returned for her sake more than his.

“FOR FUCK SAKE!” Ned yelled into the empty solar as he launched his chair across the room. Taking deep breaths, he realised he needed to calm down, he needed to pray and there was only one place he could do that.

Grabbing his cloak, he exited his room and walked past a concerned looking Jory, “Not a word.” Ned said to him as he exited the keep into the cold night and made his way towards the godswood to pray to his gods for too many reasons.

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Jon

There was a chill in the air, Jon could feel it on his face as he laid there on deck wrapped up in his trusty bear pelt. The sky was clear today and the seagulls were flying around in formation in perfect synchronisation, it was mesmerising. It was one of the many interesting things he’d seen on this trip and Jon had seen a lot of things.

He’d seen some beautiful things, like the oddly stripped fish that looked like it had almost something like bird feathers growing from it. He wanted to catch one and see what it tasted like but if Jon was being honest, he was scared of shitting out a lung from poisoning.

He’d seen some odd things, like the dog he saw...or fish...Jon wasn’t too sure what he’d seen that
They were timid but friendly little creatures, unfortunately the moment he’d called out to one they would dart away.

And then there was the not so pleasant things, like the thick fog he’d sailed through that lasted for nearly two weeks. The odd jagged rocks here and there that poked out of the water whilst sailing through and don’t even get him started on the rather long appendage that he swears he saw through the dense fog, that thing gave Jon nightmares, it was a miracle he’d even got out the other side.

Thinking back to those memories, Jon’s mind travelled even further into the past. Getting lost in his thoughts about his siblings was one of his favourite past times lately, about Sansa, when she would concentrate so hard on her stitching that the tip of her tongue would peek out of her mouth. Or Bran, who nearly gave Jon a heart attack when he decided to take a shortcut outside by climbing out of Jon’s bedroom window. Of Robb, when he used to wake Jon up on a morning with a handful of snow to the face and a body slam for good measure.

He thought about little Rickon who he still to this day didn’t understand what it was that he saw when he looked at Jon with a face full of awe. He thought of Arya, his biggest supporter. He hopes she’s still soldiering on, being the biggest pain in the arse to her parents that she can possibly be and hopes she’s still turning a blind eye to septa Mordane’s poisonous teachings and beliefs. There was Theon...he can fuck off as far as Jon was concerned.

And then came their parents. Catelyn Tully Stark was prejudiced, she was vindictive, she was a borderline extremist when it came to her twisted beliefs and she was a bitch. Hate is a strong word...Jon hated her, nothing much else to it. And then there was his father, the honourable Lord Eddard Stark. A man who at face value was the most upstanding person you’ll ever meet but to Jon he was a man guilty of lies and secrets, a man guilty of negligence. What on earth had Ned Stark done to deem it necessary to hide the identity of Jon’s mother away from him? Am I the product of rape? Am I the bastard son of a woman who was already married at the time I was conceived? Did Lord Stark cuckold somebody? ‘Oh god, please don’t be Catelyn’s crazy sister’, Jon shuddered.
Its whatever, that’s all in the past now, nothing he can do about it, his mother might as well be the fucking Queen at this point, it wasn't gonna change anything. As much as he tries to keep a positive outlook for the future he wasn’t naive, Jon was pretty sure he was gonna die soon. He’d seen no boats, no people, no land, there was nothing, just an endless horizon for half a year. He couldn’t return back; a lack of supplies would finish him off before he even saw Westeros again and he’d still have to sail back through the mass of jagged rocks and dense fog he only just survived by sheer luck on the way here.

Jon rubbed his face in resignation, brushing his fingers through his thick beard he was rather proud of if he was being honest. He knew it needed a trim and so did his hair, hanging past the top of his shoulders, He’d ended up tying it up in a bun, something he’d never done before and he still wasn’t sure if he liked it or not, regardless, it needed cutting for what it was worth in the long run.

With a sigh, Jon closed his eyes and listened to the sound of the waves, it always lullled him and he would nod off pretty easily. It wasn’t the only thing that helped him sleep, the sound of water splashing, of the waves rocking the boat like his mother would rock him to sleep when he was a baby...if she wasn’t a phantom from Jon’s dreams. The sound of the odd seagull cawing in the distance, the flapping of his boat’s sails, the distant shouting of fellow sailors.

...wait.

Jon’s eyes shot open as he jumped to his feet and looked in the direction the shouts were coming from, in the distance, about 150 yards away he could see an odd-looking sail boat, it had an awning of sorts built right in the middle of it and underneath it there were two people shouting and waving their arms in his direction.

‘Pirates’.

Or so Jon thought. As he prepared for an attack, grabbing his sword that was leant against the main mast, the odd-looking boat gently coasted towards the side of his. He was higher up than them on deck so he got a good view of them, they looked nothing like pirates, they looked...different in a way he couldn’t describe. The two men were looking up at him with friendly expressions but also seemed to be working him out as well.

The man on the right shouted up at him in a language totally foreign to Jon so all he could do was shrug his shoulders, point to his mouth and shake his head. The man seemed to realise the situation and started talking with signs as well. He pointed to himself, then pointed to Jon and then finally pointed towards the horizon while nodding his head. Confused, Jon looked to where the man was pointing and his eyes grew wide. They wanted him to follow them, in the direction they were pointing, to land, to actual land.
‘Oh my god, I did it...I actually did it’. Jon thought has his heart threatened to burst.

Land ahoy.

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Chapter End Notes

Valyrian translator used - https://lingojam.com/EnlishtoValyrianTranslator
Jon was just wide eyed as his boat coasted up to the little docks of this new land, the first thing he noticed about this place was the colour, vast amounts of trees that at first glance looked a subtle shade of red like the weirwoods in the north but in actual fact were a soft pink and at closer inspection, Jon realised they weren't leaves but flowers. ‘I wonder if there's any trees growing winter roses’.

As he disembarked from his ship he noticed that everybody on the docks, who were working, stopped and looked at him. The look wasn’t in disdain or disgust but of intrigue and interest, for once in his life he didn’t feel uncomfortable with the whispers he could hear, it probably also helped that he didn’t understand a word they were saying.

He followed the two sailors that had led him to this new land and made his way up a stone path that exited the docks, passing under a red archway that was like nothing he’d seen before. ‘Absolutely everything is different and new, it's like an entirely different world’ Jon thought to himself as they made their way through what seemed to be some sort of town. The buildings on the way to whatever their ultimate destination was were some of the most brilliant bits of architecture Jon had ever seen. Sloped roofs that were curved and made from strong looking wood, the buildings themselves were predominantly brown and white but he spotted a few that were built with the same red wood he’d seen used for the archway at the docks, these specific buildings also seemed to have green roofs instead of the dark brown ones. Jon was in awe of everything he’d seen up to now.

He was cut off from his daydreaming as a small furry creature ran across his path holding what looked to have been a large red berry, the thing was covered from head to toe with a brown grey fur, had a red almost human like face and a long tail which was currently being tugged at by two children who were clearly chasing the thing. Jon wanted to intervene but with one look from his guides, who shook their heads with a smile, Jon decided otherwise.

They carried on with their journey till they stopped and turned to Jon, the pair of men pointed up to a large set of stairs which led to the top of a steep hill. At the top of that hill was the most amazing building he had ever seen. The backdrop had a narrow waterfall that flowed from a cliff, he looked up and for the first time since arriving noticed the huge snow peaked mountain in front of him.
‘Snow’ Jon thought, the one thing he truly knows here or anywhere.

Jon shook the thoughts away as he once again looked upon this magnificent structure, this thing was 4 stories high with each floor being smaller than the last. Each of the floors had its own roof, sloped and curved like the rest of the buildings he’d seen so far and made from a soft grey wood. The balconies, pillars and archways were made from the popular red wood he’d seen as well and the whole thing was topped off with a golden sculpture at the peak of the building, it was stunning.

Jon climbed the stairs and reached the front of the building along with the two men, who he’d deduced were fishermen, and followed the pair in. He’d underestimated the size of the building and was shocked by the vast interior, clean white screens, that seemed to block out the view from the outside were on each of the walls and slid open to let fresh air flow through, Jon would say it gave the room an open feel. Low tables and cushions spread around the room, not a chair or stool in sight.

The pair of men led him into a small room that was screened off and motioned for him to sit on one of the cushions, he obliged and untied his scabbard from his waist. He’d left his belongings on his ship and just brought his sword, he couldn't be too careful in this foreign land. One of the men left the room and the other one was clearly left to keep an eye on him, which was confirmed when the man pointed at Jon’s sword and shook his head in a negative manner. Understanding his gesture, Jon picked it up and placed it further across the room from him, but not too far for him to reach if this all went tits up.

The other man returned and beckoned Jon to stand up and follow him, the man who was already in the room with Jon picked up his scabbard and followed him out, ‘Well, there goes that plan already’ Jon thought.
He was led up a small narrow staircase and into a room with seven men, old men from what Jon could see. They were sat on the same type of cushions he’d been sitting on and were sat in a circle around the room. He believed this was their idea of court.

One of the men who had escorted him talks in their language to a man who looks between the age of forty and fifty and had short cropped golden hair with flecks of grey, he looks at me for a while before speaking to me.

“Skoros iksis aōha brōzi valītsos? (What is your name boy?)” The man asked him in fluent High Valyrian.

‘Odd’ He thought.

“Jon.” He replied, still shocked somebody knew a language he did.

“Skoriot issi ao hen? (Where are you from?)” The man asked.

“Westeros, se jelmōñe dārion. (Westeros, the northern kingdom.)” Jon answered.

The man looked at him in shock.

“Gaomagon ao gūmigon se Quptenkys Ėngos? (Do you know the common tongue?)”. The man asked, clear shock still evident on his face.

“I do.” Jon replied as he looked around at the rest of the men who all looked confused with the conversation that was being had.

The man started talking again, “Good, your High Valyrian is alright but still a bit rusty.” He ended with a grin.

“If you don’t mind me asking, where are you from?” Jon asked.
“I’m from Westeros just like you boy.” The man finished with a laugh.

‘Unbelievable’ Jon thought, he assumed he was the first westerosi to ever discover this foreign land but it turns out he wasn’t, very annoying. Granted, he was glad there was somebody who knew his language and by the way he was speaking with the other men in the room, knew the native language as well. ‘Looks like I’ve found my language teacher at least’ he thought. But it still didn’t change the fact that he’d thought he’d accomplished something nobody else had before. He was broken from his inner turmoil when the man spoke up.

“I’ve told the elders that you are a visitor from my homeland and you wish to contribute to our society, it is the only way you will be allowed to stay.”

“Thank you, and please tell them I appreciate their hospitality.” Jon replied as he nodded to the old men. The westerosi told them what he had said and they replied to the man, all without taking their eyes off of Jon.

“The Daimyo accept your thanks but will only be convinced of your sincerity based on your actions in the future.” The westerosi replied.

“Daimyo?” Jon replied intrigued, the men in the room chuckled at his attempt at the word. He was happy that they chose to allow him entry to their land and not just straight up deny or kill him.

The westerosi answered “They’re like the high lords we have back in Westeros but better.”

“And what is this place called?” Jon asked with anticipation.

“Well this settlement we are in right now is called Kōchi but the island itself is called Shikoku. There are 3 other islands as well, Hokkaido, Honshu and Kyushu.” The westerosi answered.

‘Interesting’ Jon pondered. He’d never heard of any of those places in maester Lewin’s lessons or in any of the books he’d been reading.

“And what's your name if you don’t mind me asking?” Jon finally asked.
“Gerion, Gerion Lannister, I must say it’s a shock and a pleasure to meet a fellow westerosi.” He answered with a cheeky grin as he held out his hand to shake.

Jon just froze on the spot.

He accepted his hand and shook it, still shocked at who’s hand he was actually shaking.


“The very same. Some might even say it’s my greatest achievement being related to the great Tywin Lannister.” Gerion replied with what appeared to be his trademark grin.

“Everybody thinks you’re dead you know, said you went searching for your houses ancestral sword and never returned.” Jon replied.

“It’s not like I could send them a raven telling them my whereabouts, the poor creature would perish before making it even half the journey.” Gerion answered.

“True I suppose.” Jon agreed, he did wonder though, “So...did you find what you were looking for?” Jon optimistically asked, he’d only ever seen one valyrian steel sword before and that was House Stark’s ancestral great sword, Ice.

Gerion replied with that grin still plastered to his face “Not sure, you’ll have to wait and see.”

Jon was sure that grin was permanent.

“Well the Daimyo have agreed that you shall stay with me for the time being so I can keep an eye on you, make sure you don’t get into any trouble, so grab your shit and follow me.” Gerion said.

Jon was surprised but okay with the man’s crudeness. He told him that all his belongings were on his boat so they both headed back to the docks to retrieve them. On the way there they conversed and learnt new things about each other, Jon told Gerion that he’d turned 15 two moons ago which Gerion was surprised about stating that Jon was well built for his age and that having a full beard at 15 was just weird.
"I have been at sea for over half a year, not really had the opportunity to shave." Jon defended.

“took me till I was nearly 30 to grow a respectable beard, seeing you with one at 15 just pisses me off to be quite honest.” Gerion jested.

With his belongings gathered, Jon followed Gerion towards his home, it was a quaint little house that was built with a surrounding garden that had an abundance of different trees, to Jon it seemed peaceful.

“Well, this is it, home away from home, it's not a castle but it's enough for me.” Gerion said.

“Oh, don’t worry, your home looks lovely and I really do appreciate you housing me.” Jon replied.

“Not like I really had much of a choice, the Daimyo don’t trust outsiders at the moment, took me a year or so before they warmed up to me. Things are a bit tense between the four islands lately so their attitude is understandable.” Gerion said. Jon just looked at him with an inquisitively raised eyebrow.

“There’s something brewing and the outcome isn’t gonna be pleasant.” Gerion mused.

“And what do you think the outcome will be?” Jon asked as he entered the house and put down his
belongings.

“War.” Gerion answered.

‘Brilliant, been here 5 minutes and there’s already death on the horizon’’ Jon thought as he laid down on his bed Gerion had pointed out. He shut his eyes and let the darkness take him.

The Red Woman

Being led into the wide corridor by the Red Keep’s guards to join the rest of the loyal subjects, Melisandre of Asshai pondered over her thoughts and visions that she had recently seen in her flames. Suffering and death were the main theme of them really but she couldn’t help being drawn to the one vision she had seen only a moon ago.

All her visions had been the same for a very long time and she’d spent an embarrassing amount of time trying to find an answer on how to prevent the misery she had witnessed. Year after year with no answer, she was starting to get disheartened by it all but her Lord of Light had come through for her and given her a clue.

The slow crawl of people inched into the Great Hall with every person dealt with in court, she hadn't been waiting long so it seemed the King was being rather efficient today.

King Rhaegar, First of His Name sat stoically on the throne of a thousand swords and methodically dealt with the issues of the day. The man himself was a jovial King but open to bouts of melancholy if the masses were to be believed. Melisandre could see the hidden pain in his deep indigo eyes as he waved away a Lord to move on to the next one. They say the Queen is very similar to her husband and that it was all brought on when the rebellion ended 15 years ago, when Lyanna Stark...no, Lyanna Targaryen had perished giving birth to a babe that hadn't survived the birth either, both monarchs had clearly been in love and that loss had left a deep wound.

The King had done his absolute best trying to fix the problems his mad father had created but it would all be for nought if her visions rang true.

The King finished his business with the person in front to her, she was ushered forward, Well, here goes nothing’ Melisandre thought as the person in front of her was escorted away. She bowed to the
King and hoped that he would listen.

Jon

The sun had barely risen as Jon was woken up by Gerion at the butt crack of dawn, he’d slept like a baby, sleeping on a boat for half a year was not his idea of a good time so the first night’s sleep on solid ground had been blissful.

“Wakey wakey rise and shine sleepy head.” Gerion said as he shook Jon awake.

“Why? Why do you hate me so?” Jon mumbled.

“Time for you to wake and get yourself cleaned up, you stink. I’ve got breakfast on the go and when we’ve finished we’ll go and meet the Swordmaster to evaluate your worth.” Gerion replied.

“Swordmaster? What's that when it's at home?” Jon replied, still rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

“It's like the master-at-arms from back home, I'm guessing you've got some experience with weapons?” Gerion asked.

“I dabble.” Jon answered as he peeled his clothes away from himself, still half asleep.

“Well get a move on, he doesn’t like tardiness and he’ll be itching to break you in.” Gerion said with that ever-present grin.

“You remind me of someone from back home, he was a cunt too.” Jon replied as images of a certain squid prick came to mind. He should watch his tongue but he was never in the right state of mind when woken up and gods help the person who had woken him. Jon was best left to wake up on his own Robb would say after nearly getting his head knocked off for one too many snowy wake up calls, he’d completely stopped his daily ritual after seeing the face Jon had given him.

Thankfully, Gerion took it in his stride, “HA! Can't remember the last time somebody spoke to me
like that, refreshing to say the least.” Gerion replied whilst chuckling to himself. Jon believed they would get on quite well.

After he’d washed, trimmed his beard to tidy it up and eaten his breakfast which consisted of scrambled egg and an assortment of fruits and berries, Jon and Gerion headed out into the cool morning air and made their way to the Swordmaster’s hall. The hall itself was at the edge of the town and had its own path down to what looked like a secluded portion of the beach.

Gerion spoke to him before they entered, “Watch that silver tongue of yours when speaking to Master Miyamoto, he’ll fucking destroy you and I found that out the hard way.”

“I'm guessing Master Miyamoto is this Swordmaster you’ve been banging on about.” Jon guessed to which Gerion nodded.

“Master Miyamoto Musashi, best sword on the island and has trained everybody who is anybody here. Only the truly exceptional survive his lessons and teachings, unfortunately he gave up trying with me, said I was too proud to learn.” Gerion said.

“You're not gonna cry on me, are you?” Jon japed and earned a jab to the arm.

“I can't wait to see him hurt muscles you didn’t even know you had, HA.” Gerion answered back.

“We’ll see about that.” Jon finished as Gerion led them into the hall.

3 hours later...

“Fuck.” Jon said as he winced.

Gerion was right, the old Master had found hidden parts of him that now stung and ached after being run through the wringer.
“What in the seven hells was that?” He asked, as him and Gerion made their way towards the town square.

“That was you getting your shit kicked in and me having the time of my life watching it happen.” Gerion replied with a smile.

“I’ve only just met the man, why does he hate me so much?” Jon replied.

“Trust me, if he hated you that wouldn’t have lasted thirty minutes, the man has just invested three hours into you. You’ve intrigued him, he told me he sees a lot of potential for someone so young.” Gerion answered.

A small swell of pride filled Jon’s chest for a fleeting moment until he remembered how much he ached right now. Before he could complain he noticed again one of those little furry creatures he’d seen yesterday being chased by children once more, he turned to Gerion and asked what they were.

“It’s called a Macaque, it’s a species of monkey native to these islands, mischievous little devils they are. You should watch your pockets.” Gerion answered.

They reached the middle of town and headed straight for the swordsmith on Master Miyamoto’s recommendation. According to Gerion, Gorô Masamune is one of if not the best swordsmiths in the land, Jon was excited to see his wares.

As soon as they entered the store, Jon was instantly amazed at all the steel on display. Rows and rows of finely crafted weaponry lined the walls and shelves, subtly curved long swords and short swords, daggers, bows and an assortment of weapons that looked completely foreign to him.

Gerion explained to him all the different types of blade on display from the katana, wakizashi, odachi, and tachi to the more obscure weaponry like the kusarigama which was a vicious looking sickle and chain.

He also pointed out some of the rarer items on display and explained to Jon what they were made from.

“Dragonsteel? What the hell is dragonsteel?” Jon questioned.
“It’s a bit like valyrian steel but lighter and holds a sharper edge, so to put it simply, it’s just better.” Gerion explained.

“Better than valyrian steel? How can you be so sure?” Jon asked, still sceptical.

“I tested dragonsteel and my valyrian steel against a blunted sparring sword, the valyrian steel took a chunk out of it, the dragonsteel cut it clean in half.” Gerion answered.

‘That’s a gamechanger’ Jon thought as he stared at the dragonsteel in question, they were all different shades from ice white to coal black, some had patterns and some were jewelled, they were beautiful.

It took a minute before Jon realised something, “Your valyrian steel?”

Gerion smirked.

Jon realised why he was smirking and started to smirk himself, “So you DID find Brightroar then?”

Gerion carried on smirking and just nodded, Jon had to see this when they headed back.

“I found something else as well that might interest you but you’ll have to be a good boy if you want to see it.” Gerion said.

“Prick.” Jon muttered under his breath as Gerion laughed at his expression. They both left the store after browsing and handling some of the blades that were on offer, Gerion was quick to point out that dragonsteel can still be produced but is not sold to just anybody with a bit of coin. You have to earn the right to wield it.

Jon did wonder though, “Why’s it called dragonsteel? Did they have dragons here as well?” Jon grinned. He tried to sound nonchalant about it but was very intrigued when Gerion answered.

“Did they?” Gerion grinned, “They still do.”
“Fuck off, I'm calling bullshit right away.” Jon denied but couldn’t help feel a bubble of excitement brewing.

Gerion put his arm around Jon’s shoulders and turned him to look towards the huge whitecapped mountain in the distance.

“You see that there?” Gerion said as he pointed to the top of said mountain, “That's called Mount Hakusan, it means ‘White Mountain’ in Nihongo. Nihongo is the name of the language that they speak here if you were wondering.”

Jon rose an eyebrow at the name, “White Mountain? Bit boring isn't it?”

“Shut up and let me continue.” Gerion chided. Jon motioned for him to carry on.

“It’s one of the ‘Three Holy Mountains’ along with Mount Fuji and Mount Tateyama. All three of them are actually in fact volcanoes.”

Jon was in awe whilst listening to Gerion, this thing was colossal and was easily peaking above the clouds.

“Inside of these volcanoes are said to be dormant creatures, winged creatures the size of entire villages, waiting to awake from their slumber.” Gerion finished.

Jon rolled his eyes, he’d heard Old Nan’s stories before and this one sounded like it came from her own mouth. “Those sound like some really big birds.” Jon japed. “Oh god...he...here comes one now!” Jon cowered behind Gerion as he pointed up at a seagull.

“Get off me you annoying shit.” Gerion pushed him towards the path up to his house as Jon laughed.

“You mock boy but these people hold strong beliefs to these creatures, so much so they built temples in homage, do not disrespect the culture unless you want to be thrown back into the sea.” Gerion chastised. Jon to his credit apologised for not knowing.
Gerion talked a bit more about these mythical creatures as they made their way back to his home for their lunch, not much was known about them and nobody had claimed to have seen one in many years but the belief still stood that these beings were protectors from a great evil that would ultimately destroy these lands.

Again, Jon was very sceptical about the whole situation but kept his mouth closed out of respect.

It got even more interesting when they finished their lunch and made their way into Gerion’s room.

“So, let's see it then.” Jon said.

“Oh, I didn’t know you swung that way Jonathan.” Gerion replied, trying and failing not to grin like a loon.

“Not that you prick” Jon said as he rolled his eyes, “You know...your sword.” He finished.

“I’m getting mixed signals here Jonathan.” Gerion replied with a look of confusion.

“BRIGHTROAR! Let me see Brightroar you arse.” Jon huffed, “And stop calling me Jonathan.”

“Oooooh, Brightroar...now it all makes sense.” Gerion replied like he had no idea what was being talked about.

“You’re not funny, now get it out will you.” Jon said.

“Of course, Jonathan, I’ll get anything out for y.....”

“No, you're fine, just Brightroar will do you insufferable cunt.” Jon answered, the teasing had run its course and he just wanted to see the goddamn sword.

With a wink and a nod, Gerion walked across the room to his bed and reached underneath it, he...
pulled a long wooden box out and lifted it onto his bed. Jon approached as Gerion unlatched the lock on the box and lifted the lid off to unveil two long items wrapped in a deep red material.

Gerion felt around the end of one of the items and lifted it out of the box.

As it was unwrapped from its cloth Jon noticed the black leather of its scabbard and the golden finishing's that accented it ‘Typical Lannister’. With it fully uncovered, Gerion grabbed the hilt and unsheathed it, the sound echoing around the room. He laid the sword down on the bed and Jon could fully take in the beauty of it.

An obvious greatsword due to its length, Brightroar was Lannister through and through. Patterned gold adorned all around the hilt and surrounded what looked to be a square cut topaz in the centre. The blade held the same smoky ripples in its valyrian steel that House Stark’s ancestral sword featured and it was finished off with a solid gold lion’s head for a pommel, it was a majestic looking blade.

“So...what do you think?” Gerion asked as he broke Jon out of his thoughts.

“It’s magnificent.” Jon answered.
“A true beauty aye, a lot of work to recover but in the end, it was worth it.” Gerion replied.

“Where on earth did you find it?” Jon asked.

“It’s a long story. I’ll tell you some other time but to put it simply, I stole it.” Gerion answered with a grin. Jon just raised his eyebrow.

Gerion explained, “Don't look at me like that, at the end of the day, this sword belongs to House Lannister so in a sense I wasn’t stealing it but reclaiming what is rightfully ours.”

“Bit of a grey area but I can see where you’re coming from.” Jon replied as he remembered the boat he ‘reclaimed’ to make this journey here.

“A Lannister always pays their debts...unless they find a loophole.” Gerion finished.

Jon just rolled his eyes as he looked back at the sword. When he caught sight of the box that laid at the other end of the bed, he remembered that there were two items in it.

Jon nodded towards it and asked, “What else is in that box Gerion?”

A sly grin morphed on Gerion’s face.

“Why that young Jonathan is the other thing I mentioned about to you earlier.” He answered.

Gerion picked up the other cloaked item, this one was a bit shorter than Brightroar and seemed to have a plain black leather scabbard as he unveiled it. Jon’s eyes went wide when he pulled the rest of the cloth off and revealed the hilt and pommel to him.

A hand-and-a-half longsword with a simple black leather handle on the hilt was not the thing that shocked Jon, it was the twin dragon heads on the hilt and the giant pear-shaped ruby for a pommel, this was Blackfyre, House Targaryen’s ancestral sword that was believed to have been lost somewhere in Essos, his beliefs were confirmed when Gerion unsheathed the sword and presented him with the same smoky ripples as Brightroar.
“And where in the fuck did you find this?” Jon asked as he still couldn’t believe what he was looking at. “This is Blackfyre isn’t it? I’m not seeing things?”

Gerion nodded “You are correct in your assumptions young Jonathan, this here is indeed the lost sword of the Targaryen’s. This one was even more of a bitch to get hold of but I saw an opportunity and I took it.”

“You didn’t reclaim this one as well did you?” Jon chuckled as he looked back down at Blackfyre, it was simply beautiful.

Gerion’s chuckle sounded nervous to Jon’s ears as he replied, “Ha, about that. Yeah, I did steal THIS one. It’s a funny story actually, you see...”

“I heard rumours that the Golden Company were in possession of it or someone in their ranks was at least, don't tell me you stole from the Golden Company.” Jon interrupted as he looked a Gerion.

“Might have.” Gerion mumbled and shrugged his shoulders.
Jon raised an eyebrow at that, “Do they know it was you who specifically took it?”

“Well they knew it was me who took it but they didn’t know who I actually was sooo, no?”

Jon just shook his head and placed the swords back in the box.

“Did they chase you down?” Jon asked.

Gerion nodded, “They did but I managed to shake them, the lion is never the one to be hunted.”

Jon just rolled his eyes, he found himself doing that a lot when talking to him, “You’re not a lion, you’re a person, your house’s coat of arms just happens to have a lion on it.” Jon explained further, “You come into the world and leave it the same as anybody else, it’s what you do in between your birth and your death that determines who you really are.”

Gerion smiled at him and not the cocky smile he’s normally got plastered on but a smile that looked almost proud, “Well said, you’ll fit in just right around here. If it’s worth anything to you I agree, the name doesn’t make the man but it’s their actions that speak greater volumes of a person’s character.”

Gerion continued, “That reminds me, I didn’t catch your last name when we met.”

“That’s because I never told you” Jon replied. "It’s Snow by the way.” He answered.

“Jon Snow...Jon Snow” Gerion said to himself, “the only Jon Snow I’d ever heard of is Ned Stark’s son.” Gerion mused. He looked at Jon like he was trying to piece a puzzle together.

Jon curtsied to him, “The one and only.” He said with a grin.

Gerion just smiled and shook his head as he slid the box back under his bed.

“I think you and me are gonna get on just fin...what’s that smell?” Gerion asked as he sniffed and pulled a face.
“Sorry, whatever that fish was that we had for lunch is playing a number on my stomach.” Jon answered as he laughed and left the room.

“You dirty bastard!” Gerion shouted as he heard Jon laugh even louder.

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**King Rhaegar**

The King of the Andals, the Rhoynar and the First Men sat at his polished ebony desk as he read through the ravens of the day. More marriage offers for his children more than anything, they would all receive the same response as they have before ‘*The boys are already betrothed and the girls will not be forced into an arranged marriage.*’

The Crown Prince, Aegon Targaryen is a boy of 16 years, short cropped silver-blonde hair, violet almost blue eyes, leanly built and almost the same height as his father. Loved by the masses and adored by girls and women alike due to his *valyrian* features, Egg, as he was more commonly known to family and friends, was shaping up to be an ideal successor of the Crown, taught the ins and outs of politics and history of all the known kingdoms, perfect courtly etiquette when conversing and dealing with Lords and Ladies and humility towards the less fortunate. He would be a fine King.

Aegon had been betrothed at the young age of 12 to Lady Margaery of House Tyrell and would be wedding her later this year.
His daughter, Princess Rhaenys Targaryen is a young woman of 18 years, long dark brown almost black hair similar to her dornish relatives, deep indigo eyes and the same height as her mother. She had the dornish look but also hints of the fair Valyrian features, she was beautiful. Rhae, as she was more commonly known to family and friends, was the perfect mix between dornish wit and Targaryen charm and was often seen around the Red Keep with her cousins, The Sand Snakes, getting into, what they perceived to be, innocent trouble.

Rhaenys was not currently betrothed but didn’t lack suitors, most notably Willas Tyrell, who was often spotted conversing with the Princess when he came to visit his brother Loras, sister Margaery and grandmother Lady Olenna.

His brother, Viserys Targaryen is a man of 22, long silver hair just like his own, pale lilac eyes with hard lines in his face and a height similar to his own. Bitter and cruel due to him believing that HE should be sat on the throne because of their mad father making him heir before he died, Rhaegar has
had to keep an eye on him along with his mother, the Dowager Queen Rhaella Targaryen.

Viserys is currently married to Princess Arianne Martell, resides in Sunspear where his wife lives and loathes the fact that he’s referred to as ‘consort’.

His sister, Princess Daenerys Targaryen is a girl of 14, long silver hair just like his, Viserys’ and their mother, violet eyes with a slender build and height, she is what many people claim as having the classic *Valyrian* looks. Dany, as she was more commonly known to family and friends, is a quiet but confident young woman, enjoys the fine arts and is a bit of a bookworm. She spends a lot of time with the common people, often visiting the orphanage in King’s Landing and has expressed a desire to visit Essos and the Free Cities when she is older.
Daenerys is not betrothed at the moment stating that if and when she marries is completely up to her with her mother fully backing her up on her wishes. She has a long list of suitors who are hoping to change her mind however, most notably Prince Quentyn of House Martell, Lord Joffery of House Baratheon and even Aurane Waters, a bastard of House Velaryon.

Rhaegar thought on about his family members and wished he could have added 2 or more names to that list, more specifically, his 2 lost wolves. He missed her so much, they both did Elia and him, even Arthur missed her despite the fact she did nothing but take the piss with him, Rhaegar chuckled at the memory.

They both regretted not seeing or being able to say goodbye to their daughter, him and Elia every year would visit the newly reconstructed Summerhall where her ashes lay to pay their respects. She’d be 15 now, Lyarra, a name they both agreed on, named after Lyanna’s mother.
He sighed as he rubbed his eyes.

His brother in all but name knocked on his door and popped his head through.

“You have a visitor your grace, Lady Melisandre begs an audience with you.” Arthur announced.

Rhaegar sighed ‘Not this again’, his interest in prophecies and visions died a long time ago.

“Send her in and let's get this over with.” He replied. Arthur nodded with an amused grin on his face.

The woman in question swept into his solar with the grace of a royal and the mystique of a shadow, she bowed low and greeted him.

“Your grace, I thank you for granting me an audience." Lady Melisandre said.

“Not at all, what can I help you with Lady Melisandre?” Rhaegar replied.

“Dark times your grace, the visions in the flames I ha....”

“Oh, not this again, I told you in the main hall that I don’t believe in any of this anymore. I allowed you residency when you claimed that this was a diplomatic visit and that you were a representative of the triarchs of Volantis but I’m starting to realise that might not be true at all.” Rhaegar said, he could see Arthur slowly pulling Dawn out of its scabbard.

“I will relay my information and leave the city straight away, this has to be known by more than just me.” Lady Melisandre explained.

Rhaegar held out a hand to halt Arthur’s actions and replied to the woman “Fine, explain these visions and then leave. Don’t expect me to take whatever you say seriously though.”

“As you wish your grace.” She answered as she bowed her head in reverence.
“A war is brewing between black and white, good and evil, the living and the dead. I don’t know where and I don’t know when but it is coming.” The lady explained.

She continued, “For years I have seen these visions, I have asked the Lord of Light for an answer, time and time again I received no reply but only recently did he answer.”

“He gave me a vision, a vision of ice and fire clashing and creating a light, a white light. A pool of silver, crimson eyes and a winged wolf. A white fire cleansing the enemy. A warrior of salvation, a warrior of death, a warrior to bring the dawn.”

Rhaegar just sat there stone-faced as Lady Melisandre bowed and left the room, he looked up to Arthur who just shrugged his shoulders as he exited after the woman to return to his post.

He went back over what she had said, a war is not what anybody wanted right now, the realm was flourishing and everything was calm. A warrior of salvation, a warrior of death? Gods be good what was all that about.

It didn’t matter though, he’d left this type of thinking behind, prophecies and visions were the devil’s work and he refused to believe any of it anymore.

As much as he wanted to forget everything she had said, one word did stick out to him...

Wolf.

Chapter End Notes

All pics used are from a simple Google image search.

"Aegon Targaryen" - Bradley James
"Rhaenys Targaryen" - Aiysha Hart
"Viserys Targaryen" - Harry Lloyd
"Daenerys Targaryen" - Emilia Clarke

Again, I do not own ASOIAF/Game of Thrones or any of these characters.

And again, if any of the dialogue or Jon's OOCness is something you're not a fan of then I'm sorry to say that it's going to be a recurring theme throughout this fic. This is me
giving you an early out.

Thanks for the comments and kudos, the feedback is most welcome.

Hope you're enjoying it so far.
Roughly a year later...

Jon had only just recently turned 16, Gerion found out, Gerion took him out and Gerion got him royally hammered. It’s the first time he’d been blackout drunk and the morning after was one of the worst things he’d ever experienced, and in the past year he’d experienced a lot of things.

For starters, him and Gerion got on like a house on fire now, they bantered with each other, took the piss out of each other but it wasn’t all just jokes and japes with the pair of them. They both had each other's back as well whether it be in an argument or fight with some stranger or just even the smallest things like cooking for each other, doing little favours here and there.

Gerion wasn’t really a friend to Jon, he was more like an uncle...a mad and annoying uncle but an uncle all the same.

Speaking of Gerion, his ‘uncle’ had managed to get him a job working on the docks so that he could pay his way, it wasn’t really fair leeching food and accommodation without contributing so he asked Gerion if there was any work going around and he managed to be earning coin the very next day.

He spent most of his morning, from dawn to midday, in his lessons with Master Miyamoto and the afternoon on the docks, moving crates and pulling ropes was the main gist of it.

Speaking of Master Miyamoto or Master M as him and Gerion liked to call him, that relationship had
also grown as well, *Master M* was the closest thing to a grandfather that Jon had ever had. The man was a pool of knowledge and it sometimes scared Jon how much *Master M* knew about him, either the man was a brilliant judge of character or he could actually read a person’s mind like an open book.

*Master M* had kept Jon on the right track since day one of his training, at first, he wondered why he was even doing all of this intense training but *Master M* told him or believes he told him if Gerion’s translation was accurate that ‘*every man and woman should strive to be the best version of themselves*’, Jon couldn’t argue with that and the fact that the whole reason for leaving home was to discover himself and improve himself helped with agreeing with the man’s statement.

His lessons were more of a war between him and his own sanity, each lesson was so intense and cut throat that he thought he was actually going to die at points. He would go home battered and bruised, he was sure his bruises had their own bruises it was that bad. Gerion would tell him each night that in the end it would be worth it so he stuck it out.

The *Master* had claimed that he had a natural gift with weaponry whether it be swords, daggers or even the odd weapons that were native to this land, he’d taken to them like a duck to water. He’d also trained with bows but was quick to determine that the bow was something he should avoid, to put it bluntly, he was awful with a bow, that was more *Theon’s* expertise Jon hated to admit.

The *Master* had him doing all sorts of different physical exercises when sparring wasn’t on the agenda for the day, running up and down the mass hill of stairs that led up to the town hall, 50 to 60 times in one sitting at times. Jon had counted the number of stairs due to the fact that he’d ran up them that many times, it was a rough estimate but he guessed around 180 to 200 steps made up the ‘Stairway to Hell’ as he’d had dubbed it.

He’d been tasked with climbing the face of a steep almost sheer cliff that he’d later learned was actually just the base of *Mount Hakusan*, he couldn’t for the life of him even think about climbing the entirety of it and if *Master M* tasked him with doing so, he’d probably tell him where to get off, that was a hard no from him.

One of the more embarrassing exercises he had him doing was chasing the same macaques that he’d seen when he was fresh off the boat. Not only were children also chasing these little arseholes around but he was confident that it was all just a game to these bastards. He’d managed to catch quite a few of them ever since he started but his reward for capturing these wily little things was just an abundance of scratch marks with a few of them pissing on him, 1 or 2 of them had even thrown their own shit at him, knowledge he’d kept away from Gerion.

Not only had his sword skills improved but so too had his more stealth inclined skills, the ones he had learnt to adapt to living under Catelyn Stark’s glare. The skills in question had become quite
handy when it came to pissing Gerion off, the man was adamant he was trying to get rid of him by causing a heart attack whenever he snuck up on him.

Jon would always tell him he couldn’t get rid of him because who on earth would carry on teaching him *nihongo*. He wasn't fluent in the language but he believes he can take part in a cohesive conversation with his *Master* and the natives of the island. Gerion would say that he’s learnt the words well but his northern burr made some of the pronunciations sound ridiculous and hilarious, Jon would always tell him to piss off.

With all the training and lugging around on the docks, Jon would return home at night feeling like a dead, aching weight. This went on for nearly 5 moons but eventually he and his body got used to and adapted to the stresses of the day. The results of it all were shocking to say the least.

Jon would often wake up on a morning and just stare at his reflection in the looking glass, Gerion would jape that he fancied himself, but it wasn’t that, he just wondered what the fuck had happened to the old Jon Snow.

His hair was exactly the same as it had always been, shoulder length raven curls. Although he did try it out in a bun at one point but Gerion just took the piss, always asked him why there was a rat on his head and thus the bun was no more.

His beard was a little bit thicker but still neatly trimmed, something to this day Gerion was jealous of.

No, the thing that shocked Jon the most was his overall physique.

He’d grown a few more inches in the past year and he now had a couple on Gerion, something he would always grin about. Something he would also grin about is his progress with his body in general, a combination of a balanced diet consisting of the right meats, vegetables and fruit with the sheer hard work he’d put into his training with *Master M* and the hard graft when working on the docks has left Jon a wall of solid muscle.

His hard work had paid off and Gerion was always quick to agree stating that he should ‘*Always listen to uncle Gerion, you’ll never go wrong*’. He would always roll his eyes at him whenever he said that but had to agree with him somewhat, if it wasn't for that little push at the beginning, he wasn’t sure how it had have turned out.
Him and Gerion weren't the only ones who appreciated his hard work if the looks he would get in town were anything to go by.

Jon had never really taken much notice of the opposite sex in recent years, he’d always been too lost in his thoughts about this and that or ‘Brooding’ as people like to call it, always too busy to notice the looks.

But 16 year old Jon was a little bit different from the younger Jon. He’d lived away from a repressive society that put the man down whenever it could for over a year now and it had done wonders for his confidence and self-esteem. Gerion had called it body confidence but Jon was pretty sure it was getting away from that shit society that had done it.

Now Jon would find himself doing things he wouldn’t have possibly thought he would do ever, he flirted with girls when he was out and about, actually flirted, Jon Snow did not flirt or at least he didn’t.

Harmless flirting was as far as it went though, the word ‘Bastard’ had somewhat lost its meaning to Jon whilst living here but it was still always in the back of his mind, a niggling reminder of who he was and what he wouldn't wish on somebody, especially a child. Therefore, Jon had come to the conclusion that he’d be saving himself, to Gerion’s amusement.

He was interrupted from his thoughts when a wet cloth slapped across his face.

“The fuck was that for?” He asked as he glared at Gerion who was washing the bowls.

“Stop brooding and help me out with the washing up.” He replied.

Jon got up from where he was sat a went over to help. A comfortable silence took over the room whilst they cleaned up until Gerion side eyed him and nudged his shoulder.

“What’s all that about then? Not seen you brood since Master M told you about the whole ‘destiny for greatness’ thing.”

Jon remembers that day, it happened a few moons ago whilst training with the old man. The praise he received from him because of his progress in training was always welcome, it always justified his hard work but when Master M followed it up by telling him he had a ‘destiny for greatness’ and that
he wants to test him further, Jon felt a sense of foreboding creep up his spine, almost an outer body experience. Just looking into the old man’s eyes made Jon think he knew more than he was letting on.

Jon answered Gerion who had been patiently waiting, “Nah, its nothing. I was just thinking about how much of a difference a year can make that’s all.”

“Ah, so this does have something to do with Master M, he’s been harping on at me about how he thinks you're ready or something along those lines. and I'm guessing he’s mentioned about it to you?”

“I'm ready? Ready for what? He’s mentioned nothing to me.” Jon replied, ‘this better not be about this destiny thing ’ he thought.

“Well I don’t know if you’ve noticed or if it's just the naivety of youth but the town has been preparing for war for months now. Food stockpiled, buildings reinforced, head counts, the Daimyo are not taking anything for granted now that talks with the other islands have completely broken down.” Gerion said and for the first time meeting the man, he looked concerned.

Jon had noticed a lot more movement around town in the recent months but didn't realise that the situation was so dire. As much as Jon acted the confident, silver tongued youth around people, the prospect of war worried him quite a bit. For starters, he's never killed a man before, the prospect of taking hold of another person's life and choosing to end it disturbed Jon somewhat.

He’d talked about this with Gerion and he’d said that the first one is the hardest and that you have to remember that these people are trying to kill you as well, it's you or them. It somewhat helped.

He replied to Gerion, “I've seen the influx of activity in town yes but I still don’t understand what that has to do with me ‘Being ready’.”

Gerion sighed, “He’s grooming you Jon, he...”

“I’m not fucking him.”

“Will you shut the fuck up for once and listen?” Gerion sighed, “He’s grooming you for war, he’s told me that he sees himself in you, he...”
“And he’s not fucking me.”

Gerion just looked at him exasperated, “Can you be serious for once?”

“I’ll try.” He replied.

And so Gerion explained everything to him, on how Master M has been training him to be a Samurai, a highly respected soldier of the field, so that he could fight alongside Master M when the inevitable war arrived. He explained that spies the Daimyo had sent to the other islands have discovered a group calling themselves ‘The Imperial Clan’ and that they’ve been consolidating power by ripping existing clans apart and absorbing whatever numbers they had left into a major powerhouse.

To Jon this sounded just like Aegon the Conqueror if history was anything to go by, but if what the spies were saying were true, it sounded like they were doing it in the most brutal way.

Gerion explained that Hokkaido, the most easterly of the four islands had already fallen to this clan and that the Honshu resistance was already fighting them...and losing. This group was making their way west across the entirety of the four islands, and theirs was next.

“Do we know their motives? It can't all be about wealth and power.” Jon naively suggested.

Gerion just looked at him.

“It's about wealth and power Jon, no two ways about it. Towns and villages and being pillaged for valuables, women are being took for...reasons and children are being trained to fight for them.” Gerion shook his head.

“It’s all being spearheaded by a man claiming to be a god, he’s declared himself Emperor of the four islands and everybody has become an automatic enemy of the state.”

“So, this Emperor is just a tyrant lusting for power, is that what you're saying?” Jon asked.
“That’s exactly what I'm saying.” Gerion sighed, “The Daimyo and Master M have been preparing for this for months but aren't very optimistic. The spies relayed their numbers to us and the Imperial Clan have numbers close to fifty thousand soldiers, the Honshu resistance apparently have twenty thousand soldiers but are fighting a losing battle. When Honshu inevitably falls, the Imperial clan will have numbers close to sixty thousand.”

“Shouldn't we be helping them? Consolidate our troops just like they have.” Jon asked.

Gerion just shook his head, “By the time we have everyone armed, ready and traveling there, Honshu will have fallen and we’d be sitting ducks.”

“Well Kyushu will be the last island to be attacked since they’re the most westerly, we should group up with them and compile a defence strategy. We can't just sit around waiting for the inevitable as you put it.” Jon said, annoyed with Gerion’s defeatist attitude.

“At the end of the day Jon all we can do is fight, it’s a fight none of us think we can win but it’s a fight we have to take on. Nine times out of ten, war is a numbers game, and we don’t come close to having the numbers.”

“How many fighting men does Kyushu have?” Jon asked. He was trying to formulate a plan, maybe some sort of suicide mission was in order.

“Six thousand.” Gerion answered.

“SIX!...And how many do we have?” Jon asked, dreading the answer.

“Three thousand.” Gerion finished.

And now Jon understood why they all thought the fight was over before it had even started.

“Wouldn't it make the most sense then to just accept them as your new rulers for the sake of all these people's lives?” Jon wondered.

“Don't you see Jon, they aren't giving people much of a choice. The people they have recruited into
their clan from these islands haven't joined because they wanted to, they’ve joined because their families are being threatened and held captive. A third of their clan are essentially slave soldiers fighting for their family's wellbeing.”

“How long do they think it will be before they arrive...” Jon asked.

“2 moons, 3 moons tops.” Gerion answered, he’d never seen him this downtrodden, made sense if you thought you were gonna die soon he supposed.

“Gods help us, we need a miracle.” Jon said to him.

“That we do.” He replied “That we do.”

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Ned

Panic struck like a lightning bolt as he read the raven his wife had handed him. Sitting in the godswood under the heart tree was supposed to bring him calm and ease but at the moment, as he broke the Hand of the King’s seal, he felt dread.
‘Do they know?’ He wondered as he unrolled the parchment and laid his eyes on its contents.

Dear Lord Eddard of House Stark,

It has come to our grace, The King’s attention that his most northern kingdom has been somewhat neglected by the crown since the conclusion of the Greyjoy rebellion.

With that in mind, his and her grace, King Rhaegar and Queen Elia, along with Princess Rhaenys and Princess Daenerys will be making the journey north to visit and deal with any grievances that you or your people may have.

By the time you receive this letter, the Royal retinue will be roughly a month away from Winterfell and his grace hopes this amount of time is satisfactory for preparations to be made for their arrival.

His grace looks forward to meeting you again.

Sincerely,

Lord Jon Connington,
Lord of Griffin’s Roost and Hand of the King.

Ned read through the letter two more times to make sure he hadn’t missed anything, any clues to whether or not they knew.

‘His grace looks forward to meeting you again’, Ned thought that sounded a bit ominous if he was being honest, he suspected there was more to this visit than what the contents of the letter suggested.

“What does it say? Is everything alright Ned?” Cat asked, a concerned look on her face.

“The Royal family is going to be visiting us, they’ll be arriving in a moons time.” Ned replied as he skimmed through the letter a third time.

“Did they say what they were travelling so far for?” Catelyn asked, Ned could already see the gears turning.
Ned handed her the letter, “The Hand of the King said that the King and Queen believe they have neglected the north and this visit is a means to fix that.”

Catelyn read through the letter and replied, “It says that the two Princesses will be travelling with them as well. Why would that be?”

“I’m not sure, all I know is that we need to prepare.” He answered, he didn’t like the gleam in her eye when she handed him the letter back.

“I’ll get right on it, first things first, Robb and the boys need new clothes for the visit and the girls need new dresses as well.” Catelyn said as she walked out of the godswood, rattling off tasks that needed to be dealt with.

Ned picked up *Ice* that he was previously sharpening before Catelyn turned up and carried on with his task. The letter and subsequently the reason for his troubled mind completely taking over his thoughts.

*Jon.*

Ned had lost count on how many months it had been since he’d last seen him, if he were to guess he would say a year and a half. Not knowing if he was alright was the worst of it, for all he knew Jon could have died a year ago, something he refused to believe even though it was a genuine possibility.

The majority of the household had somewhat recovered from Jon’s disappearance but to say everything was back to normal would be far from the truth.

The boys missed him, the girls missed him, Jory, Ser Rodrik, Mikken, Gage, they all missed him hell, even the household staff missed him, mainly the maids, something Ned was quite sure he knew the reason why they missed him.

*Arya, gods Arya.*

She has been her mother's worst nightmare ever since Jon left. Something Catelyn likes to blame on
Jon which in turn makes Arya even worse towards her. Sly comments, cold behaviour and a rebellious streak had turned Arya into a force of nature.

It's mainly her mother and Theon who get the worst of it but Sansa receives some of it as well if you count completely disregarding somebody’s existence. Ned knows Sansa is sorry for her attitude towards Jon, she had said so herself but Arya is very reluctant to forgive and forget.

Ned sighed, Catelyn was fighting a losing battle if she thinks she can get Arya to wear any of these new dresses she’s planning on getting, she’d destroy them in front of her mother's eyes if she was forced.

He’d have to have another sit down with her, the last one he’d had with her hadn't gone too well, she’d started to behave somewhat but after a week she’d returned back to her rebellious self again. And Ned didn’t even want to think about the dirty looks he’d received throughout that week from her, it wounded him seeing his little girl look at him like that.

Ned rose to his feet and sheathed Ice, he too had a lot of planning to do, whatever the reason was for the Royal family to be heading their way, he still had to prepare his home for their arrival.

“Let's hope it IS just a visit.” He said to no one in particular.

Gerion

Jon had just left for his shift on the docks which in turn had given him the opportunity to sit down and think about what had just transpired. Jon was now aware of the current situation they were all in and his reaction hadn't surprised him at all.

Even after a year of knowing the lad, Jon was still an enigma to him, he had an unexplainable aura to him. One minute he could be chatting away with him, having a laugh and good naturedly ribbing each other, the next he would end silent and almost melancholy.

And his progress with his training was not something that could be easily ignored either, the boy was a demon with a weapon in his hand. The closest person he could compare Jon to at his age would be his nephew, Jaime. He loved his nephew but if Gerion was being honest, that would be an insult to Jon’s ability. To put it simply, Jon was the most naturally talented fighter he’d ever met,
something *Master Miyamoto* would one hundred percent agree on.

*Master Miyamoto* as of late was being very mysterious when the topic of Jon popped up lately. He knew the old man saw an incredible amount of potential in Jon but only recently has he been more intense with that belief.

Him and *Master M* had a conversation about Jon just yesterday and some of the comments he made painted Jon as being some sort of demigod and the suicidal task he was planning to give to him was just a waste of time...he also didn’t want him to die.

Gerion had to reluctantly admit he’d grown rather fond of the young northerner. The attitude, the banter, the genuine care they had for one another was very familial. He enjoyed his company to put it simply and although he’d never told the lad, he saw Jon as almost like a son.

Jon had talked about his family to him, talked about his brothers so Gerion talked about his, Jon’s opinion of Tywin was identical to his and the line “*He sounds like he needs a hug...that or a ruddy good caning.*” from Jon always made him chuckle.

Jon had also mentioned his father Eddard Stark and how he was one of the factors that made him make the decision to leave home prematurely. Jon didn’t understand and neither could he if he was being honest why Lord Stark would hide the identity of his mother. Jon thinks he’s hiding something that could hurt his image and he was inclined to agree with him.

Gerion was lost in his thoughts until he heard somebody knocking on his front door. A peak through the peep hole confirmed the identity of his visitor, *Master Miyamoto*.

‘*Odd, he never visits unless it's really important.*’

...And an hour later he understood the reason for his visit.

*The Imperial Clan* had sent a small splinter group of roughly ten thousand men to their island, *Shikoku*, in advance of their main group. Scouts had reported back and claimed the group was at most, a fortnight away.

*Master M* had also left clear instructions for Gerion to help prepare the defence of the town and to send Jon to his hall when he returns home from the docks. Gerion wasn’t one hundred percent sure
why he needed to see Jon but he had a funny feeling it had something to do with this final task of his.

His idea was a complete suicide mission, it all rested on Master M’s belief in Jon and in Gerion’s eyes, it was completely insane. Master Miyamoto was rarely wrong but he had a feeling this might be one of those times where he is...and it would cost Jon his life.

‘Master Miyamoto is going to get my friend killed’ Gerion mused, a sinking feeling in his stomach but he had to reluctantly admit, it was the only plan anybody had and was probably the only chance that any of them were going to survive this.

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Jon

The trek back home was a peaceful one, well, apart from the cheeky little monkeys trying nab his wage from his pocket. ‘They would be an absolute nightmare in Kings Landing’ he thought to himself, the image of seeing a perfumed lord running through the streets chasing a monkey as it threw its own making at the man was a rather amusing thought.

As he turned a corner and started his ascent up a set of stairs, his thoughts went back to his and Gerion’s conversation earlier, war. Something unavoidable by all accounts, something Jon was reluctant to be a part of but the fact that this town and subsequently this land had accepted him and allowed him to start a new life here kind of made Jon indebted to these people. At the end of the day, it was the right thing to do, whether or not it got him killed.

He also owed it to Master M, the old man had spent an entire year training Jon, moulding him into the refined fighter he was today. He'd made him work hard for it but the result of all the blood, sweat and tears was definitely worth it in the end.

Though he still wasn’t sure what it was that made Master M look at him like some precious gem, he was Jon Snow, some northern bastard who happened to enjoy sparring like most boys his age, what on earth was so special about me?

Jon huffed, he'll probably find out sooner or later. The old man was getting more and more intense with his ramblings and they always seem to involve him in some sense.
Gerion's house came into view as he finished his climb, he was always appreciative of his hospitality and realised he’d lucked out hard when he first arrived here. Though, he did have plans on finding his own housing after the war...if he survived.

Upon entering the house, he could instantly tell something was up. One look across the room at Gerion's hunched body as he sat at the table, reading what looked to be something important and biting his nails in the process confirmed Jon’s suspicions.

Jon greeted him to break him from his trance.

“Hey up, its busy down at the docks tonight, more boat traffic than normal, has something happened?” He asked as he headed over to the stove to boil some water for his bath.

Gerion looked up from his parchment “There’s been a change of plan, Master Miyamoto came round earlier to explain everything...It's not looking good Jon.”

That halted him in his tracks, “What do you mean a change of plan? What’s happened? Master M never comes round here.”

“The Imperial Clan has sent a splinter group in advance and that group is less than a fortnight away.”

“How many?” Jon asked, brow furrowed in concentration.

Gerion sighed “Our scouts report around ten thousand, a thousand of which are mounted soldiers.”

“Fuck.” Was all Jon could reply to that with.

“Fuck indeed, Master M has got me making the necessary plans for a town defence. We have three thousand fighting men against ten thousand battle hardened soldiers, if we do survive this it won't be without huge casualties.”

“And that’s just fifteen, twenty percent of their total strength. This splinter team will do the damage and even if we do somehow manage to repel them, the main host will arrive and clean up.” Jon
“If we survive, not you.” Gerion replied.

Jon looked back at him in confusion “Eh? What's that supposed to mean?”

Gerion shook his head “Master M has told me to send you to him when you returned from work. He’s got a plan, a stupid and ridiculous plan but a plan all the same.”

“And what does this plan entail?” Jon asked, the secrecy between Gerion and the old man was starting to get on his nerves. “You know, I've seen you and him whispering to each other whenever I'm training.”

“I know what it is he wants you to do but he wants to explain it all to you himself, he thinks you’ll understand what he’s asking of you more if it came from his mouth. Even I can't grasp what his full intentions are.”

Jon sighed, he’d just gotten home “Fine, does he want to see me straight away or am I allowed a bath beforehand, I stink of fish.” Jon asked.

“Just take your bath and head out after, I’ll get dinner going when you leave.” Gerion replied.

“Good man, I shouldn't be too long. What you doing for dinner? Ooo, can you do those noodle things again with the chicken broth? That stuff was delicious.” Jon asked.

“Yeah sure.” Gerion replied as he folded up the parchment he was reading.

“Nice.” Jon replied with a grin, Gerion really was a good cook.

He got cleaned up and left Gerion to it. Whatever it was that Master M wanted to talk to him about, he didn’t want to leave the man waiting.

“Don't give him too much trouble Jon, the man means well even if he does seem to be determined for
you to go through with his unrealistic mission.”

“Ah, you know me Gerry, good as that Lannister gold your family likes to harp on about.” Jon replied with a smirk.

Gerion rolled his eyes “You're right, I do know you, that’s what I'm afraid of.”

“Love you too.” Jon replied as he headed for the front door, “Right, I won't be long, make sure you miss me.” He finished as he left the house, all Jon heard was the faint response of “annoying shit” from inside.

The walk down to Master M’s hall was brisk and in no time at all he was knocking on the old man’s front door.

“Māzigon isse. (Come in)” Was the old man’s response from inside.

‘Odd, why's he speaking in high valyrian?’ Jon wondered.

Since he was using high valyrian he decided to reply back in the same tongue.

“Skoro syt issi ao speaking isse Valyrio Eglie? (Why are you speaking in high valyrian?)” He asked the old man.

“Ao sagon nihongo's daor olvie sŷz se nyke Ŷdra daor gımigon se èngos hen aôha lenton. Iksā daor se mē. very good and I don't know the tongue from your home. You are not the only person Gerion has been teaching language to.)” The old Master finished with a smile.

“Gerion ēza caught nyke bē va everything se ēza iwestretan nyke emā iā kŷvanon. (Gerion has caught me up on everything and has told me you have a plan.)” Jon said.

“Indeed eman. Issa jāre naejot require ao naejot prepare syt aôha journey ahead. (Indeed I have. It is going to require you to prepare for your journey ahead.)” Master Miyamoto replied.

The old man motioned for Jon to follow him, they both walked in silence out on to the backyard of the hall. Master M looked up at him then looked towards Mount Hakusan and pointed up to the peak of it.

Jon just looked at him like he’d gone mad.


“Ao gīmigon skoros's bē konīr yn ao refuse nae jot pāsagon isse ziry. (You know what's up there but you refuse to believe in it.)” The old man mused.

“nyke ĕdra daor pāsagon isse ziry kesrio syt zēha horseshit! (I don't believe in it because its horseshit!)” Jon answered back. ‘Was the man senile?’

Master Miyamoto shook his head “Ziry iksos se mēri ūhoso mirre hen īva kessa botagon bisa purge. Ziry iksos iā ribazmoqitta kūvan the only way any of us will survive this purge. It's a mad plan you're right, but it's the only plan.”

“Nyke pendagon ao sagon putting tolī olvie stock ez’magon ūhah abilities, sesir lo these ra issi real, skoros mazverdagon ao pendagon nyke could harness zirē? (I think you're putting too much stock into my abilities, even if these things are real, what makes you think I could harness them?)” Jon asked. As much as he hated to admit, the old man had a point, nobody else had a plan.

Master M held onto his shoulders and looked right into his soul “Iksē ready syt bisa journey, pāsan isse ao. (You are ready for this journey, I believe in you.)” The old man answered in such a sincere way it nearly made him tear up. ‘He believed in me’, nobody had ever said anything like that to him before. He was finding it hard to say no to the man when he was bestowing that much belief in him.

“Gaomā realise bisa ikśis ribazmoqitta paktot? iksan jāre nae jot jikagon bē konīr, find daoron se return nae jot find se entire lentor isse ūuqir. (You do realise this is mad right? I'm going to go up there, find nothing and return to find the entire town in ashes.)” Jon said.
“Kesā find skoros iksā seeking, sepār pāsagon, ziry iksos mirre emi geptot. (You will find what you are seeking, just believe, it's all we have left.)” The old man answered.

Again, with the belief, Jon had to admit, it was rubbing off on him and it didn’t take him long to come to a decision. Not like he really had much of a choice, if there was a slim chance of this saving the town then he’d do it.

“Okay, nyke'll gaomagon ziry, iksan daar sure skoros iā skoriot iksan jurnegēre yn nyke'll jikagon bē konīr I'll do it, I'm not sure what or where I'm looking but I'll go up there and look, because you believe in me.” Jon said, pride blooming his chest when Master M answered him with a beaming smile.

“Nyke knew ao wouldn't ivestragī īlva ilagon, ao'll sagon successful iksan certain. (I knew you wouldn't let us down, you'll be successful I am certain.)” Master M replied.

The man’s belief in him was approaching dangerous levels and if he wasn’t careful, he could end up with a big head.

The old man motioned to follow him back inside where he took Jon into the armoury and pointed out a large sack.

“Gūrogon bisa, ziry iksos iā bag hen mirre se equipment kesā jorrāelagon skori climbing bona run. (Take this, it's a bag of all the equipment you will need when climbing that thing.)”

Inside the bag was some mini scythe like tools, long, thick rope and a pair of spiked footwear that Jon guessed would be tied around his existing boots for extra grip. ‘Well, this is actually happening then.’

Master M walked over to him and reached up to put his hands on Jon’s shoulders again “Remember, issa bē naejot ao naejot save īlva tegun se kesā daar qringaomagon, gaomag it is up to you to save our land and you will not fail, do you understand?”

“daor pressure. (No pressure.)” Jon replied, trying to lighten the mood a little.

The old man started to shoo Jon out of his hall “sir jikagon, prepare se rest syt se bantis, aōha journey rhaenagon rē ūlī ōños. (Now go, prepare and rest for the night, your journey begins at first light.)”
He bowed to the old man and made his way back home, thoughts and idea’s running through his mind.

Upon entry of the house, he was hit with a delicious aroma, Gerion turned around from his cooking and greeted him.

“Ah, you’re back, that was quick.”

Jon went and placed his bag of equipment down and sat down at the table “Yeah, not much needed to be said really. He told me his plan and I’ve agreed to do it.”

Gerion just looked at him “You agreed? Why? You must realise it's unrealistic to ask you to do such a thing.”

Jon shook his head “He believes in me Gerry, I didn’t have the heart to throw that kind of belief back in his face. Besides, he’s the only person around here who’s got a plan, a mad plan but it's still a plan all the same.”

Gerion finished his cooking and placed a bowl of noodles and broth in front of him and sat down opposite him with his own bowl.

“You do realise there’s a good chance that as soon as you leave it will be the last time we see each other.” Gerion said as he filled his mouth with noodles.

“Aww, I'm gonna miss you too Gerry.” He replied with a smirk, “Don't worry, I’ll be back and this won't be the last time you ever do my cooking for me.”

He just rolled his eyes, “Just be careful alright, I've never been up there or even attempted it but even I can tell there’s numerous dangers to climbing that thing.” Gerion said, looking concerned.

“You need to stop worrying about me and start worrying about those cunts attacking the town.” He said as he filled his mouth full of noodles and broth, it really was quite delicious.
“Yeah, I suppose” Gerion replied, he looked so dejected.

“Hey, cheer up will ya, I'll be up there and back down before you know it and I'll return with a great beast at my back to save the day.” Jon said, trying to lighten the mood even if he didn’t believe anything he’d just said.

Gerion grinned “Only you could make light of the current situation we’re in.”

Jon grinned as he got up to wash up “That’s because the sun shines out my arse. The light that breaks through the darkness.”

“You're foul, do you know that?” Gerion chuckled.

“You love me, don’t deny it.” Jon responded

Gerion just shook his head as he headed to his room. He turned around at the door and spoke “I'm guessing you're leaving at first light?”

“Yeah, Master M told be to prepare provisions and get a good night's rest. I’ll take some rations but I'll have to hunt whilst I'm up there.” Jon replied.

“You’ll be living off nothing but hares up there.” Gerion smiled, he took one last look at Jon and said goodnight.

As soon as he’d finished cleaning up. He headed into his room and all but collapsed on his bed, he was drained.

It didn’t take long for his thoughts to run away from him as his eyes grew heavy and he ultimately fell into a deep sleep.

*Prisms of light flashed in his eyes as he looked left and right, the cavern was huge at first glance.*

*He could feel the earth breathing underneath his feet, a warm draft blowing across his face.*
He could hear the dripping of water hitting an ice blue lake in the middle of the cavern.

“Look for me.” A deep, feminine voice whispered in his left ear. He turned and saw nothing but darkness.

“Look for me friend.” The same voice whispered in his other ear, again nothing but darkness greeted him as he turned towards the voice.

Straight ahead of him he could see pillars of ice or something that looked like ice at least, behind the pillars was a warm light.

“You know where to go, look for me.” The voice came again but this time instead of hearing it, he felt it down to his bones, in his mind, in his soul.

He ventured forward towards the light.
If anybody was wondering, Jon looks like this without the scar and the grey in his beard. - http://vg01.oss-cn-hangzhou.aliyuncs.com/photo/web/161019105946931.jpg

Hope you're enjoying the story so far.

Edit: If people want me to put in Jon's future relationship in the tags next chapter then let me know in the comments.
Ned

“I can see them!” Bran shouted from the top of the battlement walls.

“Get down from there Bran before you fall.” Catelyn chastised.

Bran scurried down the wall and ran off to stand with the rest of the household. As much as Ned worried, he was still impressed with his son’s climbing ability.

“I worry about him sometimes, I worry I’m gonna find him flat on his back, unmoving one day.” Catelyn said to him.

“He’s just excited to see all the knights, he’ll grow out of it Cat.” Ned explained as they both made their way to the courtyard to await their guests.

Ned was dreading this day ever since he read the letter a month ago, a couple of sleepless nights here and there. All the while worrying if the King knew what he’d done and was here to personally deal with him.

Cat was adamant the King was travelling here for different reasons however and the fact that the King was bringing his unwed daughter and sister with him fuelled her speculation.

All the children had new clothes and fresh haircuts but Cat had spent the most time making sure Robb was perfect for the arrival of the Royal procession. She was convinced a betrothal was imminent between Robb and one of the Princesses and the journey all the way up to Winterfell
was the sole reason for their visit.

Ned wasn’t convinced.

He was also quite confident Robb wouldn’t be that interested anyway if the ravens he and Lady Alys had been sending to each other were anything to go by. The pair of them were smitten with each other when Lord Karstark visited three weeks ago. Him and Lord Karstark have kept in touch about a possible betrothal between the two love birds.

That was something Cat wasn’t interested in now that there was a bigger fish to catch and she was confident her son would get his princess.

Him and Cat reached the group lined up to greet the Royals, everybody was there in their best clothes and freshly bathed and groomed, even Arya. The promise of sparring sessions with Jory a great motivator, though by the looks on her face, she was hating every second of it.

The guards raised the main gate and allowed the group in, three mounted knights in Kingsguard armour galloped in first, followed by the King himself on his black stallion, decked out in his black plate, the same armour he’d worn at the trident.

Following the four men was a carriage flanked by Targaryen guards and a Kingsguard on either side. Following up the rear was the rest of the guard.

His family and household kneeled as the King dismounted his horse.

“Rise.” The King proclaimed.

Ned and the rest of the group rose to their feet as he noticed Queen Elia and two younger women exit the carriage along with her, most probably the two Princesses.

“Lord Stark, it’s been too long.” The King said as he shook his hand.

“That it has, Winterfell is yours your grace” Ned replied as he nodded his head.
The King looked to Ned’s right and took in his family “And this must be the family” He looked at Cat, “Lady Stark I presume?”

Catelyn bowed her head “It's an honour your grace.”

He moved on to his children as Queen Elia approached him with the two young ladies in tow. They were both beautiful and Ned could already see Catelyn in the corner of his eye eyeing them up.

Ned placed a kiss on the back of the Queen’s hand as she presented it to him and spoke “It’s good to see you again Lord Stark.”

“The honour is all mine your grace.” Ned replied.

“Allow me to introduce my daughter, Princess Rhaenys.” She said as the young Princess handed him her hand to kiss. “And this is my sister in law, Princess Daenerys.” The Queen finished as the young lady also handed him her hand to kiss.

As the women made their way down the line, he took note of some of the Kingsguard who’d made the journey along with the Royal family. He recognised the Lord Commander, Ser Gerold Hightower, Ser Oswell Whent, Ser Jonothor Darry, Ser Jaime Lannister and last but not least, Ser Arthur Dayne, who, at the moment was looking at him like he wanted to run Ned through with Dawn. ‘He must know, which means Rhaegar knows, I'm a dead man walking.’

Ned collected himself as the King returned to him “Lord Stark, if it wouldn’t be too much trouble, Elia and I would like to visit the crypts to pay our respects.”

He knew that would be one of the first things he’d ask “Of course, your grace, if you would follow me.” He turned to Catelyn “Could you show the Princesses to their rooms.”

“It would be my pleasure” She turned to Robb “Robb, could you help me escort their graces to their rooms.”

“Of course, mother.” As he led the way into the keep.
Ned made his way to the crypts with the King and Queen, Ser Arthur and Ser Oswell standing guard at the door as the three entered in.

The three of them were quiet as they made their way to the one tomb he knew they were there for.

They finally reached her statue and all three stood in silence as they looked at the visage of her likeness.

After a minute, Queen Elia broke that silence.

“It doesn’t look like her.”

“The sculptor had never met Lyanna, this was the best he could come up with from our descriptions of her.” Ned replied. It truly looked nothing like her.

“She’d probably tell us to stop brooding over a lump of rock.” Rhaegar said as Elia chuckled.

“She was truly a breath of fresh air to this dull world.” Elia finished.

“I miss her every day.” Ned said as he looked down in sadness...and shame.

“Like us all Lord Stark, like us all.” Rhaegar replied.

Another silence took over the group as they paid respect to the dead that laid there. The fresh winter rose Ned cut from the glass gardens earlier this morning lay resting in the outstretched hand of Lyanna’s statue that he’d placed there earlier that day.

After a couple of minutes of silence, the King spoke.

“I’m sorry about your son Lord Stark, it’s one of the most difficult things losing a child.”
'Oh god, why did he have to bring that up at this very moment.' He thought.

“I appreciate your condolences your grace but he’s not been found yet so there’s still a chance he’s still alive. He a strong and smart lad, I’m confident he’s out there.” Ned replied, the entire situation feeling surreal right now.

“Hope. It must be a wonderful thing to have that option Lord Stark. We lost most of that the day Lyanna and Lyarra left this world.” Elia replied.

‘Lyarra?’

“Lyarra, your grace?” Ned questioned.

Elia looked at him and smiled “Lyanna’s daughter. She was unnamed so we gave her the name Lyarra, named after her grandmother.” She blinked at him “That is if, of course, you don’t mind? We’ve been calling her that for the past 16 years.”

‘I’m an awful person’ Ned thought.

“Of course, your grace, a beautiful name.” He replied, chest compressing as he felt the deceit burn his throat on the way out.

After a few more minutes of silence, the three of them made their way back out of the crypts. On the way out, he passed Ser Arthur as the man once again shot him a look of disgust.

‘What have I done to deserve that?’ He wondered as the Kingsguard followed the three of them back up to the keep.

The King turned to his wife “Elia my dear, would you check up on the girls to see if they are getting settled in well. I would like a quiet word with Lord Stark in his solar.”

“Of course, my love.” The Queen replied as she bid him a farewell and walked towards the guest
wing, Ser Oswell in tow.

He, the King and Ser Arthur made their way to his solar in comfortable silence, well as comfortable as a man could be whilst having a hole burnt into the back of his head by one of the greatest fighters to ever live.

Him and the King entered the solar as Ser Arthur took his post outside of the door, Ned was actually relieved when he closed the door behind him, he would have to have a word with the man to find out the reason behind the looks. Ser Arthur was giving Arya a run for her money to see who could turn him into dust with just their eyes.

Ned took off his cloak and draped it across the back of his chair, he offered the King some dornish wine from his personal stash and poured them both a goblet each. ‘He would probably need it for what was about to transpire.’

This was it, he knew it, this was the quiet talk with the King he was dreading. He was about to be accused of treason and Ned for the life of him couldn’t challenge the accusation, he was guilty.

Guilty of tearing a child away from his father’s family so he could grow up with his mother’s family, all without the father knowing he existed.

Guilty of neglecting his own household and allowing the resentment to build up so much that said child grew up and left home prematurely...all because Ned didn’t have the balls to tell him about his mother. Because he was scared he would not only lose his son but also lose his family from the fallout.

He was a coward.

He’d have to make sure the King knew that nobody else in the family was aware of the treason he’d been committing for 16 years and that only he should be the one punished.

He placed the goblet of wine in front of the King as he sipped on his on the way to his seat. He took a deep breath as he placed his goblet on the desk and looked at his King. As he was about to talk, the King spoke up before him.

“So, Lord Stark, what has been happening up here in the wild North?”
Ned just let out a breath he didn’t know he was holding.

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**Daenerys**

“Thank you, Lady Stark.” Dany said as Lord Starks wife bowed and left the room.

The room in question she’d be staying in already had a roaring fire when they entered and her belongings had been delivered shortly after they’d arrived at the room.

She sat down on the bed and ran her fingers through the soft fur blankets that laid on top and got lost in her thoughts as she looked into the hearth.

Winterfell seemed nice, in a warm and safe kind of sense. The Starks were nice people although she hadn't missed the look Lady Stark had given her and Rhae, like she was deciding something important.

Dany and Rhae weren't stupid, this had happened countless times. Unwed Royals paying a visit to their vassals, said vassals assuming a betrothal is in the works and ending up poorly disguising their disappointment when nothing transpired.

Lord Robb seemed like a charming boy, thick auburn curls and pretty blue eyes, something any lady would be interested in, especially if those things were attached to the heir to the North.

Unfortunately for him however, her and Rhae had talked numerous times on their perfect kind of man and none of their descriptions matched the heir to Winterfell.

They both had very similar tastes, tastes they seem to share with Rhae’s cousin Arianne, unfortunately for her brother, Viserys. Dark and dangerous were the main two attributes but they also wanted someone with a soft heart and a kindness when it mattered. Somebody they could joke and laugh with and not sit in awkward silence for the rest of their lives.
They also wanted somebody adventurous and not boring, nothing like Rhae’s dullard cousin, Quentyn. They were both Princesses of the realm and they knew what they wanted to Rhaegar’s annoyance.

She was snapped out of her thought process as Rhae knocked and walked into her room.

“So, what do you think of them?” Rhae asked her as she joined Dany on the bed and folded her legs underneath herself.

She got up to start unfolding her clothes out of her trunk “They seem nice, though I did sense a little coldness from the younger girl, Arya I think her name was. She didn’t look at all comfortable with the whole situation.”

“I noticed that as well. I asked Lord Robb if she was okay and he said she’d been like that ever since her older brother disappeared.” Rhae replied as she stretched on the bed like a cat.

“Understandable I suppose, must be really missing him.” She said as unfolded the dress she’d thought about wearing for the feast tonight. “What did you think of Lord Robb by the way?”

Rhae shrugged her shoulders “He’s handsome enough, very courteous but I couldn't really get a good idea of the boy with his mother starring at us like she was waiting for something to happen.”

“I think she might be looking for a bride for her son, with the assumption that the one of the two of us are to be sold off since we travelled all the way here.” She said as she took her boots off and sunk her toes into the warm fur in front of the hearth. “It couldn’t possibly be because we wanted to travel and see more of the world, that would be preposterous.”

Rhae snorted “Your sarcasm is truly inspiring Dany.” She said as she cracked her knuckles, something that went through her something rotten. “Speaking of travel, has father said anything more about that trip to Essos you were planning? I wouldn't mind coming along with you, and Ari, Obara, Nym and Tyene have expressed an interest as well.”

Dany shook her head “I Don't think it's going to happen anytime soon I'm afraid. Rhaegar said Essos is very dangerous place right now, the Golden Company seem to be on a tear at the moment, ripping towns and villages apart, sieging cities. The Dothraki have apparently took offence to some of their actions and have been attacking them, to put it simply Rhae, it’s a warzone at the moment and Rhaegar wants me nowhere near it.” Which was a huge disappointment, Dany had really set her
heart on visiting soon.

“I wonder what's got the *Golden Company* so worked up about. They’re normally quiet unless money is involved. Does father know if they’re funded by anyone?” Rhae asked as she twirled the ends of her hair.

“According to Rhaegar, reports suggest a great insult occurred and they are now trying to remedy it, whatever that means.” She said as Elia walked in.

“What are you two gossiping about?” She said as she joined Rhae and sat on the bed.

“We were talking about Dany’s cancelled trip to Essos, apparently it’s chaos over there at the moment.” Rhae explained.

“Well enough of that, I want to know what you think of our hosts.” Elia replied.

Rhae huffed at her mother’s change of subject “They seem nice enough, the younger daughter seems a little cold but Lord Robb believes she’s missing her older brother who disappeared not long ago.” Rhae answered.

“We talked about that in the crypts with Lord Stark, he believes the boy is still alive wherever he is. You have to admire the hope I suppose.” Elia responded.

Dany could see the melancholy from Elia a mile away, *Lyarra* being the cause most probably. She tried cheering Elia up and also Rhæ who had joined her mother in feeling down.

“Right, who wants to help me pick out a dress for tonight's feast?” She asked.

“Sorry Dany, I’ve not even picked out one for myself yet, but if you want my advice, I’d pick that light blue one you were unfolding just a minute ago.” Rhæ suggested.

“I’ll help you pick out something nice Rhæ, we wouldn’t want you looking anything less than stunning when you enter the feast.” Elia told her daughter.
Rhaenys looked at her mother in suspicion “Why is it so important that I don’t look anything less than stunning? Are you plotting something mother? Because if this has something to do with Robb Stark, I won’t be part of your game.” Rhae huffed.

Elia sighed “Rhaenys listen to me, I want you to be happy, okay, smite a mother down for helping her daughter find that happiness.” Elia shook her head, “You’re getting of an age now where you should be looking for a husband, I’m just trying to help you find him, no pressure. I want what’s best for you...for the both of you.” Elia finished as she looked at her.

Rhaenys hugged Elia and apologized for her outburst, she let go after a time and got up to leave along with her mother.

When Elia reached the door, she turned and looked towards Dany “I’ll send some handmaidens up to help you get ready Dany.” She said as she smiled at her “Rhaenys was right by the way, the light blue dress will be perfect for the feast.” She finished as her and Rhae left the room.

Her dress was picked and the handmaidens had bathed her and groomed her hair ready for the evening feast, two simple braids that met in the middle was sufficient.

As the last of the laces to her dress were tied by her handmaidens, a knock on the door was heard, she asked whoever it was to come in and in stepped a young man.

The man bowed and looked at her, oozing confidence “Your grace, Lady Catelyn has asked me to escort you to the great hall for the feast.”

She wasn’t sure who the man was “My apologies my Lord, I didn’t quite catch your name.” Behind the man, in the hallway, she caught Ser Jaime’s trademark grin.

The man didn’t seem pleased with her not knowing who he was and was hiding his annoyance very poorly but answered her nevertheless “Lord Theon Greyjoy your grace, Heir to the Iron Islands.” He finished with a grin.

‘Ah, the hostage’
She smoothed down her dress and slapped on a fake face of curtesy, one that she’d mastered in
King’s Landing, and looped her arm through his.

“Lead the way Lord Greyjoy.” She said as the pair of them made their way down the corridor
towards the courtyard, Ser Jaime closely following them.

She attempted to make idle chit chat with the Greyjoy boy but in the end, he just tried to charm her
with cocky words and false confidence. The journey to the great hall not being quick enough for her
liking.

She turned to him as he finished his story about defeating a grizzly bear single-handedly “Wow my
Lord, you seem like a very accomplished fighter.” She fluttered her eyelashes for effect, Ser Jaime
coughed to hide his laugh “There must be somebody better than you though, otherwise you would
have blocked it.”

He looked at her in confusion. ‘Too easy’

“Blocked it? What’s that supposed to mean?...your Grace.” The boy replied with annoyance,
remembering who he was talking to at the last second.

“Somebody made a real mess of your nose my Lord, I’m surprised a man, who single-handedly
defeated a grizzly bear, couldn’t block a hit to his face. Of course, it would make total sense if the
creature that made this mess was bigger and more ferocious than a bear, then I would totally
understand. Was it a dragon perhaps?”

At that Ser Jaime didn’t even try to hide his snicker as the boy fumed “No, it was a bastard, caught
me off guard while I wasn’t even looking at him. You could go ask him about it but I’m pretty sure
he’s rotting in a hole somewhere now.” he finished as he dropped her arm and stormed off towards
the feast, leaving her and Ser Jaime chuckling at his retreating back.

“Bit bitter isn’t he.” Ser Jaime commented as he offered his arm to her which she took.

“I was getting bored of his lies the little braggart. The bit about the bear was my breaking point.” She
explained as they crossed the courtyard.

“Well, I imagine somebody in there must know if he’s lying. You could end up really embarrassing
the lad if you really wanted to.” Ser Jaime suggested with a wiggle of his eyebrows.

She pondered the idea “Well, if he acts like an idiot in there, I’ll have to find out won’t I, Lord Robb will probably know if I ask him.” She finished as they entered the hall, warmth and the smell of cooked meats hitting her nose.

Ser Jaime escorted her past the tables, one of them Theon was sitting who was avoiding eye contact with her, and led her to the high table that hers and Lord Starks family were sitting at, she bowed before her brother and said her greetings to the Lord and Lady of Winterfell. A place in-between Lady Sansa and Lady Arya was reserved for her, the latter looking like she’d rather be anywhere else right now.

She greeted them both as she sat down and placed a napkin across her lap. The food was warm and delicious and went down well with her dornish wine. Her favourite was the beef-and-bacon pie with onion gravy, she embarrassed herself when she moaned at the first bite, Lady Sansa looked to her lap grinning and Arya, who she found out detested being called a lady, laughed out loud.

A loud boisterous laugh was heard across the room as she caught site of Theon roaring at something, clearly drunk, whilst Robb was trying to shush him. The men around the table with him were also laughing.

She turned to Lady Sansa “Has he always been like that?” She said as she nodded her head in Theon’s direction.

“Who? Theon? Yeah.” She nodded, “Our brother, Jon put him in his place not long ago but ever since he left, he’s returned back to being the same bragging Theon.”

Arya interrupted “He’s stupid. He’s one of the reasons our brother left home, always reminded him on a daily basis that he was a bastard. Now Theon has a daily reminder of Jon whenever he sees the mess he did to his nose.” She smirked as she flicked a pea at Theon.

The food hit its mark and Theon glared at Arya and then glared at her for a second before turning back to his group, she heard the word “idiot” muttered under his breath and she smirked. Time to have some fun.

She spoke up so Theon’s table could hear her “I’m surprised you didn’t block that pea Lord Greyjoy, if you can vanquish colossal beasts then a tiny vegetable must be child's play to you.”
The table that Theon was sat at grew quiet, so did Theon and Robb with the latter looking confused.

It was Arya who spoke next “Colossal beasts? What are you talking about?” She asked bluntly, not one for pleasantries. The girl was growing on her.

She snuck a look at Theon, whose eyes went wide when he realised what was about to happen. She replied to Arya in a louder voice so that Theon’s table could hear.

“Why, Lord Greyjoy here was regaling me on the way to the feast on how he’d taken down a grizzly bear all on his own. I wasn’t convinced in the slightest but I assumed the Heir to the Iron Islands wouldn’t lie to a princess of the realm so I took his word for it.” She finished with a sip of her wine.

Arya started full belly laughing and even the reserved Lady Sansa started to giggle. She saw Robb looking down with a grin and Theon glaring at her, fully red in the face with embarrassment or anger, she wasn’t quite sure.

Arya spoke up after finishing her laughing fit “The only colossal beast he’s fought is that green-eyed monster.” She carried on chuckling as Theon stood up and stormed out of the hall as the table he was sat at, including Robb, laughed at his retreating figure “He’s stolen that story off my brother.”

She looked at Arya with intrigue “So it was your brother who fought the bear?” She asked as she raised an eyebrow and looked back at Robb who was still laughing with the men at the table.

“Not Robb, Jon. And he did kill the bear himself, he showed me the pelt he skinned, it was huge.” She smiled, a sad smile in Dany’s opinion. “He told us about the fight and how he survived, it was the last story he ever told any of us.” She finished as a lone tear rolled down her cheek. The poor girl looked away to wipe her eyes but Dany had seen it. She really missed her brother a lot.

Her side of the table went quiet after that, both Arya and Sansa looking down after everything that was said. It gave her chance to think about this mysterious boy, no...man. A man who’d survived a bear attack and gained not scars but furs for his troubles. He sounded dangerous this man, this Jon.

She had her material for tonight's bedtime thoughts.
Rhaegar sipped on his wine as Lady Stark finished talking about her son, the woman was obviously a very proud mother and he had to agree that her son did sound like the perfect successor for warden in the north after his father.

She spoke about her other children as well but not as much as her eldest who by the sounds of it, was her favourite.

“Well, Lady Catelyn, it sounds like the North will be in good hands for the foreseeable future. The crown had neglected your land for too long due to the distance and I feared the worst but it seems my fears were misguided and I hope the Crown and the North can be close allies once again.” He finished with a raise of his glass to the matriarch of the family who returned the gesture, a gleam in her eyes as she looked on at her son.

Whilst this was happening, another conversation was taking place between his sister and the two young Stark girls, the youngest of which being hard to look at for him and Elia. Dark brown hair, grey eyes, although Lya’s were lighter, more of a silver than a grey, and an attitude to match made it hard not to envision a young Lyanna when looking at the Stark girl.

Dany was conversing with the girls and overheard Lady Arya talking about her brother, Jon, and a story about a bear. It seemed he wasn’t the only one who overheard as he spotted Lord Stark lowering his gaze from the corner of his eye.

He decided to talk about the situation to Lord Stark.

“Lord Stark, I couldn’t help but overhear the conversation between my sister and your daughters about your son. I assume there hasn’t been any news or sightings of the boy since you ended the search?”

The man visibly gulped, it was clearly hard for Lord Stark to talk about this “There’s been nothing your Grace, it’s been over a year since we stopped the search and nobody has seen or heard anything about him since.” Lord Stark sighed “I just hope he’s alive out there and is doing alright for himself.”

“I’m sure he’s okay Lord Stark, if the story about the bear is anything to go by, he should be able to
take care of himself.” He replied as he placed a comforting hand on the man’s shoulder.

Rhaegar decided to change the topic to something he’d been thinking about for a few months now “I was wondering, Lord Stark, if I may have your ear and opinion about a topic I and the small council have been discussing for a few months now.”

Lord Stark nodded “Go ahead your Grace, you have my ear.”

“Excellent. The subject topic is in relation to the 300th anniversary of Aegon the Conqueror’s crowning next year and how the realm could celebrate this. The majority of the council agree that a tourney, the largest tourney the realm has ever seen, be the perfect way to celebrate this event.”

Lord Stark seemed to sigh in relief for whatever reason and answered “That sounds like a fitting way to celebrate, your Grace.”

He smiled but what he said next was going to be the difficult part “As you know Lord Stark, with the tourney being lauded as the biggest the realm has ever seen, we need to hold this event in the centre of Westeros where everybody can reach it without travelling for months to get there.” He looked at Lord Stark to see if he realised what he was saying, by the looks of it, he did.

“That being said, we were hoping that I and the council have your blessing to hold this tournament at Harrenhall. I know there’s not a lot of fond memories of that place but along with the castle being rebuilt and my father no longer being with us, we were hoping to create some new memories, better memories.”

Lord Stark sighed and nodded his consent “Aye, you have my blessing. You have the right of it, that place needs new memories.”

He nodded and a comfortable silence overtook the pair of them, both of them deep in thought and probably thinking of the same person right now.

As he was contemplating, the tables were moved to the sides of the room for the dancing to commence. Elia had asked him whether or not he’d be playing his harp tonight but he thought the time and place didn’t seem appropriate.
Lord Robb approached his daughter Rhaenys and asked for a dance which she agreed to and Lord Brandon, bless his soul, walked up to Daenerys with bright red cheeks and offered her a dance which his sister kindly accepted. She probably made the young boy’s night.

Many more pairings got up and started dancing, he turned to Lady Stark to offer her a dance but the look on her face as she watched her two sons like a hawk was unsettling. He decided to ask Lady Sansa, who looked a bit put out that she didn’t have a partner.

After dancing with Lady Sansa, then his wife, who had finished her conversation with Lord Stark, Lady Catelyn and finally his sister, Rhaegar called it a night and escorted his wife out the hall to their chambers to end a very taxing day on his soul.

Jon

The arrow pinged off the rock as he missed the hare by an inch.

“Little prick.” He muttered under his breath, not wanting to alert anything in the area.

Not that there was much else in the area other than snow, rocks and...snow.

He’d been on this mountain for roughly a month now, a month since he said his goodbye to Gerion and Master M and told them not to die. Gerion, as always laughing and embracing him in a hug that was unexpected but not at all unwanted.

Master M had been more reserved in his farewell, putting his hands on his shoulders and explaining to him that he needed to stick to the task at hand. Straight to the point, that was Master M’s style.

The Journey to begin with was simple enough, climb, hunt, eat, sleep. But as the weeks went on, the rations ran low, cliffs got steeper and the air got thinner, something Master M had forgot to mention.

He’d nearly died using his spiked boots and picks to climb a formation of rocks, losing one of his said picks in the process. He’d not had to use them since but was dreading it when he did.
Every night, when he set up camp and closed his eyes, he would dream the most lucid dreams he’d ever had. It started the night before his journey began and they’d been getting more and more clearer the higher he climbed. He’d chalked it down to lack of air which in turn was making him delusional.

‘But they felt so real.’

The deep female voice persistently telling him to find them, he didn’t know who “them” was. It would always end up with him roaming around the most vivid looking cave he’d ever seen, blues and purples shining from an unknown source. There was no fire or sunlight to guide his way, only this unexplained light.

The dreams would always end with him walking into a large cavern, lit with the same blues and purples that guided him there. In the centre of the chamber would be a large lake of the clearest blue he’d ever seen and looking up into the ceiling he would always see a large hole that allowed sunlight to beam down into the centre of the water. At that point the whole cavern would fill with a white light, blinding Jon and waking him from his bizarre dream, every night for roughly a month.

And now he was close to the top. He could actually see the top for starters, the clouds had covered the peak of the mountain on his ascent but now he was actually above the clouds, which was mad in itself, he could see the finish and hopefully a reason Master M was so confident in this plan.

At a steady pace, he would make it to the summit in roughly 3 to 4 hours but at the moment he was hungry and in need of something to eat. He had meagre rations left and the hare that had bolted off was the first living thing he’d seen in two days, not even birds were stupid enough to be this high.

Unfortunately for him, the hare wasn’t the only living thing that was in the area with him, the aggressive hissing sound being prime evidence of that.

Stood perched on a formation of rocks to his right was a four-legged animal that he’d never seen before. Its fur was a whitish grey with black spots on its head and neck, Its body stocky and short-legged. Its muzzle, like its legs, was short as well and its eyes were grey, black slitted and completely focused on Jon’s frozen body.
‘Shit’

The beast let out another hiss as it leapt of the rock and slowly walked towards him, belly low to the ground, fur bristled and its haunches up. Primed to end Jon where he stood.

He decided to crouch down to seem less intimidating to the beast, it stopped in its tracks when it got about ten feet away from him and it looked into Jon’s eyes, right into his soul. It was close enough for him to get a better look at it, it was a beautiful creature to say the least.

His eyes reconnected with the beast after admiring it and before it could pounce at him, Jon blacked out.

*He forced his eyes open and felt tension is his legs, he could feel and hear his heart in his chest beating, heavy thumps as he focused on his adversary.*

*Powerful, precise footsteps brought him towards the unmoving target, he was intrigued as he smelt the air around it, a familiar smell.*

*Confusion and fear took hold of his mind, the prey was familiar, recognisable...him.*

*How?*

*He could see himself slumped against the cold ground, limbs collapsed, face looking into the sky.*
I approached and flinched as I took note of my face, more preferably my eyes.

*Milky white staring into the open air.*

*What? Am I dead? Did the beast kill me?*

*I look around for any trace of the creature. Nothing but paw prints in fresh snow.*

*My eyes follow the prints, they lead closer and closer... they’re my paw prints.*

*I gasp and flee as fast as my four legs can take me, trying to shake the pain in my head as I ran.*

*My vision goes black.*

He gasped as he sat up from the cold, damp ground. ‘*What on earth was that?*’

Jon checked his body for any bites or scratches or anything, nothing. ‘*Was that another one of those dreams?*’ He wondered.

No...no it can't have been, the creature’s tracks are there in front of him, clear as day. It was me, I was the creature...or in the creature’s skin, he wasn't sure.

He’d heard of skinchangers, more common with the First Men than the Andals or the Rhoynar. An incredible ability to enter the mind of a creature and control its actions. He’d never met one himself but knew that they existed if the tales of the wildlings beyond the wall were anything to go by.

Him, a skinchanger, was he always this way? Were the dreams he had as a child, running around the woods like a crazed wolf real? Did this have something to do with the dreams he’d been having recently? He wasn’t sure about a lot of things lately.
“Mad.” He muttered as he shook his head and got to his feet.

He needed to reach the top even more now, a subconscious sense of anticipation spiking through him. Something was happening, something that he feared and greeted all the same. He was anxious.

“I’m going mad, it’s happened, it’s finally happened.” He said to himself as he soldiered on forward. “I’m even talking to myself now...yep...definitely mad.”

An hour passed by, an hour of trekking and thinking and an hour closer to the top. He’d hoped to have seen the creature he’d seen earlier again but it seemed it wasn’t to be.

The path he was currently on was incredibly uneven and narrow, to the left of him was the face of the mountain, smooth to the touch which was odd he thought and to his right was a knee-high formation of rocks along the path, acting almost like a wall. Over said wall was nothing but clouds and thin air when he looked over the edge.

“Gods have mercy.” He said out loud as he shimmied across the path, leaning his back against the smooth surface.

He made it half way across and reached an overhanging of ice and snow above his head. It shielded him from the wind that was slowly picking up and allowed him a breather.

Leaning his head back against the wall he looked up at the ice that was sheltering him at the moment, on second glance he noticed it was actually a very odd-looking ice.

‘Where have I seen this before?’

He reached out to touch it but before he did, the wall behind gave way under his weight and he was falling. Smooth rock aiding his decent as he recovered into a slide, the decent getting less steep and evening out, passing more of the odd ice on the way down.

He could somehow see ahead of him without a light source and he noticed a hole approaching.

‘Maybe the ice holds light?’
He reached the hole and prepared to land, if he could, when he passed through. Falling through he noticed the cave he was in as he landed with a huff on his arse.

He just sat there for a moment and looked in awe.

Walls lined with the same odd-looking ice he’d seen on the way down, and his assumptions about the stuff seemed true, it did emit some sort of light. He thought it was safe to say this wasn’t ice, but something more precious and beautiful.

It hit him like a hammer when he realised he’d seen this before, he’d seen this exact cave, in his dreams.

“...It’s real.” He said. Completely baffled.

“Wait...”

‘*If this was real then how much of the rest of his dream was real?’*

“Suppose there’s only one way to find out.” He said to himself as he got to his feet and carried on forward. He touched one of the gems on the wall as he passed by and accidently cut the palm of his hand on its sharp edge.

It was like somebody had reached into his chest and squeezed his lungs as tight as they could. He tore his hand away as quick as he could and tried to suck in all the air in the room to soothe his
burning lungs.

“What...the fuck...was that?” He exclaimed in between gulps of air.

‘Look for me’

He heard that voice from his dreams, talking to him through his mind, it was real, it was all real, his head hurt, it felt like a large rock on his shoulders, wanting to collapse and let the darkness take him. He started closing his eyes to ease the pressure.

‘No, look for me friend’

There it was again, jolting his eyes and mind open. He needed to carry on even if it was just to ease the pressure on his body and soul, a pressure that made him feel like a weapon, a weapon ready to explode...an explosion he wanted.

“I'm going to die, this cave will be my grave.” He muttered.

He walked on, still hearing the voice telling him to look for them, “Look for what?” He said, hoping for an answer, no reply.

After ten minutes of walking he reached an opening in the ground, nowhere else to go but down or back. He’d come too far now to go back and the pressure was subsiding the deeper he went.

“I’m gonna fuckin kill Master M if I ever see him again.” He said as he at the edge of the hole and dropped down, thankfully it wasn’t a big drop.

Raising from his crouch as he’d landed, Jon looked forward and took in the same large cavern that was always present in his dreams. The pressure from his mind and body had completely disappeared as soon as his feet hit the ground.

He slowly walked forward along the path that took him the edge of the crystal clear lake that resided in the middle of the chamber. Light shining in from the hole in the ceiling, exactly like his dream had shown him.
Something that hadn't been present in his dreams however was the large, crystal structure in the middle of the lake.

It was amazing to see.

Bright blues and purples seem to breathe when the light from the ceiling hit it.

He placed his hand in the water to clean his hand that hadn't stopped bleeding since he’d cut it.

It was clear, clean and warm.

‘Warm...why was it warm?’

He watched his blood as it seeped into the clear depths of the water, it looked like it was on a journey with how quick it moved.

It seemed to have a destination as well, the crystal structure in the middle of the lake.

The same structure that was now actually moving, up and down in a slow rhythm.

Breathing.

It was breathing.

Before he could step back, it started to move with more urgency, unravelling like an awakening wolf.

Planes of crystal and flesh spread high and wide from the structure as the ground shook.
Pillars of muscle and power rose from the water.

A colossal whip of strength uncoiled like a snake.

Its thick neck and head rising, teeth razor sharp.

A growl thundered into the silence of the cave from the beast's chest.

Eyes of crystal staring into his soul.

Salvation.

Purpose.

Home.

Chapter End Notes

Hopefully you enjoyed that chapter.

Tags have been updated and hopefully the Relationship tags hasn't put anybody off my story.
Thanks.
Time had stopped.

Silence had overtaken the cavern, not even his breathes could be heard.

He’d stopped breathing.

He slowly released the breath he didn’t know he was holding as his heart went ten to the dozen. Strong, thumping beats reverberating through his entire being. He could feel his pulse all throughout his body, even his eyes.

He blinked to try and clear his vision but there was nothing wrong with it in the first place. Standing there, right in front of him was the most incredible thing he will ever see between now and the day he leaves this world.

From its huge foot, which was easily bigger than Jon himself, to its neck and head, which was outstretched high and proud, it must have stood eighty feet off the ground. From head to tail it easily broke one hundred feet long. Protruding from its back were huge plains of crystal and flesh, spread wide in a clear act of intimidation...which had worked very successfully.

Either something very interesting was going to happen or Jon was dying very soon. He’d faced a bear and survived but this was just not even realistic when formulating a plan. He placed his bag, that had been with him for a month now, on the floor to at least give him a little less weight to carry if this turned into an escape.
‘You won't be dying today child.’

That voice, that deep feminine voice was in his head again as he kept eye contact with the creature. He wasn’t a hundred percent sure what it was but he could have a guess.

‘Why don’t you have a guess, tiny human.’ The voice replied.

‘Wait...can it hear me?’ He wondered as the colossal creature huffed, ‘It huffed!’ and started to move around the cave, flicking water at him with its tail.

‘Yes, I can hear you child. Don’t reveal to me that you’re simple...’ The creature replied.

He was talking to this thing with his mind, it could hear his thoughts, it's probably hearing me think about this...how? How is any of this possible? Was he officially insane? Can you be self-aware of your own insanity?

‘You're going to turn my mind to mush if you don’t calm down.’ The voice said, each word laced with annoyance.

“...You can actually hear me then? I’m not insane?” Jon replied, he was baffled but also very excited. Not only had he found, what he believed to be a dragon but he could converse with it as well, like he would with some bloke down at the docks.

‘Yes, I can hear you...and I’m not some bloke, do not insult me!’ Was its reply.

“Sorry...I didn’t mean to insult you, it's just...all this is just overwhelming, you know.” He answered.

The beast curled its wings back into itself and laid down, not so different to a dog laying down in his opinion.

A deep growl emitted from the dragon’s chest ‘Do not compare me to a lowly mutt, you disrespectful man child.’
“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I forgot you could hear my thoughts somehow. How are you even doing that anyway?” He asked as he carried on staring at the dragon in awe, this impossibly beautiful being.

A noise almost like a cat's purr echoed around the chamber as the dragon puffed out its chest ‘You woke me. The blood in your veins released me from my slumber and now you and I are bonded through body, mind and soul.’

“Bonded? The blood in my veins?” He was confused until he remembered what had happened just recently. “Bonded…like skinchanging?” He did have the blood of the First Men…blood…his hand. He looked down at his cut hand, the bleeding had stopped but the blood that had seeped out into the water had vanished.

“I have the blood of the First Men, we are known for skinchanging…is this what you mean about my blood?”

The dragon looked at him with such intensity he felt in the depths of his soul, in the marrow of his bones, as if it was trying to work him out, its answer clouded in mystery.

‘Perhaps’


Mad.

“What...” He cleared his throat “What does me being bonded with you mean? Am I your pet now?” He asked, trying to make light of the heavy situation by genuinely fearing that he’d be staying here for the foreseeable future.

‘It means that you are mine and I am yours.’

“So... we’re like...married now? Is that what you're saying?” Jon asked befuddled.
‘What is “Married”? ’ The dragon replied. He could sense its confusion, no, he could feel it.

What the fuck is happening?

“It's like err...like a union, a ritually recognised union between two people. Its normally between two people who love each other but the land I'm from have been using it wrong for a long time. For the most part it's a political tool, a sham marriage, one of the numerous reasons that place has gone to shit.” Jon ended, feeling his ire rising towards the end of his explanation.

‘I can feel it you know. I can feel your anger and power. What is the cause of this anger?’

“People.” He answered simply, nine times out of ten they were the cause of his anger.

‘And people are your enemy, and now mine too.’

His eyes widened “NO....no. It's not all people, just some people, select individuals, not everyone.” He tried to defuse the situation before he unleashed death upon everybody.

‘Okay, some people. I can help you with “Some people” if you want?’

Images of Theon Greyjoy fucking launched across a field with the flick of a tail ran through his mind and he couldn't help but look away and suppress a laugh.

‘Yes, I can do that. That IS funny, make the enemy fly.’

‘Oh right, I forgot you could hear my thoughts, didn’t know you could see them as well.’ He mentally said. “It’s okay, sometimes my enemies just need a punch or a speaking to. Killing them is a last resort.” He answered back.

The dragon huffed and stood up, water cascading down its flank and bouncing off the crystals that adorned its flesh creating a rainbow effect.
‘You have woken me from my hibernation and we’ve bonded via your blood offering, tell me why it is you have come here.’

“Because of you...you asked me to come, you told me to look for you in my dreams.” Jon answered, slightly miffed if he was being honest.

‘Yes, I did, but something triggered our shared dreams, an event or a reason for us two to meet. What is that reason? What is the purpose you seek me out...Jon?’

It...She? The dragon’s voice sounded feminine. She called him Jon, she knew his name.

What Purpose...What reason...

‘OH SHIT!...The whole reason he was here in the first place...’

“The people! The people from my town need help, they need saving from the enemy!” He exclaimed. All coming back to him now, the reason he's here for. Gerion and Master M counting on him to make the difference.

‘What is this enemy you speak?’

“A group of people, a large group of people have been ravaging the four islands. They’ve raped and killed many innocents and the town that I'm from is next. I have friends down there that I regard as family and I’ve made this trip, a trip that I was sure was going to be unsuccessful and result in me dying on a mountainside. But I've found you. The answer to all our prayers, the great salvation to end the suffering.” He got down on his knees “I’m begging you, please help me, I can't go back empty handed...they need me...they need us.”

‘I will help you Jon.’ Was the dragon’s calm response.

His eyes went wide “Really!?”

‘Of course. We are bonded now, we are as good as family, and family helps each other, no matter
“Thank you...thank you so much. You have no idea how much I love you right now.” He preached. He’d done it, Master M had been right, and that belief will be well rewarded.

‘On one condition...’

...of course. Nothing in life is free.

‘I stay with you. I am your dragon as you are my human. Only death will break our bond.’

“Okay!” He replied, almost instantly, actually startling the great beast. That wasn’t a condition, that’s was a blessing. Who the fuck wouldn’t want to be best buds with a dragon?

‘Alright then. Shall we go and save your family?’ She asked. Actually, she looked like she couldn’t wait...and neither could Jon.

“Yes, let's do this.” He said as he bounced on the spot and rubbed his hands together. The excitement between the pair was making them both restless, Jon bouncing on his heels...

“I never asked, what's your name?” Jon asked her.

‘I don’t have one. I was born alone and assumed I would die alone. I had no need of a name.” She replied, a deep-rooted sadness churned through his and her mind.

“You need a name...what if I named you since you aren't alone anymore.” He suggested.

‘Thank you, Jon.’ He could feel the joy in her response. He did that, he’d brought joy to this stunning creature.

‘What shall I be called?’ She asked as her tail slid from side to side in the shallow water.
Now THAT’S a question. What do you name a dragon? A dragon you’ve just met but feel such a deep connection to already that they feel like family. Like a sister or a...mother.

“I’ve never known who my mother was but I’ve dreamt about her countless times over the years. In those dreams she’s always been beautiful, the first time a clapped eyes on you I thought the same. Beautiful.” He said as he stared into her eyes.

Her returning gaze was intense.

“I would name you the nihongo word for ‘Beautiful’, Kireina.” He finished, hoping she approved.

Silence filled the air but was broken after a few moments.

‘Thank you’ Was Kireina’s sincere reply.

Her whole demeanour changed with in an instant with her next words ‘Now, let's go save your friends.’

“Right, lets.” Jon agreed but was unsure of the next steps “What...how do we do this then?” He asked.

Kireina lowered her body till she was lying flat in the water ‘Climb on and we’ll fly out of here. We’ll be saving your friends in no time.’

Jon just went with it, trying not to show how excited and terrified he was about doing this. Him, flying a dragon, the world had gone mad. What he’d give to see Lady Catelyn’s face if he ever turned up back at Winterfell with Kireina.

He slowly made his may forward as he spoke “Ookay. Not sure how to do this but I’ll give it a shot.” He grabbed hold of one of the crystals that protruded from her scales and used it to hoist his way up to her back. As soon as he’d touched her, he felt a bolt of energy through his body and mind, and by the jolt in movement of Kireina’s scales, so did she.
He placed himself between two crystals on her back and made himself comfortable. The first thing he noticed was the heat she was emitting, it wasn’t overwhelming but more like the heat of a freshly made bath. It was nice. The second thing however was a little more jarring as she rose up to her full height. The distance from her back to the ground was huge and he had to hold on tight to make sure the light dizziness didn’t make him fall, that would be embarrassing.

‘*I can hear you thinking you know. Everything will be alright, just hold on tight.*’ *Kireina* mentally reassured.

“Sorry, just can't believe any of this is happening that’s all.” Jon replied.

’*We’ll be heading out through there so hold on tight.*’ She told him as she gazed at the huge hole in the ceiling of the cavern.

Jon took a deep breath “Oh, okay. I think I'm reeAAAAHHHHH!” He screamed as they took off through the opening. He hugged the crystal in front of him for dear life and closed his eyes tight shut to help calm his heart that felt like it was jumping up his throat.

‘*Open your eyes, you're missing it.*’ *Kireina* whispered in his mind.

He slowly opened his eyes. He could feel the cold air hitting his body before opening them but when his eyes grew wide at the sight, he knew he was flying. Flying through the clouds as the vapour attacked his face.

No words. No words could describe what he felt, even the air in his lungs had stopped working temporarily. They coasted lower and emerged from the clouds, *Kireina*’s muscles and scales working together underneath him felt surreal, the sheer power he felt was unrivalled. This was probably the closest any man could get to feeling like a god.

He could see the coast from where they were, even this high up, in the gods domain, he could make out his town, *Kōchi*, and it was getting more and more detailed the longer they flew.

“This is amazing! Thank you, thank you so much for sharing this with me!” He shouted over the wind.
'No need to shout, I can hear your thoughts remember, I know how thankful you are. You're welcome.' Came Kireina's response, she sounded so amused and happy.

It took Jon around a month to reach the summit of the colossal mountain he was looking at behind him and at Kireina's Pace, they’d make it home within in the hour.

He wasn’t sure what he was going to be met with, how people would react, how Kireina would react, but one thing was certain.

Nothing would ever be the same again.

Gerion

An arrow flew past his head as he peered over the top of the wall. The walls and gates had been barricaded a few weeks ago, just before the Imperial Clan’s splinter team arrived the very next day.

It had been like this for nearly a month now, hold up behind their walls and in their homes. The clan itself were camped outside the walls, the first few days they’d fought one another, their men versus the clan but it was obvious to everyone that Gerion and the rest of their people had planned perfectly for the defence of the town.

The clan were losing too many men trying to enter the town and seemingly decided to wait it out and besiege them instead. They weren't expecting this much resistance and the main group had been over confident to send a group beforehand, it had backfired and the splinter group was now at a stalemate with them. It didn’t stop them however from trying every siege trick in the book, horns being blown at night to stop the residents of Kōchi from sleeping and various other methods.

Thankfully, they hadn't brought siege weaponry with them so the gates we fairly secure, that however didn’t stop them from trying to scale the walls from time to time, often resulting with a failed entry and a corpse.

They’d also not brought ships, so fish was still being caught by the Kōchi residents in preparation for the main group arriving. Unfortunately, scouts had reported seeing a huge naval fleet sailing down
the east coast of the island and predicted they’d arrive at the docks in a matter of days. So fishing had stopped and all of their boats were preparing a barricade in defence.

The walls were closing in around Kōchi and there wasn’t an escape in sight, an inevitability he’d told Master M before the Imperial Clan had even arrived. The man in question had refused defeat, told Gerion he would not run, not abandon their town, they would defend her for as long as they could and that his plan will work.

His plan.

His death sentence more like. Not only his but everybody else’s...including Jon’s.

_Jon_, thinking of Jon was hard. He’d left the town to journey up that sodding mountain about a month ago now, the youthful enthusiasm and belief in his eyes when he’d told Gerion that he’d be back and not to worry was easily digested on the day of his departure, but four weeks in, it made the pit of his stomach feel weird and an anger towards Master Miyamoto reared its ugly head. The man had essentially sent his friend to go die alone, in the cold, to never be discovered. His body wouldn’t even be buried for god’s sake, probably torn to bits by some unknown predator that lurks up there.

All because he believed in his bat shit crazy plan.

He looked down at the courtyard and saw the man in question, he was instructing a group of young soldiers the formations they needed to use when the true fight inevitably started.

‘How can he be so calm and confident after what he’s done?’ He thought.

Several horns blaring in the distance broke him from his musings, he turned in their direction and his heart sank.

Stood at the peak of a hill in the distance was The Imperial Clan, the rest of The Imperial Clan if his eyes weren’t deceiving him. All of them were geared up to the teeth for war, banners waving in the breeze and an aura of sheer confidence radiating from them as they stood stoically on the crest of a green grass hill.
‘This is it, the beginning of the end.’

A few of the men on the walls were yelling instructions, telling the men to get into position for the inevitable. A small part of Gerion wondered why they were even bothering, looking over to the hill again he saw the sheer numbers the clan had. Rows and rows of men broken into groups of roughly 200, all marching down the hill to claim their prize.

Battering rams and trebuchets crested the hill behind them, completely surrounded by the majority of their mounted soldiers. In total, Gerion guessed roughly fifty thousand men as he stared at the mass of steel and flesh marching towards them.

‘They were more successful with their previous battle than we’d expected.’

And with the fact that a large naval fleet was seen days away, it would seem his assumption was correct.

‘How many men have they fucking got?’ He thought bitterly as he made his way down to Master M to organise the troops. He might not be his biggest fan at the moment but they still had a job to do.

Their soldiers were armed with a pole like weapon with a blade at the end called a Naginata and wore lacquered hardened leather armour pieces that covered their vitals.

*Master Miyamoto* himself had armour on but less pieces, apparently to aid in his movement. Gerion himself had gone for the full set, he was a decent swordsman but nowhere near the level of Master M to have the confidence of wearing less protection, mad fucker.
Before he made it to the bottom of the stairs, he heard another horn go off. The ground started to shake and he was positive they’d begin their charge. He bolted up the stairs, closely followed by Master M, and checked to confirm his thoughts. The wave of soldiers running down the hill had done just that.

Master M was yelling instructions as soon as he realised what was happening, telling men to prepare the wall for defence. Gerion just stood and watched as the clan got closer and closer, watched as their men released arrows into the group. He grabbed a bow himself and joined in.

He released his first arrow, and his second, and then a third. This was all they could do now, they’ll die but they’d sure as hell be taking some of the bastards with them.

He was nocking his fourth arrow when he heard the mutterings and mumbles from his men. He looked up at them to see what the cause of their chattering could have been and then looked out on to the field.

‘What?’

They're retreating...or a better way to describe it would be fleeing if the screams from men and horses a like were anything to go by. Stampedes were occurring, men crushing men, horses bolting straight through their ranks, not caring what or who they ran into. Wheeled battering rams and trebuchets left abandoned to steamroll down the hill into their own troops.

Madness had overtaken The Imperial Clan. Madness or fear based on their actions.

He looked across to Master M to see his take on all of it, the man wasn’t even facing them, he had his back to the whole scene.

‘What in the fuck is going on?!’ He wondered.

A second look at Master M made something else obvious that he’d not seen the first time, the old man was smiling. He looked at the other men, half of them were still looking out on to the field just like he was, but the other half were looking behind them with wide eyes and mouths gaped.
He turned around to look at whatever they were so bothered about instead of the fleeing enemy. “What in seven hells are you cu...”

That’s a big bird...

No...

That’s a fucking dragon!

“When had breathing become so hard?”

That’s a huge fucking dragon...

A dragon...
And it was coming right towards them.

The courtyard underneath them was silent, everybody was staring into the sky with mixed looks of awe and fear. Some were even on their knees, bowing and praying.

Gerion, and by the sounds of it everybody else, held their breath as the impossible beast flew over them. This thing was huge! Easily the size of a few houses. Its wingspan blocked out the sun but he could still see the light bouncing off its scales and what looked to be gems that were embedded in its body.

The draft it caused with its beating wings made a few men fall on their arses, Gerion would have laughed at them if he wasn’t too busy gasping. Something Master M was doing as well as a few men pointed at the back of the creature.

A man was on its back, legs and arms gripped on to one of the protruding spikes on the dragon’s spine. But what made his heart skip a beat was the very noticeable raven curls flowing in the wind atop the man's head.

“Jon...” He breathlessly whispered.

He didn’t get chance to think any more about his friend being alive because the dragon had decided to attack the clan, and it was the most powerful and devastating thing he had ever seen.

An intense beam of white light erupted from the dragon's mouth as it flew over the retreating men, ripping the ground apart and instantly turning the clan’s men into dust. In fact, the light was that intense, it was already causing him a headache. He appreciated it when the beast closed its mouth.

The dragon rose in the air and banked off to the left to come back round for another run. It gave Gerion just enough time to see the utter destruction that had been left. The main thing he noticed was the huge trench that had been left behind from the dragon’s breath, still simmering and smoking. It must have been 20 feet deep, 30 feet wide and went on for at least 200 feet. Inside this trench was nothing but ash, soil and what looked to have been numerous shards of polished rock left in its wake.

All that damage in less than ten seconds, it must have disintegrated a few hundred people into dust in one run.
And it was coming back for another hit.

“Fuck me!” Was all he could say as he watched the destruction of the dragon’s breath from a side view. The light from its breath was so bright, it would be easier looking directly at the sun. Again, it ripped the ground to bits and made people disappear, he could feel the ground rumble from the impact. Gerion would have felt bad for them but they’d brought this on themselves, raiding towns and villages, raping and slaughtering women and children. This quick death they were currently receiving was punishing them lightly in his opinion.

The devastation was evident and The Imperial Clan had been given a bloody nose, in the most brutal way.

The dragon finished its run and landing on the crest of the hill with a massive thump. It raised its head and looked over the other side of the hill, the side none of them could see. It spread its wings and roared its head off at the fleeing soldiers, the noise was insanely loud and he had to cover his ears to avoid pissing himself. It had really shaken his bladder something rotten.

Cheers could be heard all around the town as Master M started yelling in his native tongue. He ran up to Gerion and started bouncing around as he hugged him. He had a big goofy smile on his face as he laughed, to which everybody else on the wall and ultimately the courtyard joined in as well. Gerion couldn’t help laughing along with him, mad fucker.

The town quietened down as they heard the thumps getting louder and louder, Gerion disengaged from the old man and looked over the battlements. The image of a dragon lowering its body to the ground and seeing Jon Snow leaping off the back of it will be something that would be hard to forget. Even more so when Jon walks up to the beast’s head and strokes it like a common housecat.

Hushed whispers were heard when Gerion ordered the main gate to be opened, whilst he was calling out his order the dragon had decided to go for a flight. People were still amazed as it flew over the town and up towards the clouds.

Everyone turned their attention back to the main gate as the man of the hour walked in, longer hair (That looked awfully wild after his little flight), bushy beard that was in dire need of a trim and the biggest shit eating grin Gerion had ever seen on a person. A grin that completely disappeared when men started bowing and kneeling to him.

He looked so uncomfortable as he was motioning them to rise. Him and Master M raced down the
stairs to the courtyard, almost knocking each other over in the process.

The old man was first to Jon as he seemed to squeeze the young man to death with his crushing hug. Gerion was too far away to hear what was being said but by Jon’s laughing reaction, it must have been something mad, it normally is with Master M.

He reached Jon himself and caught him in a bruising hug of his own “You mad fucker, I can’t believe what I have just seen.”

Jon laughed “Did you miss me?” He asked as they broke from their embrace.

“Pretty fucking hard to miss you on the back of that thing!” He jested as Jon laughed again.

He calmed down as his tone changed “I’ll tell you all about it later, but first, I need food and a bath. Then we’ll talk about how to deal with the rest of The Imperial Clan. We spooked them into fleeing but they’ll be back eventually.”

Gerion nodded as him, Jon and Master M made their way up to his house to regroup and plan their next course of action.

“A fucking dragon.” He muttered to himself as he shook his head. Jon and Master M chuckled at him as they headed home.

Rhaenys

The morning after the feast was rough, she’d over indulged on wine throughout the night and the banging headache she had when she woke up was her punishment. That coupled with the chill in the fresh northern air that seeped through the cracks of her chamber window made it a rough awakening that morning.

Stretching her arms above her head and cracking her knuckles was always the first thing she did when she woke up, the loud accompanying yawn would always alert anybody outside that she was awake.
What wasn’t normal was the phlegmy build up in her throat and the sticky remnants of her sleep in the corners of her eyes.

“Urggh, that’s all I need.” She said to no one in particular as she dragged her sorry ass to the bowl of water that was on the vanity and rinsed her face off. She looked up into the looking glass at her reflection.

She huffed “You look as rough as I feel.” She said to herself.

“Charming.” Was the reply from her mother who’d just let herself in, quiet as a mouse she was.

She rolled her eyes, a dull ache bolted through them since she was still half asleep “You can knock you know mother.”

“Mothers don’t knock, would have thought you’d have learnt that by now sweetheart.” Was her mother’s reply.

She rubbed her face again to truly wake herself and searched around her chambers for a handkerchief to blow the death out of her nose.

“Are you alright? You do look a bit...under the weather.” Came her mother's concerned inquiry.

“I’ll be fine, just a bit congested that’s all.” Came her distracted reply as she blew her nose on her newly found handkerchief.

“I’ll send the handmaidens up to run you a hot bath after I’ve had a talk with you.” Elia replied.

Rhaenys strolled back to her bed and wrapped herself up in the furs, her mother joined her and sat at the end of the bed facing her.

“Did you enjoy the feast last night? I saw Dany, she seemed to be having a right old laugh with the two Stark girls.” Her mother asked.
She shrugged her shoulders “Eh, it was alright. I was seated with the three Stark boys so we didn’t have much in common to talk about. Lord Robb was more interested in getting merry with his friend Theon and the two younger ones wanted to talk about the Kingsguard all night.”

She shook her head “And don’t even get me started on Lady Stark. I didn’t appreciate her subtle lecture about the faith and my wine consumption. That wine was my only companion last night and I'm paying for it this morning.”

“Oh Rhae” Elia shook her head “It can’t have been that bad. I saw you and Robb chatting earlier in the night and again when you were dancing. He wasn’t ignoring you, just enjoying himself with his friends that’s all. Don’t look too much into it.” Her mother finished.

“She wasn’t planning on it.” She side eyed her mother, trying to catch her reaction.

Elia spotted this “Don’t look at me like that. Just don’t judge the boy after one night.” She suggested.

Her eyes sharpened at that “I know what you’re doing.” She accused.

“I’m not doing anything.” Her mother replied as she got up and started touching up her hair in the looking glass.

“Don’t lie to me, I know what this is.” Came her heated reply.

Elia sighed “Listen Rhæ, we aren't forcing you into anything but Rhaegar and I are getting worried. We’re getting worried for both you AND Dany. You can’t be alone forever Rhæ, you’ll eventually marry at some point but by the time you realise that, all the good ones your age will have families of their own. You’ll be left with older codgers like Walder Frey to choose from.” They both shuddered.

“Why does he have to be trueborn? Why can't I marry a man who’s made himself instead of getting it given to him? Someone who understands the actual world we live in and not the imaginary one Lords and Ladies live in? Someone who values me because of me and not the title, lands or dowry?” Rhæ explained passionately.
Elia came and sat back down on the bed and shook her head in exasperation “It's not that simple Rhae. You're a royal, a Princess of the realm, the King's daughter. Nothing but trueborn would be acceptable for you and anything less would be viewed as an insult to the trueborn Lords you've previously refused.”

She carried on before Rhae could retort “Just give Robb a chance. Look at your brother, he wasn't too pleased about his arranged marriage at first but look at him now, madly in love with his Lady wife with a babe on the way.” She patted her on the shoulder “Me and your father were an arranged marriage and we love each other very much, I don’t see why it can't happen for you either.” She finished.

Her blood was up and she didn’t think when she replied “Yeah, it only took you kidnapping somebody and sending the seven kingdoms into war for you to get to that point.”

Her mother’s sharp eyes and scowl were on her in an instant, she’d never seen her so angry before.

“I’m sorry mother, I didn’t mea...” She tried to apologise.

Elia put her hand up to cease her apology. She stood up, straightened her dress and left the room with a slam.

“Fuck.” She muttered as she put her face in her hands.

Her head hurt, her throat hurt, she couldn’t breathe through her nose properly and she’d just royally pissed her mother off. The day hadn’t even started yet.

A knock on the door disturbed her inner turmoil as she rose from her bed. She called out to ask who it was and the handmaidens her mother promised responded through the wood of the door.

She replied to them to come in and three young women entered her chambers, one of them carrying a pail of hot water and the other two carrying a copper tub for her bath.

“A hot bath sounds like heaven right about now. Then I need to find mother and apologise.” She mused to herself.
Half an hour had passed by since she’d been cleaned by the handmaidens, they’d left shortly after they’d finished and let Rhae relax in the warm water, eyes closed and warmth surrounding her. It gave her a chance to take her mother’s words into account and actually think about Robb for once.

Rhae had a type. Dark, handsome and dangerous, a bonus if they could make her laugh. It wasn’t really fair to compare Robb to her perfect man but she couldn't help it. He had short auburn curls that were nice enough but they weren’t the long dark curls that she could see in her mind’s eye. His eyes were nice. Deep blue eyes the colour of the ocean, still, it wasn’t the deep browns or the ash grey that her mystery man had. A bit of a shame he’d not inherited his father’s colouring.

He was handsome, she couldn’t deny that but she’d established a few years ago she was a girl who liked a nice beard on a man and there wasn’t an ounce of facial hair on Robb’s face, some ladies would love that but not her. She’d not seen much of his body, he’s probably in shape if the dance they had last night was anything to go by so he had that going for him at least.

At the end of the day, any woman would not be disappointed with being married to Robb, he was handsome, respectful and the heir to a great house. But Rhae could not see herself living up here with him in the future. The cold of the North was already annoying her, she’s half dornish, the heat of the sun was in her veins. She was already looking forward to being south of the neck.

‘I suppose nothing is gonna get done sat in here.’ She thought to herself.

She climbed out of the warm tub and into the cold air of her chambers, darting straight for her robe to keep the heat in. She knew she’d forgotten something when the maids were here.

She padded bare foot to the door and ushered in the handmaidens who had been waiting for her to finish, she asked the last girl to help get the hearth up and running.

The girl’s eyes went wide, it seems she’d forgot as well “O...of course your grace.” She said as she passed the rest of the maids and rushed straight to the hearth.

The rest of the girls clothed her in the thickest wool dress that she owned and placed a light grey fur cloak on her shoulders to finish the look. She was cleaned, changed and warm, now she could function properly and the first thing on the agenda was finding her mother and apologising. Her rumbling stomach would have to wait.

Ser Jonothor was waiting outside for her when she opened the door to let the handmaidens out. She
said her good mornings to the man and they both chatted away as they made their way towards her parent’s bedchambers in search of her mother. As they both turned the corner, they saw Ser Oswell waiting outside of the Royal chambers so it was evident her mother was inside.

She nodded to Ser Oswell as he knocked on the chamber doors and announced her “Princess Rhaenys is here to see you, your grace.”

“Send her in please.” Was the muffled reply from her mother.

‘Here goes nothing.’ She thought to herself. It's not the first time her dornish temper has gotten her into trouble.

She slowly opened the chamber door and crept inside, Ser Jonothor waiting outside alongside his brother in arms.

She looked across the room and saw her mother sat at her vanity brushing her hair “Mother?” She asked in a soft voice.

Elia turned from her looking glass whilst still brushing her hair. It was obvious in an instant to Rhaenys that she’d been crying “Yes darling?” Was her reply.

Rhae walked with purpose to her mother and instantly embraced her in a tight hug “I'm so sorry mother, I didn’t mean any of what I said to you. I was just angry that’s all, you know what I'm like when an argument doesn’t go my way, I go on the defensive and spew nasty comments. I'm truly sorry mother, please forgive me.” She pleaded as her own tears decided to make an appearance.

“Shush sweetheart, I know you didn’t mean it, it just shocked me that’s all.” Her mother cooed as she stroked her hair.

They held each other for a few minutes, letting each other collect themselves into the royals they were and disengaged from their hug. Rhae still wasn’t convinced her mother knew how sincerely sorry she was “I am truly sorry mother, you know that don’t you? I hate falling out with you.”

Elia shook her head “Shush, no more of that now. Yes, I know you're sorry but I'm sorry too. I’m sorry for pressuring you so much with the whole marriage talk. Me and your father are just trying to look out for you and trying to make the best possible future for you because we love you, always.”
She managed to hold back from crying again as she hugged her mother a second time. Maybe she’d been dramatic about the whole situation. Maybe if she spent some time with Robb then her mother would at least appreciate the effort, even if nothing came out of it.

“I’ll see what Lord Robb is up to today, see if he’d like to show me around Winterfell...for you.” She told her mother whose eyes went bright and smile grew on her face.

“That's all I ask sweetheart, thank you.” Elia replied as they hugged again.

“I'm not promising anything.” She mumbled into her mother’s shoulder.

“That's fine. The fact you're trying is enough for me.” Came her reply.

“Love you.” She said, face still in her mother's shoulder.

“Love you too my Rhae of sunshine.” Came Elia’s reply, childhood nickname and all.

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Catelyn

She couldn’t be more pleased with herself if she tried, watching her eldest escort the King’s daughter around their home. Both of them chatting and smiling as her son was no doubt charming the Princess with stories of his childhood as he pointed out different aspects of Winterfell.

They made a rather handsome couple in her opinion, strolling around arm in arm in what would one day be their keep to rule.

She herself was strolling around arm in arm with her beloved. She’d told him she wanted to survey the keep to make sure everything was running smoothly while they had guests under their roof but she’d told a little white lie there, completely innocent she thought. She just wanted to see how her son and future bride got on.
She turned to Ned who himself seemed to be lost in his mind, something she’d noticed quite a lot since the Royal family had arrived “Look at them Ned, don’t they make a lovely couple.” She cooed, pride swelling in her chest when thinking of her eldest son.

It would seem she’d broken Ned out of his thoughts when he replied “Sorry love, you were saying?”

She nodded over towards the young couple, both of them were currently walking towards the glass gardens “I was just saying they make a lovely couple my love.” She finished with a soft smile.

“They do aye, but I wouldn’t be getting too carried away Cat, nothing has been made official yet.” Ned answered.

She tutted and softly slapped his shoulder “It’s good as, my dear. Just look at them both, it's an ideal match, not only do they look good together but the marriage would unite four great houses. It’s a no brainer.” She smiled as she looked off into the distance “It would also help explain why the King came all this way with his unwed daughter, I for one don’t believe he came here just for a visit.”

Ned shook his head at her “The King came here to visit his wife’s resting place and get the North’s situation in order. His Master of whispers, Lord Varys has heard some disturbing reports that I’ve neglected to hear myself.”

This was the first she’d heard of The King and her husband's little one on one meeting yesterday “Disturbing reports? What have they heard?” She asked as the pair of them walked under an archway towards the glass gardens.

Ned sighed “Lord Varys has apparently heard several reports of murders being carried out between Hornwood and the Dreadfort. Reports also indicate that one Ramsey Snow, Lord Bolton’s natural son is behind the killings.”

She shook her head “How dreadful. Have you heard anything from Lord Bolton yourself? The fact that it’s his bastard and not his heir Lord Domeric is not the surprise but what is, is that we’ve not heard anything ourselves.”

Ned dropped her arm. ‘*Here we go, defending the bastard again.*’ She thought.
“It’s not good enough for you is it? It’s not good enough that he’s gone, been gone for over a year now. You still have to pull him down, constantly belittling him. I’m starting to grow tired of it now.” Ned harshly whispered to her.

She wasn’t having it though, his devil born whelp was gone and not soon enough in her eyes. “You know this could have all been avoided if you hadn't spread some cheap tavern wench’s legs and bestowed the poisoned fruit of that act on our family. But no, you had to bring him into our home, the constant reminder that my husband preferred the bed of a whore to his own wife’s. You Lord Stark are more to blame in this situation than I ever was.” She heatedly replied as a few workers around the courtyard started sneaking looks at them.

With a huff, her husband turned around and headed back towards the great keep, people moving out of his way to avoid his cold anger. She was in the right she knew. Bastards were the spawn of lust, greed and treachery, the fact that a bastard had been running around murdering people is evidence of that. She was well within her right to reinforce her beliefs to Ned but the fact that he’d tried to pin blame on her had really hurt.

With a huff she picked up her skirts and headed towards the glass gardens to see how her son was getting on. If she was honest with herself, she wouldn’t be too angry if she caught the pair in an embrace of sorts. This would just help the whole situation out if they were already amiable with each other, it took nearly a year for her and Ned to get to that stage. No thanks to the bastard like.

Approaching the glass gardens, she noticed a Kingsguard waiting at the open door to the inside, obviously keeping an eye on the lovebirds. She didn't want to disturb them but she still sneaked a look through the glass before leaving.

Robb and Princess Rhaenys were both sat on a box near the entrance to the gardens themselves. Robb had a piece of parchment and charcoal and was scribbling something down that she couldn’t see herself, Princess Rhaenys was talking to him but that was inaudible. But from the smiles they were sending to each other and at one point, laughter, she was quite confident her son would be getting the Princess he deserved.

‘Just a matter of convincing the King now.’

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed that chapter :)

Next chapter will be a bumper chapter and be the last in Act 1, Jon’s making moves...
I'm breaking the story down into Acts to help me with structuring, Chapters will be still coming regularly.
The Conclusion of Madness

Chapter Notes

Phew, that was pain to write.

Long chapter ahead, just a heads up. At 9k words I was contemplating splitting it into two chapters but I couldn't find a realistic place to break it in two...I did also promise a bumper chapter for the last chapter in the Act so....yeah.

I fully understand if 18k words as opposed to the 7-8k words I normally write per chapter is a bit of a commitment and again, I apologise for this brick of a chapter I've just dropped on your lap lol

Like always, Hope you enjoy :) 

Pic source - Google Image Search
Google Translate used for some portions of the dialogue.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jon

Jon woke up with a gasp, startled by what he’d been dreaming of, or what most people would interpret as dreaming. Recent events would prove otherwise to Jon and he would be more inclined to believe he was warging. And not into some common wild animal no, into a dragon, into Kireina.

When he first experienced flight on the back of a dragon he believed that that was what gods must feel like. Then Kireina had gone one further and shown the sheer power she possessed by ending the existence of a few hundred people in a matter of seconds. Master M’s lessons about survival and ‘kill or be killed when it came to war’ were the only things that were keeping him from feeling bad for those people. In a sense, using Kireina felt like cheating, the sheer destruction she caused was almost haunting. But at the end of the day, this was war and those few hundred people dying sent a message and saved a few thousand people’s lives. ‘We made the best of a shitty situation.’ He thought to himself.

The true power wasn’t on dragon back or witnessing total annihilation no, the true feeling of power was looking, feeling, being inside the body and mind of the dragon itself. That was the true power...and it was overwhelming as fuck.

He rubbed his eyes and bolted up out of bed before he got too comfortable. It wouldn’t do well sleeping through a war. He’d gotten back home with Gerion and Master M with the full intention of
planning out the war since they’d just received a massive advantage in the form of, as Gerion had put it, a great fuck off monster of a thing.

The first thing Jon had done when he entered the house was make himself a bath. The many layers that he’d been wearing for a month peeled off his body in almost one solid piece and the smell that was cocooned underneath was off putting to say the least. The warm bath accompanied by a bowl of Gerion’s special noodles had sort him out wonders and whilst sat at the table looking over maps and battle plans with Gerry and Master M, he’d completely dozed off only to find himself in his bed the very next morning.

‘Aww, they must have carried my fat arse to bed. They are good to me.’ He thought fondly.

He rinsed his face, put on some fresh clean clothes and wandered out of his room. He followed his nose to the kitchen where Gerion was cooking something that made his stomach grumble. His shuffling feet alerted Gerion of his presence and he received a beaming smile from the man, one he tried to return but he was just completely out of it this early in the morning.

“Good morning sleeping beauty, eggs are on the way.” Gerion said as he turned from his cooking. “You feeling better now? You must have needed that sleep, you’ve been out for like 12 or 13 hours. Me and the old man had to carry your sorry ass to bed HA.”

“Yeah, feel much better. Back to my grumpy old self on a morning so nothing to worry about.” He said as they both sat at the table.

Gerion slid across a little small pot towards him “Have a go of that. That'll wake you up.”

Inside was a clear liquid not too different from water “What is it?” He asked him as he looked at the drink with suspicion.

“Just try it. I promise you it will help. One of Master M’s creations.” Gerion said as he smirked

“I don’t trust you. You’ve done something to this, I can tell.” He replied.

“Just down it...or don’t. I was trying to help you, it's not me who always feels like shit on a morning.” Gerion replied as he went back to his eggs.
“No, you just look like it, and then for the rest of the day until you go to bed at night. The world is a cruel one Gerry, I’ll give you that.” He replied as he successfully dodged a bit of scrambled egg that was thrown at him.

“Cheeky shit. That’s the gratitude I get for making you breakfast. Drink the drink and stop being a whiny bitch.” Gerion replied, grinning as Jon eventually picked up the little pot and down the entire thing.

“URGHHH!” He started coughing to help relieve the intense burn in his throat “WHAT....WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT!?" He looked around the kitchen for anything to take the burn away whilst Gerion was laughing his ass off. “No seriously...my throat is on fire you dick.”

Gerion handed him a mug “Drink that.” He said as he was still chuckling at Jon’s suffering.

He took the mug and looked in it “This better be water or I’m hurting you.” He drank the, thankfully, cold water like a madman. It helped a bit but his throat still somewhat burned. “ Seriously, you could strip paint with that. What the fuck is it?” He asked as he eventually collected himself. It was too early for this sort of shit.

“Like I said, one of Master M’s concoctions. He calls it rice wine, I call it Fire water.” Gerion replied as he placed a plate of eggs on each side of the table.

“I don’t care what you call it, keep it away from me.” He replied as he sat back down. “Why would you do that? Why do you hate me so?” He asked as he shovelled a fork full of eggs into his mouth.

“I told you it’d wake you up, that’s why. You running around my kitchen like a stabbed rat was evidence of that.” Gerion said with a chuckle.

“Dick.” He replied with a mouthful of egg. The rest of the breakfast was spent talking about the actual war they were currently in the middle of. Gerion had told him that The Imperial Clan’s naval fleet was spotted by a fishing boat that was being used for scouting and they guessed they were 2 or 3 days away from here...that was 2 days ago.

“That’s when they’ll attack again, when the navy is attacking from the sea. And since Kōchi doesn’t really have a naval force, me and Kireima are gonna have to sort them out ourselves.” Jon explained. Not only would it stop them from being attacked on two fronts but it would also prevent The
Clan’s fleet from skipping us and going straight for the furthest away island, Kyushu instead.

One of Gerion’s eyebrows rose “Kireina? That the name of your new best friend?” He joked but Jon could see he was very interested in talking about the dragon, who wouldn’t.

He nodded “Aye. When I found her, she told me she didn’t have a name so she allowed me the honour of naming her. I think the name is fitting, don’t you?”

Gerion’s face morphed into a look of confusion “She told you? How? Does she talk like us?”

‘Ah shit, let that one slip. How does he explain this to him without sounding mad?’ He wondered.

He cleared his throat and sat up to explain “Have you ever heard of skinchangers?” He asked.

Gerion’s eyes went wide “Like the wildlings?”

“Yes, like the wildlings. Since I’ve got the blood of the first men running through me there was always a small chance I could become a warg. And since I’ve got Stark blood, the chances were multiplied.” He finished. He looked at Gerion who shook his head in confusion “You know, with the whole Warg King story and House Stark taking his daughters as prizes. Our blood has plenty of that skinchanger magic.” He explained further.

“So, the magic in your blood allowed you to talk with this dragon, and she told you this?” Gerion asked.

“I asked her and she just said “Perhaps.”. I can't think of anything else that it could be though. The fact that I actually dreamt of her for a straight month and then discovered on the way up there that I was actually in fact a warg brought me to that conclusion.” He answered.

Gerion looked at him weird but accepted his response “So let's get back to the plan, you want to fly out to sea and fight all these ships on your own? Even with all the ballistae they have on deck, which for a fact I know they have from the scout reports we received.”

Jon didn’t know about the ballistae. But they didn’t really have any other plans or
options. *Kireina’s* entrance into the war was a gamechanger, but they had to use her efficiently if they wanted to come out the other end alive. His plan was high risk high reward and it had his name written all over it.

“I wasn’t aware of the ballistae but we should manage, I think, I hope.” Gerion didn’t look convinced “Listen, it’s the best plan we’ve got, its one big thing less to worry about. The town recollects themselves and prepares for another siege against *The Clan’s* ground forces. Yes, it’ll be more than the ten thousand you had to defend against before but the fear of a dragon appearing will make them skittish and less confident. They’ll be reluctant to over commit.” He explained. “While this is happening, me and *Kireina* will be smashing their fleet and as soon as I’ve dealt with them, we’ll fly back and incapacitate their ground troops. I would suggest seeking out this self-proclaimed *Emperor* but by the sounds of it he hasn’t made an appearance at all.”

Gerion shook his head “No, he hasn’t. He’s done a good job at protecting himself by staying elusive. He knows if he gets captured or killed then his little conquest of greed will have been for nothing.” He sighed “I just wish we could have a talk with him to understand his motives, it can’t all just be for greed.”

“Well, if I manage to find him, he won't get the chance to explain himself. He doesn’t deserve that luxury for what he's done and I’d rather just cut the cruel fuckers head off there and then.” He answered with conviction. The fucker had to die, no two ways about it.

Gerion sighed as he looked at him “I've only just got you back and now you're leaving again.” He said “I know I've said you're annoying quite a few times in the past but the place doesn’t feel the same without you around.” He finished. No smirk, no grin, just total sincerity.

Jon couldn’t take the piss out of him with how sincere and hard that looked for him to say. Nobody in Winterfell had ever said anything like that to him, except maybe Arya. Still, he appreciated it all the same. “Cheers Gerry, you’d be surprised how much that means to me.” He said as he stood up and cleared the plates to wash up.

Deciding that they needed to get a move on, him and Gerion left the house to go and meet up with *Master M* to tell him of their plan. On the way down to his hall, Jon side eyed Gerion and noticed the man deep in thought, brow furrowed and staring at the ground while they were walking. At one point they made eye contact, Gerion looked like he’d been caught red handed and promptly looked away.

“Spit it out.” He told him as they sidestepped a cart being dragged up the road.
“Spit what out?” Gerion looked surprised but Jon wasn’t buying it.

“You’ve been quiet ever since we left the house. Along the way you’ve done nothing but brood whilst eyeing me up. If somethings the matter, I need to know about it before I leave.” He explained.

Gerion sighed “It's nothing, just silly old me letting my thoughts run away from me that’s all.”

Jon gave him a look that said he wasn’t convinced and just stared at him until he gave him an actual answer.

Gerion’s shoulders seemed deflate as he finally crumbled under Jon’s unblinking stare “Okay okay...god’s I thought Tywin’s scowl was intense.” He said as he shook his head “You told me up at home that you had skinchanger magic from your Stark blood, correct?” He asked.

“Yeah. From the Warg King’s daughters, what's your point?” He replied.

“So, your Stark blood is only one half of your heritage, from that you get the skinchanging and the brooding right. As you’ve said in the past, you are unaware of your mother's side of the family so...now hang on a minute.” He said as he noticed that Jon was about to speak up. “Let me finish without ripping my head off, please?”

Jon reluctantly nodded, not caring very much about this topic of conversation.

“Okay, thank you. As I was saying, you aren't aware of your mother's side of the family so we don’t know what kind of properties her blood has that she passed down to you.” Gerion looked at him “Jon...you met a dragon and was riding it within an hour of meeting it. When you unmounted it, you walked up to its face and started stroking it like a cat...that's not normal.” He strongly suggested.

Jon was getting tired of this and started to up his pace, trying to get to the Master's hall so that he’d shut up.

“I don’t know what you want me to tell you. I don’t know who she is, whether she’s dead or alive or anything.” He huffed “If you want to know more about her go and ask Lord Stark. He's the one who deemed me unworthy of knowing something so basic in a person's life, take it up with him.” he finished.
Gerion grabbed hold of his shoulder to slow him down “I'm trying to help you, you clod. Answer this question for me, who was known for having a connection with dragons hmm?” He asked, one eyebrow raised.

Jon just looked at him funny “Targaryens.” he scoffed “Don't stand there and suggest I've got Targaryen blood, I know Master M is going mad from old age but I thought you had a few years left at least.” He smirked as he started to walk again but then turned around “As a matter of fact, she can’t have been a Targaryen. There were only two females in the Targaryen line when I was born, one was already pregnant with Princess Daenerys and the other was Princess Rhaenys who was three years old. HA, logicked.” He finished with a proud smirk.

Gerion just looked at him “And what type of blood do the Targaryen’s have?” He didn't give Jon a chance to answer as he furthered his point “Valyrian. I suspect that there's a drop of Valyrian in your blood, not necessarily from House Targaryen.” He said.

Jon went quiet as they carried on walking to their destination, head full of thoughts. Gerion had annoyed him with that conversation but he also did have a point, he had bonded quite quickly with Kireina. He just assumed it was the skinchanger magic that was in his blood but Kireina’s vague reply as to how he’d bonded with her made him not so sure anymore. He would have to have a little chat with her later.

The pair of them made it to Master M’s hall after that rather heavy conversation on the way down but were pushed out by the old man and his trusty stick before they even walked in “Ah ah, no. Both of you, follow me.” Master M said to them and to Jon’s surprise, in the common tongue as well.

He looked at Gerion who looked down and smirked “Master M?! You speak the common tongue now?” He asked as he tried to keep up with the old man who looked like a man on a mission.

He looked over his shoulder at him and grinned a toothy grin “Not only one who can learn new language, cunt.” The old man replied to Jon’s horror.

He looked at Gerion who was trying his absolute best not to burst out laughing “Why did you teach him that?!” Jon asked, absolutely horrified “You can't have him roaming around, effing and jeffing all up the place, it's wrong.” He finished.

Gerion shook his head “It’s not swearing to him.” Jon looked at him for clarification “I may or may not have told him the word for friend in our language is cunt.” He said as he laughed “You don’t
want to know what I told him what the word for sword is.”

Jon thought it was somewhat wrong to mislead someone like that but if he was being honest, it was kinda funny in a twisted way.

He kept pace behind Master M and noticed where they were heading to. His eyes went wide as he turned and grinned at Gerion “Taught him the word for sword, did ya?” He turned back and nodded towards the sign for the weaponsmith’s shop as Gerion bit his bottom lip, realising where they were heading “Think I'm gonna find out that word, don’t you? Gods help me.” He finished as they entered the shop after Master M.

The old man was already conversing with the swordsmith when they entered, thankfully in their native tongue. He looked at Gerion who was doing a decent job at keeping a straight face but he could see the humour in his eyes. This was gonna be hard to get through without making a scene.

Master M turned around and spoke to him as the swordsmith went out back “My cunt, Gorō has gone out into back to bring gift from me to you.” He said, still using the wrong word for ‘friend’. Gerion coughed.

He was too busy holding in the laughter that it took him longer than normal to register the words “Gift? For me? What for?”

Gorō, the swordsmith returned with two Katanas, each sheathed in their own individual scabbard or Saya as they are more commonly known on these islands. Jon had been taught everything when it came to these native weapons and he’d absorbed all that knowledge like a sponge.

The sayas themselves were made from a lightweight wood native to the island, painted a pure black and coated with a lacquer to give it a glossed finish. Two black silk ribbons tied to them to finish the look.

The hilt or the Tsuka as they are known around here was finished with a black silk similar to the ones tied to the saya and the guard or Tsuba was square in shape and seemed to have a freshly crafted impression of a dragon on each of the two swords.

Master M picked up one of the blades and unsheathed it, the sound of it almost eerie. Jon noticed instantly the difference between the normal steel he’d been using and the sword that was in front of him right now. He’d seen a few of these around Gorō’s shop but he never imagined he’d have his
own. Jon looked in awe at the immaculate steel, a steel the shade of a midnight sky.

*Dragonsteel.*

Jon didn’t know what to say as *Master M* handed him the hilt of the *Katana*. The balance, the weight, even the grip was perfect in his right hand. Looking up closely, he could see how truly brilliant the steel really was, freshly oiled and deathly sharp. He was so enraptured with the blade, that the sound of the other *Katana* being unsheathed was rather jarring to say the least.

*Master M* held it out for him to grab with his left hand and again, perfect weight, balance and grip. Freshly oiled just like its twin. He stood back as he gave them a test, a couple of spins and twirls, a flurry of slicing motions. They truly were magnificent, the lightweight steel allowing him to speed up his already rapid movements. Everyone had backed away as he lacerated the air around him, Gerion had his arms crossed and was looking at the floor with a grin, *Master M* had his chin high as he looked on with pride and *Gorô* was just open mouthed in awe.

“Alright alright show-off, sheath the blades and give the old man a hug.” Gerion said as he walked back towards Jon.

He promptly stopped his fluid movements and sheathed the precious swords. Nobody had ever gifted him something so precious before so he wasn’t sure how to react, so to hide the fact that he could feel the moisture building under his eyes he strode over to *Master M* and brought him into a crushing hug.

“Thank you...thank you so much. I don’t know what I did to deserve this.” Jon muttered into the old
Master M placed his hands on Jon’s shoulders and eased him back “You do deserve it. I believed in you. I believed you would save us all and you did. You have earned the right to wield Dragonsteel Jon. You deserve it.” The wise old man said determinedly.

Jon wiped the tears from his eyes as he grabbed the two swords and the black leather sword belt that held each Katana on each side of his hips. He thanked and bowed to Gorō for his incredible work and followed Gerion and Master M out of the shop.

He spoke up behind the pair “Thank you again Master M, truly.”

“Again Jon, you are welcome. You truly have earned those flaps.” Master M replied.

Out the corner of his eye he saw Gerion turn his back on them as his back subtly shook.

“Flaps?” He asked but he was pretty sure he knew what had happened here.

The old man pointed at the swords “Flaps. Katana’s.” He tried to explain.

He didn’t want to ruin a nice moment with the man and decided to just play along. He’d be thumping Gerion the next chance he gets “Ahh, flaps. I see.”

The nod and smile from the man was worth the play acting. Gerion was nowhere near them now but he could still see him trying not to burst out with laughter.

All of a sudden, he felt a tingling in the back of his mind, almost as if somebody had just opened a door and let themselves in. A presence, a strong one. Kireina.

‘It's time.’ Was all she said.

Screams and shouts could be heard further into town, near the docks, and the reason why was flying out from sea towards them. Specifically, towards him.
‘Land in the town square Kireina. In the middle, I’ll meet you there.’ He communicated to her through their bond.

‘Hurry up, we don’t have long.’ Was her curt reply.

He strapped his brand-new blades to his sword belt and tied it around his waist. He wasn’t wearing any plate but he still had his black boiled leathers on so that would have to do. He doubted it would matter really since it’d be mostly Kireina doing all the work but you never know.

He turned to Gerion as he finished fastening his belt, all serious talk now “She’s here Gerry. She’s gonna land in the town square where there’s room for her. You’re gonna have to fill Master M in with the plan.” He finished as he gave them both a quick hug and sprinted off into town.

He could see Kireina trying to land as soft as possible to not spook the locals and by the small crowd that had gathered on the outskirts of the square, she’d succeeded somewhat. A shame about the small fountain that was crushed underfoot as she landed though.

‘Quick, get on. We need to leave now.’ She said as he climbed up the flank of her lowered body, protruding crystals providing ample leverage. This would never get old.

He got himself seated and took a little peak at the small crowd, most of them looking at the pair of them like ethereal beings. Jon would like to think of himself as being a somewhat humble man but the attention felt nice. It was nice to feel wanted, to feel needed for a change.

Before he could dwell any deeper on his thoughts, Kireina was stretching her hind legs and back into the sky and scooping up masses of air into her wings, propelling them skyward and hopefully not to their watery graves.

Robb

His parents were acting odd.
His father was being rather quiet and his mother was...well, his mother looked and acted like she was on a mission, and he seemed to be involved in it. He’d not missed it when he saw his parents subtly following him and Rhaenys this morning and he’d definitely not missed seeing his mother peeking through the glass garden windows at him.

He also didn’t miss the disturbing smile she wore as she edged away from the window. He’d never once thought he’d associate the words mother and disturbing in his life but for the first time, he’d managed it.

He wasn’t naïve, she was obviously up to something. He wasn’t sure if his father was in on it but he knew his mother was very much the spearhead of this game they were playing. He had his predictions on whatever it was they were up to, the main one being a betrothal to one of the Princesses.

It’s not that they weren't nice, because they were. He’d not spoken much to Daenerys but the little he had, he’d seen a strong-minded woman, one who could take a joke and give one back if the situation with Theon was anything to go by.

He’d spent a little longer with Princess Rhaenys or Rhae as she prefers to be called. Again, she too was a strong-minded person but also incredibly friendly and very easy to talk to.

It was also hard to miss how beautiful the pair of them were. Bran had been smitten with Daenerys as soon as his dance with her had finished last night, he’d not shut up about her when they broke their fast this morning.

And Rhae, Rhae was a dornish beauty. Dark hair, olive skin were classic Martell features but the deep indigo eyes were what gave away her father’s side of the family. ‘They weren't the blue-grey eyes of his beloved though.’ He mused. Princess Rhaenys was a beautiful woman, a woman of great pedigree, funny, charming, caring. But she wasn’t his beloved, his heart was already claimed by another, his Alys.

They’d met three weeks ago when her father Lord Rickard Karstark had visited his father to discuss about matters of the North or something, he wasn’t sure because he was not present in those meetings. As soon as his eyes had met hers in the courtyard it was over, a true northern beauty. One that he’d offered to keep company for the duration of Lord Karstark’s visit. When he suggested this, his father was stone faced but he could see the humour in his eyes, Lord Karstark looked rather pleased with himself and Lady Alys smiled softly whilst looking at the ground.

The Karstarks were in Winterfell for nearly 2 weeks and in that time him and Alys had grown closer
and closer. They spent most of the time almost exclusively together to Theon and Sansa’s annoyance. Theon wanted his friend back and Sansa wanted another girl to chat with. Arya the little devil had done nothing but tease him and at numerous times had caused him to blush when describing the embarrassing yet true things she’d caught them doing.

He’d shown her around his home dozens of times, taken her into Wintertown and bought her a little trinket, a little silver wolf figure. She’d hugged him for that and he’d felt like the King of the world at that moment.

They’d spent time in the library and read a few books together, reading the same book and seeing who could finish the page first. She won most of the time but the smile and laugh it would invoke from her was worth it to Robb.

It had all come to a head the night before her departure, they’d sneaked out of the farewell feast and strolled hand in hand into the godswood. There they shared a kiss and a promise to stay in touch. They’d be sending correspondences to each other when she got home, he told her she’d have one waiting for her by the time she got back to Karhold. It was early days between them but the connection was there, and Robb was pretty confident he’d found the woman he would like to marry.

But it would seem his mother had other ideas. It was a shame for her that nobody was interested in her wishes. It may sound horrible to speak like that about his mother but he’d still not forgiven her for Jon’s disappearance, even if it was over a year ago and he’d come to terms that he was gone.

To her, seeing her son arm in arm with an unwed princess must have been immensely satisfying, but what she didn’t know was that him and Rhaenys had already talked about their own futures and what they hoped for it whilst walking around the godsdowood. He’d explained to her that he wanted to ask his father if he could ask for Lady Alys’ hand in marriage and that the pair of them were very close. If Rhaenys’ reaction was anything to go by she didn’t look offended or jilted at all. In fact, she almost looked relieved when he told her. He didn’t know whether to be offended or pleased with her reaction.

They’d strolled arm in arm into the glass gardens as her escort, Ser Jonothor guarded the entrance. He’d told her he was writing Alys a poem he wanted to send to her but was terrible at it. She suggested a few ideas here and there and he jotted them down to use for himself. Her suggestion of a few rose petals inside the poem was a good idea as well and was the whole reason for their journey to the glass gardens.

Right now, he was walking up to his father’s solar to discuss the possibility of Lady Alys and him marrying. His father was one of the few people that knew about his and Alys' correspondences, Arya knew but only out of sheer willpower and determination to catch him in the act of writing said letters. She promised not to tell anyone but with the way his mother was acting it might have been
best if she knew what he wanted.

Jory nodded at him as he knocked on the door to his father’s solar “He's in there but he’s been rather quiet my Lord.” Jory warned.

“Thanks for the heads up.” He said as he heard his father tell him to come in.

The Lord of Winterfell looked up from whatever it was he was reading and gave him, in all honesty, quite a pitiful smile. “Robb, what can I do for you? Arya hasn’t been misbehaving has she? I know I told you to keep an eye on her whilst the Royal family was visiting.” He said as he started folding the letter that he was reading. Robb spotted Jon’s name at the bottom of the parchment and already deduced that he was reading his farewell letter.

‘You’re not the only one who misses him father.’ He thought to himself.

He cleared his throat to avoid the nerves showing “I’ve come to talk to you about marriage, more specifically who I would like to marry.” He said, he could feel his hands getting clammy. The possibility of his father rejecting his wishes in favour of a more lucrative betrothal in the back of his mind.

This seemed to catch his father by surprise. “Oh...okay. This wouldn’t by any chance have anything to do with Princess Rhaenys?” His father asked.

“No, no it does not.” He said as he steeled himself. “I would like the opportunity to ask Lord Karstark for his daughter’s hand in marriage.” He finished. Preparing for the worst.

His father sat there with a soft smile and nodded “Okay. I see you’ve thought this through. You can send a raven to Lord Karstark asking for his daughter’s hand and I’ll send one with it giving my blessing. Expect a reply quite quickly, he was rather keen on the pair of you marrying.” He finished with a smile. He’d not seen a genuine smile from his father in months.

He couldn’t believe it was that easy, he just hoped Alys would agree to the arrangement “Thank you father.”

“No problem son. I just want to see you happy.” He smiled. “However, you’ll have to have a word with your mother. She’s got the idea of you and Princess Rhaenys being wed and I don’t think she’ll
take this news well coming from me."

He nodded, he knew he’d have to let his mother down gently.

“I’ll see you later at dinner.” He said as his father opened the top draw of his desk and placed his letter from Jon in it.

“Father?”

He looked up. “Yes Robb?”

“You’re not the only one who misses him.”

His father looked 10 years older when he replied “I know son, I know.”

Jon

The sea breeze attacked his face and filled his senses. It would have been enjoyed somewhat more if they weren't hammering at an immense pace towards what could possibly be their demise. He was quietly confident they could pull this off, and by we he actually meant Kireina. The sheer amount of destruction she had caused against The Clan in such a short amount of time was terrifying, gloriously terrifying. His blood thrummed through his ears and the adrenaline coursed throughout his body when Kireina annihilated a portion of their army. He should have felt remorseful at the loss of life but to his horrifying surprise he felt nothing but fire and power. If he wasn’t too careful, he could become a danger to himself and the people around him.

‘I won’t let that happen.’ Kireina responded through their bond. He’d still not gotten used to the fact she could hear his thoughts.

‘I do wonder, are you able to read the thoughts of anybody you want?’ He asked.
‘No, only the one I am bonded with. I can communicate with you through thought and hear your thoughts whenever you are close. But, if we are separated by a great distance, I can only communicate with you through your dreams.’ She explained in that deep, thundering voice.

‘That explains the dreams on the way up to find you.’ He realised. Something didn’t add up though.

‘How could you communicate with me in my dreams before we had even bonded? I’d been having those dreams a month before I’d even met you?’ He asked.

She went quiet.

Why had she gone quiet?

After a minute of nothing but the sound of the wind blowing through his ears she spoke up.

‘What you ask pertains to something that I have sensed brings you great emotional distress. Are you sure you want to know?’ She asked delicately, words chosen with care. She was pussyfooting with him and the entire concept of that just seemed bizarre.

He nodded, then realised she couldn’t see him ‘Yes you can tell me, I promise I won’t cry.’ He japed even with a sense of unease resting on him.

‘Your blood resonates with me, not your first man blood, no...the other part of your blood’s mixture.’ She told him cryptically.

Jon wasn't fan of riddles.

He sighed and replied to her, although, he was quite sure where this was going ‘And what is this “Other part” of my blood you speaking of?’

She rose above the clouds in hopes of seeing better as a thick fog had started to ease its way into their vision, she levelled off after their ascent and replied to him. A word he somewhat expected but still sent a lurch through his stomach...
‘Valyrian.’

He took a nice deep breath of the cold sea air through his nose, he never thought he could describe air as delicious but that was the word that came to mind. Delicious, clean air running through his body, calming his senses and mind as he desperately tried to not make his annoyance rear its head. Unfortunately, wolf blood had no such problems with acting now and thinking later.

He almost snarled at the dragon as he replied...almost ‘And how would you know that? Valyrian blood originates from the Valyrian Freehold, a once vast territory on the continent of Essos. A continent on the other side of the world from here. How could you possibly know about valyrian blood hmmm?’

He felt that. He felt that deep rooted sadness, a wish to forget but failure to. An immense pressure on her soul and subsequently his at the moment. He felt it, he felt his insides burn and his eyes start to boil, his brain feeling too big for his skull, wishing to escape from its confines of bone and tissue. And then, nothing. He felt nothing, normal again. Until another emotion collided with him with such force, he couldn’t stop his breakfast from escaping his stomach or the tears from running down his face. An emotion that was more jarring than her sadness...guilt.

Guilty of what?

He recovered somewhat from his breakdown as they coasted through the air in silence, both needing respite from such an intense experience. Jon was sure he wasn’t supposed to feel any of what he just had but like Kireina had pointed out, they were bonded. Her demons were his demons and his hers, and my god did she seem to have some horrible ones.

She broke the silence after a few minutes ‘Can we not talk about how I know? Can you just take my word for it? I have no reason to lie to you.’ She answered, almost pleaded. At that moment Jon felt awful for his targeted anger. He reluctantly accepted that yes, she had no reason to lie and that he could, quite possibly have some valyrian blood pumping through his veins.

That was hard to swallow.

He sighed ‘Okay, so somehow you know I have valyrian blood and I’m inclined to believe you. That means that my....valyrian blood helped with the bonding?’ He asked, still coming to grips with the reality that he in fact does have valyrian blood. The first thing he’s ever found out about his mother. A small giddiness inside him at finding out something without his father’s input on the mysterious
He felt her powerful muscles move as she banked a little further out to sea in the hopes of catching a glimpse of this fleet, the fog slowly but surely becoming thicker and more than a hindrance towards their task. The conversation they were having had almost made him forget the reason they were out at sea in the first place.

She eventually answered as she levelled herself off, vision still impaired by the dense blanket of fog despite the repositioning. ‘Your blood didn’t just help with the bonding, it’s the sole reason we were able to bond in the first place. Your valyrian blood that flowed into the cavern lake was what woke me, your valyrian blood allowed me to communicate with you through your dragon dreams. The blood of the first men that flows through you is the reason why you dreamt of flying last night. But that wasn’t a dragon dream, that was something else.’ She explained.

‘Warging.’ He subconsciously thought. This was all getting too much for him right now. They had a task to go through with, the whole of Kōchi relying on them to pull this off. With failure resulting in the death of him, Gerion, Master M, the Kōchi people and even possibly Kireina herself. He had no time to be thinking about his blood, his mother, dragon dreams? and warging. They had a job to do, and with the surge of determination that ploughed through Kireina’s and subsequently his mind, she agreed.

Kireina dipped lower towards the sea to get a better view, the fog had turned up at a truly awful time, visibility was nigh existent. Thankfully, if they couldn’t see anything then neither could any of the boats they were searching for.

‘Can you see anything? I might as well have my eyes closed, this is ridiculous.’ He thought, a wall of grey facing him.

She was silent for a few seconds until she saw something ‘There, I see shapes.’ She bellowed out loudly through their connection.

Turns out dragons had better eyesight than people because it was nearly half a minute before he started to see dark silhouettes in the distance. He counted ten so far but who knew how many they had further back.

‘Go higher and see if we can fly over them undetected. I want to see how many we’re fighting here.’ He uttered to Kireina. Even in his mind he was whispering. There was always something enjoyable about being sneaky to Jon, it almost filled him with a childish glee when they coasted over the
numerous ships. They were that quiet they could even hear the dull voices of conversation.

Jon counted 28 or 29 ships after they’d made a couple of passes over. The ships were moving but not at the pace they clearly wanted, the fear of striking a random rock in the fog being understandable to Jon. He remembered his journey across the sea and couldn’t blame their caution. At the pace they were going they’d probably reach Kōchi by nightfall.

Jon didn’t want these people dead, he just wanted them to stop what they were doing. He wanted to end this with as little bloodshed as he could. He also didn’t want to use Kireina like some weapon of mass destruction, the attack on The Imperial Clan yesterday was a few hundred men out of roughly 50 thousand. It was more of a statement than a massacre that Kōchi was under the protection of a real-life dragon and that if you wanted to attack you would just end up the same as the mounds of ash that were left.

He needed to make a statement here as well, a show of power, a display to the rest of the fleet. Master M had told him once that the human emotion of fear was powerful and if used properly, could become a useful tool, especially in war. Unfortunately, more people would die when he set this example but it was to stop the entirety of this fleet and the people on these ships from being annihilated by Kireina. It wasn’t fair to make Kireina kill all those people either, he wouldn’t make her a mass murderer.

Another bolt of guilt from Kireina hammered through his mind as he finished his thought process. She felt guilty of something but Jon wasn’t sure of what she felt guilty about. He was getting distracted from the task in hand.

‘That ship right there, the one furthest forward.’ He sighed as he told her what to do next ‘Hit it with all the fire you can...we need to make a statement.’ He finished whilst he held on tight to one of the crystals on her back.

When she’d done this the first time he’d held on to a similar crystal on her back and that too grew warmer and emitted a soft glow just like this one. What he hadn’t noticed was her actual dragon fire, he was too busy holding on for dear life as she nosedived towards the ground. By the time he’d collected himself she was already landing on the hill and screaming her head off at the fleeing army.

But today, today was hard to miss.

He felt the thrum of power coil underneath his legs, time feeling like it could almost stop as she unleashed a torrent of light into the unsuspecting ship. A bright light that lit up the surrounding area and caused him to squint his eyes at the intensity of it.
That wasn’t fire. That was energy. That was power in its purest form. A power so absolute, it cut the ship clean in half and carried on as the beam of light broke the surface of the sea and lit up the water underneath, numerous sea life seen clear as day darting off to avoid their demise.

His inner thoughts broken by the high-pitched roar from Kireina that caused him to tense his muscles and grind his teeth until she finished. As soon as her roar of dominance was over, she beat her wings and dragged them up high into the sky.

‘Do you trust me?’ She asked him as she stopped working her wing muscles and made her body go limp.

‘Yes.’ Was his instant reply. The right answer his mind screamed as she tucked her wings into the side of her body and nosedived towards the remains of the destroyed ship.

The crystal on her back glowed up again as another stream of light blasted towards the remains of the ship, striking it from a vertical standpoint. The feeling of power surged through him as they nosedived closer and closer towards the bombarded corpse of The Clan’s vessel. He took a quick peak in the direction of the rest of the fleet as he rushed towards the sea, men stood at the bow of each of the ships completely frozen in fear. Some chancing it and leaping into the sea in the hopes of being a smaller target.

He looked back forward as he saw how close they had gotten to the surface of the watery grave for some of these men. Muscle and scale bolted upwards as Kireina lifted up at the last second and closed her mouth to halt the flurry of energy she’d discharged at the remains of the ship. Nothing but a thin layer of ash and a few stray planks were left.

Kireina roared again and a good job too. He was pretty sure the sudden change in direction from Kireina had momentarily knocked him out and the sharp noise alerted him back to consciousness. Kireina flew slow circles around the fleet to see if any of them were feeling especially brave today, nothing but scared and resigned men looking back at them.

They’d done it, they’d managed shock them into resignation and fear, the absolute last thing an army needed. He looked back at the ash pile as they circled back around the front of the fleet, a fleet of ships that didn’t have a single sail up now. He had a feeling that the ship they destroyed was carrying their Emperor, the spearhead of their fleet and the whole campaign in general.

‘If we’ve just killed their leader by sheer luck then we might have just won this war.’ He
thought. *Kireina* agreed and hoped he was right.

*Kireina* flapped her wings and sent a few of the ships in front rocking, she moved as close as she possibly dared which allowed Jon to shout at the men stood at the front of the ship, majority of them looking up at *Kireina’s* form and some waiting for him to open his mouth.

A man who seemed to be the captain of that particular ship untied his sword belt and dropped it to the floor, along with his *katana* as well. The rest of the men behind him followed suit.

‘*They’re dropping arms, giving him ample time to actually talk to the enemy for once.*’ He thought to himself.

‘*Could be a trap. If they kill you, I’ll make them wish they’d drowned after I’m done with them.*’ *Kireina* muttered in a concerned but angry manner in his mind. The protectiveness making him smile.

He cleared his throat as he shouted across to the captain, hopefully understand Jon’s dodgy *nihongo* “*Watashi o kizutsuke, daremoga shinu.* (Hurt me and everyone dies.)”

The man looked at him, grim and resigned to the fact that their fight was done. It was up to the captain now whether or not his men carried on with this stupid battle or went home alive instead. Jon was feeling confident they would choose correctly.

The man nodded as he slowly looked up *Kireina’s* flank and gulped.

Jon shouted across again to confirm something for him

“*Anata no ten’nō wa sono fune ni ita nodesu ka?*(Was your Emperor on that ship?)” He asked as he pointed out towards the thinning pile of ash, slowly being claimed by the sea.

A look of anger rose on the man’s face as he shook his head and spat on the deck of his ship

“*īe, sono otoko wa nigemashita. Korera no shimajima o hisshi ni kōhai sa seyou to shite ita bōkun wa, watashitachi ni kare nashi de kurasu yō ni iimashita. Kare wa doragon o shitteita ni chigainai.* (No, the man fled. The tyrant who desperately wanted to rule these islands told us to go on without him. He must have known of the dragon.)” He finished. To Jon it looked like the man really wanted to get that off his chest.
Jon shook his head, killing their leader would have been a major setback for the enemy. Hell, by the looks on some of the men’s faces, they weren’t the Emperor’s biggest fans. No doubt angered and forced into their position to keep their families alive, families that were being held hostage by their own leader. What the fuck was wrong with this guy? A man fuelled by greed and wielding fear against his own men to ensure loyalty.

A mad man.

Jon was abruptly interrupted when the captain shouted across to him
“Kare wa honnō kieru mae ni, anata ga sugu ni kare o tsukamaeru koto ga dekirunara, kare wa watashi no ushiro ni suru mairu shika inai hazudesu. (He should only be a few miles behind us, if you're quick you could catch him before he truly disappears.)”

Jon’s funny feeling ended up being true. Fear was the only thing this man had to ensure loyalty, and they’d lost that fear of him when he ran away. He was still surprised with how quickly they were turning the man over, a look behind the captain at the men behind him was even more surprising. He could see the hope in their eyes as the captain explained how long ago the Emperor had decided to turn back, how he’d threatened to butcher women and children if the task wasn’t completed even in his absence. He explained that the Emperor’s ship was full of hostages, important political figures from each of the sacked towns. Used them as protection and threatened to kill these people one at a time if their respective communities rebelled. To Jon it sounded like this prick had his back against the wall.

The hope was there again in the men’s faces when he told the captain that he had a choice, turn all these ships around and help him take down this tyrant or carry on fighting for a man who couldn’t give a fuck whether or not you died. As he predicted, there was some resistance but fortunately for him they were outnumbered 10 to 1 by the rest of the men. The men who resisted the hardest were tied up and held inside the ships they were on to avoid any sabotage. Jon got a good look at a few of these men and they looked nothing like the natives of the four islands, something that was rather odd. Fortunately for them, he didn’t have time to question them as the fleet started to very slowly change their course back the way they came.

He’d managed to do what he’d set out to do and that’s stop the fleet from attacking Kōchi, and he’d managed that without too much bloodshed. But Jon was feeling greedy, he wanted this “Emperor” cunt. He thought he’d got him when the boat was turned to ash. He thought that in one fell swoop he’d essentially crippled their leadership and put them on the cusp of surrender and defeat. But he wasn’t there. He’d wormed away like the cowardly maggot he was...and Jon wanted him.

Kireina was getting restless, he could feel her annoyance through their bond. They needed to move and move fast if they were to catch this cunt. The fog was still thick in the air so spotting the ship would be a lot harder but he trusted Kireina could see it before it was too late.
They circled the fleet a few times to make sure they were in fact turning around and this wasn’t some elaborate ruse. Jon was in no mood for tricks and neither was Kireina, the whole fleet would be annihilated at the first show of deceit. He’d used democracy to win them over but force would be reluctantly used if he was betrayed.

As the ships slowly started their reverse journey back, Kireina let out one last mighty roar for good measure and ascended into the clouds in search of hopefully, the man that would end this war.

North was the only way they could go so that’s the way they went. They didn’t have much to go on other than how long ago the Emperor had ditched the rest of the fleet and that his boat looked nothing like the other ships. They were looking for a ship that couldn’t be anything more than 10 miles away due to the fog and looked different to what they’d seen before, shouldn’t be overly difficult he thought.

It wasn’t long till Kireina was whispering in his mind *‘There’s a ship ahead but something doesn’t feel right.’* She muttered, a sense of unease encompassed the pair of them.

The fog hadn’t let up at all, if anything, it’d gotten thicker. It was a few moments after Kireina spotted the ship that Jon did. The men were right, this ship looked nothing like their own. Where the fleets sails had emblems of, what he’d guessed *The Imperial Clan’s* insignia, this one carried pitch-black sails with nothing on them at all. This one also had a vicious looking iron ram attached to the bow of the ship that looked like it could cut through any ship that decided to get in its way.

There was still a feeling of unease as they flew silently over the ship, a light rain deciding to appear. A look down towards the deck of the ship caused Jon to frown...there wasn’t a soul on deck. The unease grew.

*‘I really don’t like this Jon.’* Kireina whispered through their bond as she circled around to get a good look of the ship. One more lap around it confirming his earlier observation, there was nobody on board.

*‘Me neither but we’ve come this far. I need to check to see if the prisoners are on board. Hell, this might not even be the right ship, it looks abandoned.’* He replied.

*‘I still don’t like it. There’s something really odd in the air.’* She answered, still worried.
‘Are you the odd thing? It is kinda weird to see a dragon wouldn’t you say?’ He japed, a light rumble from her throat suggesting she didn’t find it very funny.

‘Okay okay, I'm sorry. I suppose it's not the best time to be joking.’ He replied. ‘I still need to go down there and check though.’

He could feel her trepidation about the whole thing ‘Don't worry, I'll be as quick as I can. We can still hear each other through our bond so I can tell you if something is wrong. In the meantime, you can keep an eye out for any more ships just in case this isn't the one we’re after.’ He suggested, hoping to ease her.

It obviously worked somewhat as she slowly descended towards the side of the ship, low enough so he could take one last look at the deck to check for men before jumping and rolling onto the vessel.

‘Good luck. And be careful.’ She told him, almost like a mother hen. It brought a small smile to his face as he watched her coast back up into the thick fog, essentially leaving him alone on this ship.

This was dumb. Jon knew this was dumb, being alone in presumably enemy territory. Well, not completely alone. He did have his freshly forged dragonsteel katanas with him. He almost hoped there was trouble so that he had an excuse to use them.

Using the surefooted stealth skills that Master M had all but drilled in to his body and mind, he sneaked around the top deck looking for any sign of life. The rain was starting to get heavier as he made sure not to make a sound, two laps around the top deck was all that was needed to confirm that it was devoid of life. The sails were still up so the ship was still moving along through the fog, aimlessly traveling into the unknown and possibly death.

Using his barebone skills on sailing, he used the sails riggings to hopefully halt the ship and bring it to a somewhat standstill. With that done he made his way towards the captain's cabin to begin his search.

He entered the captain’s quarters and noticed straight away the sheer lack of luxuries, something that was rather odd if this was indeed the Emperor’s flagship. Dark, damp and dingy would be the words he described the room as he walked across towards the desk in the corner. The only light that was available was the natural type that was seeping in through the crummy windows.
Scrolls and maps littered the dark wooden desk. Maps of the surrounding isles, signed documents written in what looked oddly like *valyrian* and a few random notes made up the majority of the mess that was left. Random jars and bottles scattered across the little shelf on the wall above the desk. Goblets and glasses shoved to one side, none of them looked like they’d been cleaned in a very long time.

A small decanter was perched in front of a dusty glass jar. The decanter looked to contain a dark blue liquid of which half the contents had already been used. He picked it up, popped the cork and lifted it to his nose, the overwhelming smell making him reel and placing it back where it was. The large dusty jar caught his eye as he placed the decanter back, trying to rub the dust off the label deemed useless. Eyeing the room, he found a dirty rag flung across the back of a chair and used it to remove some of the muck on the jar, after rubbing it for a few seconds he had to place the jar on the table and hold himself together less he threw up.

Mixed in with what looked like brine and blood was a jar full of what looked like worms at first, but after a couple of seconds just looking at it, he realised it was a jar full of tongues, with a few eyeballs thrown in for added effect.

He looked away from the little desk of horrors and took a quick look around the cabin, confirming it to be empty. He unsheathed one of his *katana* after finishing his search and headed back outside to look for the door to the hold of the ship.

The door wasn’t too difficult to find and he was soon inching his way slowly down the stairs to the hold, trying is hardest to not step on a creaky stair or plank of flooring. He doubted it would matter though, the wind had picked up outside and was currently whistling through the gaps of the ship, essentially cancelling out any slight noises he would make.

As he slowly opened the door at the bottom of the stairs the first thing that hit him was the horrendous smell. Shit, piss, blood, every bodily fluid mixed into one stench of death. The second thing he noticed was the sheer lack of light at his end of the hold, thankfully at the other end there seemed to be a soft glow of light behind a stack of crates about 7 feet off the floor, no doubt a single candle being the source. And Jon was guessing there was somebody behind those crates.

Using his hands to feel his way through he noticed a few metal bars, scratch that, a lot of metal bars, almost like jail cells. He stopped at one of these cells and crouched down to see if he could get a better look inside, what he saw made him sick to his stomach.

On the floor of this cell was the shadowed silhouette of small person and with a bit of squinting he realised it was a small girl. A girl who was curled up in a ball, covered in dirt, blood and what looked to be her own waste. Her ankles and neck were chained to the ground and the worst thing of all, she wasn’t breathing. The little lass had died in this fucking cell, in a puddle of her own making.
Jon could feel his blood boiling, he wanted to hurt something.

He closed his eyes and exhaled deeply through his nose, calming him a little but not nearly enough to douse his anger. There were dozens of these cages, a few of the people in them were alive but barely breathing, most had died the same way as the little girl.

‘What kind of fucking monster were they dealing with here?’ He wondered as he slowly made his way to the far end of the hold, the far end where the only source of light was.

‘And hopefully where this fucking shitbag was hiding.’ He thought, a little surprised Kireina hadn’t tried to school his temper through their bond.

‘Kireina?’ He whispered through his mind.

No reply.

He tried to communicate with her again but realised she couldn’t hear him, and he couldn’t hear her. He couldn’t feel any connection with her at all, almost as if he was in a bubble and she was on the outside oblivious to him. That unease was back as he slowly made his way forward to the end of the hold, light footed and as quiet as a mouse. Kireina did say something didn’t feel right and now he was feeling it too.

He pressed his back against the wall and lifted his blade so it stood vertically in front of him, if anybody was planning on grabbing him, they’d be losing a hand in the process. Light noises could be heard around the other side, it sounded like metal chains being scratched against the wooden floor beneath them. He risked it and took a peek to see what he was dealing with, his eye widened at what he saw.

Four people, three men and one woman were chained to a chair each and gagged with rope. One of the men was unconscious but could still be seen breathing, the rest were by the looks of it, desperately trying to keep their eyes open. Jon saw no threat here, these people were clearly prisoners and could possibly tell him what the fuck was happening on this ship or even better, who the fuck had done all of this.

He slowly crept around the boxes and revealed himself to them, sword raised just in case it was a trap. The woman spotted him first as her eyes went wide, the muffled noise that came from her
alerting the other two of his presence, the fourth man was still out cold.

He put his finger to his lips and motioned them to be quiet, which they instantly did. Jon got a closer look at them as he approached the woman first. All four of them were dressed in some very expensive looking silks and robes, not at all like the rest of the prisoners he’d found in the cells. He tried to rack his brain and work out where he’d seen this type of clothing. As he slowly started untying the rope that was round the back of her head, he realised he’d seen this type of clothing in the town hall, where the *Daimyo* were situated.

These people are *Daimyo*. These were the important figures the captain from the fleet was talking about. If they were here as prisoners it meant that this WAS in fact the *Emperor’s* ship. None of it made sense though.

‘*Where the fuck is the Emperor then?*’ He wondered as he finally loosened the knot and freed the rope from the woman's mouth.

“*Daijōbudesuka?* (Are you okay?)” He asked her as he started untying the rest of the ropes around each of the men.

“*Watashi wa daijōbuda to omou, arigatō.* (I think I’ll be okay, thank you.)” She said as he finished untying the rest of the men.

“*Dare ga anata ni kore o shita nodesu ka?* (Who did this to you?)” He asked.

He got no reply.

He looked up from where he was trying to untie the rope from around her ankles and saw she was wide eyed and looking behind him.

“What...” He didn’t get to finish what he was going to ask as he was jarringly interrupted by a grim voice behind him.

“*WELL WELL, LOOK AT WHAT WE HAVE HERE! GOT OURSELVES A WANNABE HERO EY BOYS HAHA!*” Came the loud shout from behind. The use of the common tongue startling him somewhat.
His head swung around to take a look at the man or in this case, men that had caught him red handed. There was five of them in total and they were about 10ft away from him. Four of them were pencil thin and dressed in dark black and indigo robes with withered faces and bald heads. The man stood behind these four creeps was a lot more built than the other men, a long dark grey coat covering up a steel breastplate and chain. He had dark brown scraggily hair that matched his beard, scars all over his face and a leather eye patch across his left eye. Slung across his shoulders was a 3ft long steel axe that he was holding with his right hand and hanging around his neck was a black leather strap with what looked like a steel horn strapped to it. Something he noticed they all had in common was an unusual blue hue to their lips.

"WHY DON’T YOU PAINT A PICTURE, IT’D LAST LONGER...A LOT LONGER THAN YOU’RE GONNA!" The man at the back bellowed out at him. One of the four creepy bold men started quietly chanting something as Jon stood up and readied his sword.

“Who are you? Where’s the rest of your crew?” He said in a cold voice, thankful that it didn’t waver.

The man at the back tilted his head towards Jon and grinned rather disturbingly. “Dead, gone, thrown overboard. I had no use for them anymore. As for who I am...I’m your god. Bow for your fucking god you worthless little cretin.”

“The only gods I bow to are the old gods...so forgive me for not bowing to some ratty looking fuck and his little group of cunts.” Jon boldly replied. The man looked unhinged and maybe winding him up would cause errors. *Master M* did always tell him that emotion doesn’t belong in single combat.

His reply seemed to somewhat surprise the man as he paced left and right, not once taking his eyes off Jon. “The old gods? Those fucking tree’s...They call them the old gods cos that’s what they are...OLD! AND YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY...OUT WITH THE OLD IN WITH THE NEW!” The man shouted as he hacked up phlegm and spat on the ground “Even the drowned god will have to kneel when I’m done.” He finished.

Jon using the man’s mad outbursts to ever so slightly inch away from him so he had somewhat of a distance in preparation for what he assumed was a to come.

‘*Fucking drowned god? He can't be...’* He thought as he realised what this meant.

He about snarled as he replied “You're fucking ironborn...that scummy little group of small-minded
cunts. Bunch of thieves, rapists and murderers who don’t even deserve the piss stained rocks they reside on.” He shook his head as he realised something. “YOU’RE the Emperor, aren't you?” He let out a humourless chuckle “All makes fucking sense now. The greed and the hunger for power. The raping and killing of innocents. The thieving and the taking of prisoners. You couldn’t garner the loyalty so you had to force it and take it...just like the ironborn have always done.”

“Haha, see you’ve got a brain in that pretty little head of yours.” The man paced from left to right still, he looked anxious to fight. “You're right, I am the Emperor, the Emperor of these four islands. The same islands that will become the start of my empire.” He stopped pacing and squatted down, leaning against his axe he’d rammed headfirst into the wood beneath. Looking at Jon with intensity, an intensity he knew was laced with insanity. “I set out on a three step plan you know, a life mission if you will. A mission that would take me all over the world to finish.”

He eyed Jon up and down “You're a northerner, aren't you? Ha, don’t answer, I can tell by your adorable scowl.” He shook his head “You were the first step in my plan you know, not you personally no, the North itself. You see, my brother wanted to be the King of the Iron Islands...but I wanted the rest of the kingdoms under my rule, something my brother was unaware of ha.”

“Well, you know how the rebellion went so I won't waste time explaining that. Shortly after I was banished from the Iron Islands, some would say it was a punishment for raping my brother's wife but I saw it as an opportunity, an opportunity to begin my reign elsewhere.”

“I travelled all around the known world, searching for a place to start. Whilst searching I brought a few...individuals into my circle.” He said as he looked at the four other men. “They showed me what I wanted and what I needed to see. I needed to quietly bide my time and build up a force away from the eyes and ears of the little men of Westeros. Find a place to start my conquest to become more than a King, a ruler of the known world...an Emperor.”

“My three-step plan was simple, become a King...become an Emperor, then...become a God.” He waved his hand across the front of the four men with him “These men here have been helping me with the final step, a step I thought was decades away...until you showed up. More precisely, that beast of yours.”

‘No.’

“You see, these men right here have been keeping your dragon busy. Hammering it with visions so it can't even see straight, keeping it busy enough for me to prepare...prepare myself to blow this.” He said as he grabbed hold of the steel horn that was tied around his neck.
‘That's why I can't hear her, she’s too busy fighting visions to even acknowledge me.’ He realised. These men would be dying soon.

The man continued “This right here is a Dragonhorn. Said to grant the user control over dragons. I think you know where this is going.” He finished with a creepy smile. A smile Jon couldn’t wait to wipe off him.

Jon gave him a lazy grin “Up your arse I imagine. I’ll probably need some help from one of your whores here but I bet we could get that whole thing in you with a wiggle.” He said as the men around the room started to fan out and slowly surround him.

The ironborn slowly stood up with the creepy grin still plastered to his face “I see you're a funny man, a pretty one as well. Us ironborn take what we want, maybe I’ll make you my whore. Maybe I'll fuck the fight right out of you...just like I did to that little bitch in the cage over there.” He said as he pointed in the direction towards the young girl he’d found caged up.

His blood froze. The rage slowly but surely cracking and melting it away like a molten fire. A fire he could hear in his ears and feel in his chest. It needed to escape, find an outlet before it consumed him...but what if he wanted it to consume him? Consume him till the point of no return. They say fire is the great cleanser, what if he wanted it to cleanse him? Use him to cleanse others?

He got into a stance with his sword, he could feel the need, the want to punish and hurt and destroy these men. The man decided to carried on “Slip of a girl she was, could hold her in one hand just about. Better than using my own hand I suppose HAHA!”

That was the final crack that welcomed the fire.

With a spin, he swung his katana with such force behind him and cleaved the man who was still chanting from hip to hip, essentially cutting the man clean in half. He was still chanting as his legs collapsed underneath him and his body folded in on itself, a few seconds later he stopped with unblinking eyes as the trauma took hold and inevitably took his life.

‘First ever man I have killed with my own hands. I should feel remorse and shame, not a sense of lacking and want.’ He thought to himself.

He wanted more…and there were four other candidates.
The man to his right tried to blow something out his hand into his face but Jon turned his head to the left just in time, just in time to see a man to his left run at him with a dagger. Jon dropped to a knee and lifted his bloodstained blade above his head and pointed into the path of the man. He essentially skewed himself halfway down Jon’s blade, right underneath his sternum. Jon stood back up, readjusted his hands on the hilt of his sword and ripped it upwards through the man’s chest and out through the top of his head, leaving the man’s torso looking like an opened jaw of flesh and organs.

‘This steel is scary...and the perfect tool for what I want to do.’ He thought to himself. The fire was talking now, and he allowed it to power him through his twisted form of justice. In the back of his mind he could hear a whisper but ignored it as the man to his right ran at him with a dagger of his own, unaware that Jon was about to end him.

He swung his leg low and swept the man’s legs from underneath him, sending him flying on to his front. All the while another one of the ironborn’s whores was approaching him with his dagger a lot more cautiously after seeing two of his friends mutilated on the floor. Jon didn’t give the man chance to be cautious as he turned and manoeuvred his katana low, blade edge up and swiped upwards, slicing the man’s dagger hand clean from is arm. He took the man’s head off before he could even scream in pain, the one small act of mercy Jon was willing to give right now.

The man who’d been tripped was startled by the decapitated head landing in front of his face and tried to rear backwards, only to be met with a boot pressing his back into the ground and a blade being rammed through the back of his skull and out through his mouth.

All while this was happening, the ironborn had skirted around the room and eyed Jon with great interest. Jon had his eyes locked right on his figure as he removed his blade from the back of the man’s skull he’d just ended. The wood beneath them both was almost sticky with the vast amount blood and viscera he had spilled.

The ironborn spoke up “Very impressive, I expected somet...” but Jon wasn’t in the mood for talking with this cunt and swung his sword towards the man’s head. The blade moved with such speed, the man only just backed away from taking the brunt of it to the side of his head. Instead, the end of Jon’s blade had caught the man’s face, specifically his forehead and left a deep cut across it, in the process cutting the tie of the man’s eyepatch and revelling a black eyeball underneath.

The man touched his forehead and sucked in a breath through his teeth “...CUNT! You're gonna pay for that!” He growled at Jon.

“Not likely.” He replied as he went for another slash at the man, one that was avoided this time.
The man bellowed out and rushed at him with his axe, moving a surprising pace. His axe came down as if to chop Jon clean in half but he missed as he moved to the left and leant back to avoid the following attack from taking his head.

Jon dipped and dodged the man’s attacks, using the time to learn his moves and fighting habits, just like the ironborn had just been doing. He leant back to avoid another swing at his face but in the process lost his footing and slipped on the remnants of intestines on the floor, giving the ironborn chance to swing the knob of his axe’s handle and catch Jon square in the face with it.

Dazed, Jon lifted his sword to block the following strike. With such force, the ironborn swung his axe down and met Jon’s *katana* in the hope of cleaving the narrow blade in half but was majorly disappointed when the *katana’s* steel held true and in turn, jammed itself halfway up the axe’s head itself. Jon avoided a kick to his midsection as the ironborn tried to tear his axe free from his blade, the man wasn’t aware he’d left himself horribly open for the taking.

The ironborn’s face morphed into a look of surprise and horror as Jon took his right hand of the hilt of his sword and unsheathed his second blade from his belt. With as much force as he could he yelled out and swung his newly released blade into the side of the man and cleaved his leg, right above his knee clean off. The man released his axe and collapsed, screaming due to the jarring balance of having one’s leg being taken off, screaming bloody murder as he held his newly acquired stump whilst rolling around in the remains of his men.

Jon leant over on his knees and caught his breath *‘That was close.’* He thought to himself. He looked across at the “Emperor”, who was trying to so desperately crawl towards a dagger that was discarded by one of the other men earlier. Unfortunately for him though, Jon wasn’t finished.

He wiped his blades clean on the robes of one of the corpses he’d created and sheathed them back onto his belt. He eyed the axe that the ironborn had used to try and kill him and picked it up. Out the corner of his eye he saw the dying man reach for the horn that was still tied to his neck, with his eyes widening, Jon rushed over, swung the axe down just below the knee of the man’s remaining leg and chopped it clean off. The man screamed in pain and almost instantly forgot about the horn, the horn Jon ripped from the man’s neck and threw behind him.

Jon looked back up from the mess he’d made to the man’s legs and saw that he’d actually been successful in reaching the dagger. Before he could grab it though, Jon moved up and brought the axe down on his arm, cleaving it from his elbow down. He screamed and howled, but little bits of laughter were mixed in as he rolled around in, what looked to Jon, a state of euphoria.

*‘He’s truly insane.’* He thought. The fact that he was laughing and almost enjoying himself did not sit well with Jon. It angered him, this man needed to be punished not allowed to die in his deluded state of happiness.
With that thought and unadulterated anger flowing through him, Jon moved across and took the man’s remaining limb off, leaving him with nothing but four stumps.

‘Jon…’ A whisper in his mind said. But Jon wasn’t listening.

The man’s eyes were glazed over as he stared at the ceiling but was still quietly laughing, almost as if this was all some joke. It kept the anger in him alive.

Jon grabbed the ironborn’s face and looked him square in the eyes. “You’re going to die soon oh mighty Emperor. You won’t be missed and you won’t be remembered.”

‘Jon…’ The voice again said to him. Jon blocked it out to finish what he started.

The man coughed up a mouthful of blood as he laughed, he attempted to spit it into Jon’s face but his body clearly didn’t have the energy and he ended up dribbling down his chin. “The great Euron Greyjoy will never be forgotten *cough* I’ll be remembered as the most forward thinking ironborn of all ti *cough* time.” The man, or Euron as Jon had only just learnt of his name, looked up at him and sneered. “I’ll be remembered more than you will northerner. You clearly ran away from home, unlike you I left to become more...become a g.....” He said but Jon had heard enough and proceeded to slam the end of axe’s handle into the mouth of Euron. Smack after smack into the man's mouth, filling it with blood and teeth. Jon looked at Euron’s face as the man finally stopped breathing but Jon wasn’t finished, strike after strike breaking every tooth in the cunts mouth.

‘JON!!’ Kireina’s voice bellowed out as he brought the axe down on Euron’s neck and decapitated him. He closed his eyes to calm the monster that was causing chaos inside him.

In through your nose, out through your mouth was his inner mantra as he tried to calm his racing heart. One look around the room and at the man underneath him was when the reality hit him...he’d done this. He was the cause of this. It looked less like a fight and more like a massacre, all from his hands, hands that were stained red and thick with blood. He’d let his anger take control and this was the outcome. Master M had told him emotions don’t belong in single combat, he’d have to agree. The evidence was laid around him.

‘I’m okay Kireina, I’m okay.’ He told her through their reconnected bond.
‘You’re not okay. We’ll be talking about this soon. In the meantime, the fleet is right behind us and we need to get back to the mainland.’ She replied in a determined tone, almost like a scolding parent.

‘What about the prisoners?’ He asked as he looked in their direction, thankful that they were behind crates and hadn’t seen what he’d just done.

‘Tell them help is on the way. You’ll have to tell the captain to send some men onto the ship to release the prisoners and sail them back to land. But you have to hurry, while you were on the ship I checked to see where the clan’s army on land were...they’ve nearly reached Kōchi’ She urged through their bond.

“Shit...right.” He said. He had to get his head back in the game. Looking around the room at the crates he saw a burlap sack flung across one of them. With the idea in his mind he grabbed the sack and put Euron’s head inside, hoping and praying the sight of their “Emperor’s” decapitated head was enough to end the fighting and ultimately, the war. He also picked up the so called “Dragonhorn” and tied it around his neck, he didn’t want this getting into the wrong hands if it did in fact control dragons.

He walked over and told the four captured Daimyo that men were on the way to take care of them and the rest of the prisoners. With that being dealt with he headed up to the main deck and waited for the Kireina, who didn’t take long to arrive and line up her body with precise beats of her wings, allowing him to climb up to her back and turn towards the oncoming fleet.

A quick word with captain, who looked at him with wide eyes since he hadn’t had the chance to clean the thick layer of blood he was caked in, and they were on the way to commandeer the ship full of prisoners. Their reaction to him telling them that he’d killed their leader and proving it by showing them the head gave Jon hope that his plan would work on the rest of the army. To Jon, it was still crazy to see a group of people erupt with cheers when shown their leaders head, Euron really was a piece of shit, one nobody liked or would miss.

‘Right, you ready?’ He asked Kireina.

Jon didn’t even get an answer as she shot up into the air and headed towards Kōchi, cheers from the men below getting quieter as they made their way to hopefully put an end to this farce of a war.
Gerion

The defences were up, preparations made and men prepared for this uphill battle. The scouts had spotted the Imperial Clan’s main host, again summing up to roughly fifty thousand men, both on foot and mounted. They’d also brought along their siege weapons and if the scouts were to be believed, ballistae. No doubt the involvement of a dragon being the sole reason for their addition.

He was hoping and praying Jon and his dragon had been somewhat successful with their side of the plan, every second that passed since they’d left had been torture for him and not knowing whether or not they had the might of a dragon on their side anymore worried some of the men that were stood around him right now.

Jon was correct with one of his assumptions though, the knowledge of a dragon would slow the clan’s march and reluctance would show in their ranks. According to the scouts, movement of their army was awfully laboured, almost as if they didn’t want to fight. Gerion knew that with every passing moment without a glimpse of the dragon, the clan would grow bolder. And that worried him.

‘What if we don’t actually have a dragon to help us anymore? What if Jon failed and is now laying at the bottom of the ocean?’ He thought, the last of which made his heart lurch.

He felt a hand on his shoulder as he was broken from his contemplation, turning to see who it was, he was greeted by Master M’s old mug. To Gerion he looked overly calm about the whole situation and knew that it had something to do with the huge amount of faith he had in Jon.

“What you thinking about cunt?” Master M asked him.

‘Knew this was gonna bite me in the arse at some point.’ He thought. Teaching him swear words in place of the real words was a true passion of his but he’d not thought about how it could affect him.

He shook his head “Just wondering how Jon is getting on. This is all gonna come to a head soon and I’m hoping and praying we all come out the other side unscathed.”

Master M squeezed his shoulder, a reassuring gesture Gerion believed “We’ll be fine. The war will come to a close soon and I’m pretty sure we’ll survive.” The old man said, his sheer belief being half mad half inspiring.

“How can you be so sure? How are you this confident? I’m having a mini breakdown in my mind.”
He said.

*Master M* gave him one of those goofy smiles, a smile he’d seen before “Simple...we’ve got a Jon.” He said with pride. Something Gerion had always felt when thinking of Jon.

‘Stop it.’ He thought to himself. Ideas running through his mind of Jon being more than just a friend to him. ‘*He doesn’t see you like that.*’

He rolled his eyes and gave the old man a lazy smile “You put too much faith in him I fear, I’ve always wondered why that was...” He prodded.

*Master M* looked over the horizon and was quiet for a time, he looked deep in thought. He broke the silence when he turned back to him “You’ve known me for a few years now, not once have you seen me with a wife or children. The sad reality is, I never saw myself as a parent at any stage of my life.” He said. Gerion had never seen him this serious before. *Master M* continued “I’ve had an endless number of students in my halls, teaching them the ways of a warrior, a pure fighter. All of them for one reason and that reason being to create them into soldiers. All of them for the exact same reason...apart from one, Jon.”

Gerion looked at him with understanding.

He continued “You see, Jon didn’t want to learn to be a soldier or a guard, he wanted to learn about himself. Learn what he was capable of and learn how to better himself. He wanted, no, needed somebody to help him mould the new Jon, a more confident Jon, a smarter Jon, a better Jon.” He looked Gerion right in the eyes “He gave me the privilege of that task, he gave us both that privilege. I’ve seen the way you two act with each other and I’ve seen that natural confidence of yours rub off on him.”

“That confidence you gave him he used to push the boundaries of his learning, that self-belief that he can always be better at what he seeks out to achieve. Yes, he was cocky and guarded when he first arrived here but that was a defence mechanism against the prodding and poking he’d endured in his homeland. For him to show how bothered he was by some of the things people said about him would make him look even weaker than his society portrayed him as already.”

“So you see, not only has he put his faith in me but he’s also put his faith in you as well. A belief that the pair of us will nurture and better him, to make him feel wanted and needed for once in his life. And we did that, and so, because he’s put so much faith in me, I give him that faith right back.” *Master M* finished.
Gerion had never thought of it that way but couldn’t find it in him to disagree with the old man. If anything, Master M was in the same boat as him “It’s more than that though isn’t it?” He said.

Master M looked down and smiled “It is. He feels like family Gerion, like that grandson I never had. Whenever he’s around I’m more content.” The old man eyed him “I’m not the only one who feels this way am I?”

Gerion gave him a sad smile “You have the right of it.” He sighed “I have a daughter back in westeros, her names Joy and I abandoned her to go on some crazy adventure. She was 3 the last time I saw her, in the arms of her Aunt Genna as I promised to bring her back a present. I failed her. The moment I saw a boy appear from my country, alone in a foreign land, I knew I had to take him under my wing, to help with the guilt of abandoning one person. I couldn’t abandon another.” He chuckled a little “That annoying little shit has been the best thing to happen to me in years and can't see him as anything less than family.” He finished, a soft grin forming.

He heard Master M laugh and he looked towards him. The old man nodded his head towards the horizon “I think somebody knew we were talking about him.” He said in amusement.

He turned and looked to where Master M was looking, high in the sky out over the ocean he could see the small shape of a winged creature slowly but surely getting bigger and closer towards where they were. An image he would never be able to get over seeing until the day he dies. Hopefully they were returning with good news, Gerion really hoped.

Jon and his dragon, something fucking mad to even comprehend still, landed just outside the walls of the town with an almighty thud that shook the ground. People were already whispering and talking about their “saviour” as he headed up towards the gate and Gerion was inclined to believe some of them, Jon was making a habit of turning up just at the right time.

He motioned for the guards to open the gates for Jon to which they did. The first thing he noticed when Jon walked through the gates was how much blood he was caked in, the second was the burlap sack slung over his shoulder that was slowly dripping blood onto the ground.

‘What the fuck has he done now?’

“And what in the world has happened to you?” He shouted as he approached Jon, hoping that none of the blood that was on him was his. “You’ve brought me a present as well, you shouldn’t have Jon.” He finished as he smirked at him.
Jon returned his smile as he swung the bag off his shoulder and placed his hand inside. There were a few gasps around him as he pulled out a decapitated head from the bag and turned its face towards Gerion.

“This right here Gerry, this is hopefully the end to this stupid fucking war.” Jon said. Gerion cocked an eyebrow at him, not being sure what he was talking about. “This, this is the ever-elusive Emperor that caused all of this.”

That widened his eyes as he looked at the head.

Jon continued “This cunt right here was the tyrant that started all of this. Notice that he’s clearly not a native to these islands, that’s because he’s from our homeland, more specifically the Iron Islands.” Jon smiled “Euron fucking Greyjoy he said his name was when the life was fading from him.”

Now that was a surprise to him. He knew that Euron Greyjoy had all but disappeared after the Greyjoy rebellion but this was the last place he expected to see him. When he really thought about it though, it all made sense to him. The way the whole war was brought about and the way it had progressed screamed ironborn. Hopefully this was all gonna come to an end with the main culprit’s head being paraded around like a trophy.

“Fucking Euron Greyjoy.” Gerion spat at the ground to which Jon went and rubbed the face of the ironborn’s head in. He smiled. “That cunt was the mastermind behind burning Lannisport, I’m glad he’s dead. I hope you made him suffer.”

An odd look came over Jon as he placed the head back in its blood soiled bag “I did.” He coughed and combed his fingers through his hair “I plan on presenting this to the remnants of his army in the hopes they abandon this farcical war. If the way his navy reacted then I think we might be celebrating tonight.”

He nodded. Before he could reply however, Jon was already walking back through the gates.

“JON WAIT!” He shouted. Jon turned around to him and in the background, he could see the dragon swing its head to look towards the pair of them.

“What?” Jon asked.
“You not going alone surely?” He replied

“I won't be long, trust me. If it doesn’t go the way we want it to you’ll know.” Jon answered cryptically.

“What's that supposed to mean?” He asked.

Jon turned and looked at the dragon with a smile “You'll know.” And with that he started jogging towards the dragon, mounting it and taking off towards the oncoming army.

‘Please be careful. Please don’t do anything stupid.’

Jon was making a habit of this, appearing and disappearing. Leaving him to wonder whether or not he’s okay like a worrying parent. He sighed, all he could do right now was to sit and wait. Wait to see if the war was indeed coming to an end, wait to see if Jon returned okay.

He stood there for what seemed an age with Master M talking mindless chit chat, all to distract him from the fact that Jon and his dragon might not have been successful. Finally, after roughly an hour they got their answer.

Circling the town and descending from the sky like some great deity, Jon and his dragon made an entrance that Gerion would assume, would not be too different to the dragonlords of old. Just outside the walls of the town a group had amassed to watch the spectacle, Gerion and Master M were at the head of that group as they watched Jon dismount his great beast with surprising ease.

As Jon approached the group, Gerion could tell everyone around him were holding their breath, the suspense was killing them, him included. Jon to his credit seemed to keep a stone-cold look on his face as he approached them but as soon as he made eye contact with him, that shit eating grin started to form on his face.

They’d done it! They’d survived! Thank the fucking gods!

“Karera wa kōshin shite iru! Sensō wa owatta! (They're marching home! The war is over!”) Jon shouted. The group around him responded with glee, cheering and shouting, some even kneeling in
front of Jon who quite quickly motioned them to get up, embarrassment written all over his face.

Gerion pulled Jon into a tight hug when he finally reached the group. He could hear the news spreading around the town, cheers and shouts bellowing out all around the streets, they’d be a party tonight.

“Well done lad, you should be proud of yourself. You’ve just saved thousands of lives in there, you’re gonna be a very popular man tonight haha.” Gerion said as he broke away from the hug. Jon smiled at him but it didn't look as enthusiastic as it should've been.

“What's the matter?” He asked him, unease taking hold.

Jon shook his head “It's nothing, don’t worry about it. I just need a hot bath and my bed. I'm so fucking drained right now.” He said. Gerion reluctantly accepted his answer even though he knew there was more to it.

The day turned into night and the whole town was out on the streets celebrating. Jon had explained to the Daimyo that as soon as he’d shown the head of the Emperor to the commanders of the now defunct Imperial Clan, the entire army seemed to sigh in relief. A few angry protesters, who Jon recognised as Ironborn, were dealt with accordingly. Though Jon never revealed what happened to them, Gerion had a few ideas.

And now the army had split off into separate groups and headed home to each of their respected islands. Peace at last.

The celebration seemed to go on throughout the whole night, playing music, singing, dancing. Everybody was getting well and truly merry, ale and wine being shared among everyone, Master M had also brought his new rice wine that he was so proud of. When offered some, Jon, in the politest way possible told him to ‘shove it up his arse.’ which got him and the old man laughing.

Jon the poor lad couldn’t seem to get a moment to himself throughout the whole night. Whether it be men wanting to drink and chat with him, women and girls harmlessly flirting and mooning over him or children excitedly asking him about his dragon. Gerion noticed he was struggling to even keep his eyes open and gave the lad some mercy by escorting him away for a chat.

That chat never came though, Jon used the opportunity to head home, stating he was on the brink of passing out from the combination of drink and exhaustion. He knew there was more to it but left it
for the night. He had all the time in the world with him now.

One month later...

As it turned out, Gerion didn’t have all the time in the world with Jon.

A few days after the conclusion of the war, Jon dropped some big news on them...he needed to go home.

Him and Master M had argued with him, telling him his place was here, where he could settle down and start his new life. But Master M and eventually himself realised they wanted him to stay not for his sake but for their own selfish reasons. The main reason for wanting him to stay being that they would miss him.

Turns out the main reason for returning back to Westeros was to find out once and for all who his mother was. Yes, he wanted to see his family again, talking animatedly about his brothers and sisters but what was driving him was closure, the closure of finding out who his mother was and if she was still alive. Jon had told him that he had a point when he was talking about valyrian blood and that Kireina had only made him desperate to find out more.

That was a month ago, and now had come the day Gerion was dreading. The day his...friend would be leaving, who knew if he’d ever see him again.

Jon at the moment was talking to Master M. He’d noticed in the last couple of weeks that Jon had been training even harder than he normally did, trying to perfect what he’d learnt. It was also in these last few weeks that the unthinkable had happened...Jon had bested Master M in a spar. It was the talk of the town for a little while, it turned out the old man wasn’t surprised at all in his defeat stating that ever since he’d returned from his suicide mission up a mountain, Jon had been a monster in their sparring sessions.

He was broken from his musings when he saw Jon hug the old man and move over to him.

Jon placed his two bags down on the floor in front of him and held out his hand for Gerion to shake. He swatted his hand out of the way and brought him in to a tight hug.
“You got everything?” He asked as he broke away from their embrace.

“I think so. My swords and clothes are in that bag.” as he pointed to the long bag to his right. “And my rations and valuables are in that one.” as he pointed to his other bag.

Gerion picked up the long box that was behind him “You think you’ve got space for two more things?” He asked as he lifted the lid to the box and took out the two sheathed valyrian swords, Blackfyre and Brightroar.

Jon’s eyes went wide “I can’t...I can’t accept these Gerry. And besides, I’ve got my own set of blades now.”

“Not to keep silly, I want you to take them home. To take them to their rightful families.” He saw Jon’s bewildered look and sighed “I left my home to search for this sword in the hopes of returning it to its rightful place, House Lannister.” He said as he lifted up Brightroar.

“This sword...” He said whilst lifting up Blackfyre “was just a bonus of my travels and belongs to House Targaryen. Getting an audience with Tywin shouldn’t be too difficult if you mention Brightroar, he’s been after a valyrian sword in the family for decades. The Targaryens are a different story, not met one myself so I’m not sure how they’d receive you.” He finished.

Jon smirked at him as he grabbed hold of the swords he was offered “Maybe I'll just keep them myself. Visit Lord Tywin and use Brightroar and a fork to eat my dinner in front of him. Is he an angry man Gerry?” He finished with a laugh.

“Gods, to be a fly on that wall.” He said as Jon placed the two swords in his bag. He looked at Jon “Listen, I know the main reason you’re going back there is to find some answers but if it wouldn’t be too much, I’d like to ask you a favour.”

“You’ve homed me for more than a year Gerion, you’re practically family at this point. It would never be too much to ask.” Jon said with sincerity.

“My daughter, her name is Joy Hill. She’s baseborn like yourself and I suspect is treated the same way you were.” He looked into the distance to avoid eye contact with Jon. “Tell her that I miss her and wished she could be here with me in this free land instead of that repressive land she is no doubt ridiculed in. Tell her I’m sorry that I failed her.” He said as he looked down in shame.
Jon was quiet for a minute, Gerion had never told him that he had a daughter so he was probably processing. “Don’t worry Gerry, I’ll tell her. I’ll tell her what a great man her father is. I’ll tell her that she isn’t forgotten and that she’s still loved even from afar.” He said.

He nodded and just about held in the tears “Thank you Jon.”

*Kireina* roared in the background and paced left and right on the beach, a beach that had attracted a rather large crowd for Jon’s send off.

Jon eyed her “I think she’s getting impatient and wants to get going, gonna be a long journey.”

“You gonna be okay flying that long? Didn’t you say it took you half a year to sail here? You'll be on her back for weeks.” He asked with concern.

Jon gave him smile “It’ll be rough but she’s assured me they’ll make good time, might take less than a fortnight even.” He then chuckled “She told me that if she gets tired of carrying my fat arse she’ll land in the sea and spread her wings in the water to float, and that I can paddle us the rest of the way.” He finished, rolling his eyes.

Gerion laughed but it wasn’t very enthusiastic, Jon was leaving and the situation had now become more real.

Jon brought him in for one last hug “I'll miss you Gerry, you’ve done so much for me.” He said whilst in the midst of their embrace. Gerion swallowed the lump in his throat and broke away before he well and truly broke down in Jon’s arms.

“Go on.” He said as he lightly shoved Jon in the direction of his beast “Get going before she takes off without you.” He forced out.

Jon gave him a sad smile and clasped him on the shoulder one last time before picking his bags up and carrying them to his dragon.

With his bags securely strapped to one of the many spikes on the dragon’s spine, Jon climbed up onto its back. He looked over his shoulder to Gerion and *Master M* before giving them a sad smile
and one last wave before taking off into the air and flying out to sea.

_Master M_ clasped him on the shoulder in understanding before walking up the path exiting the beach, leaving Gerion on his own looking on out to the horizon with his eyes firmly locked on the small figure in the sky.

‘_You coward, you couldn't say it could you?_’ His mind screamed at him. And his mind was right, he couldn’t say it, only when the spot in the sky all but disappeared in the distance could he utter the words as he let the tears finally fall.

“Goodbye...son.”

_End of Act I_

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Chapter End Notes

...And breathe.

The thought of Kill Bill sirens in Jon's head when he snapped on Euron was quite amusing while writing that part :)

Think I might have to put Dark Jon in the tags for what he's gonna be getting up to...

Hope you enjoyed that :)
Well, this took longer to finish than I would've liked. Unfortunately, real life got in the way and may be the reason the next few chapters are a bit of a wait. I can only apologise but some things are unavoidable and there's only so many hours in a day.

I'm not going to say the next chapter is going to be out next week because I'm not going to make promises I might not be able to keep. I am however gonna keep chugging along in the hopes of getting them to you as soon as possible :)

Thanks for all the feedback and kudos from the last chapter, appreciate it.

With that I give you Act II of The Rising Son, hope you enjoy :)
The possibilities were endless.

Mind you, he still had things to do before he really stretched his adventuring legs, and at the top of the agenda was his mother.

If push came to shove, he would have to force it out of his father. Enough fucking around with secrets and “when the time is right” bullshit excuses. He would be doing his own digging around at first, putting little bits and pieces of information together that had either been worked out, like the smidge of valyrian blood in his system or incessant rumours he had heard when he was growing up. One in particular popped up quite a few times in his childhood and at times he wanted to believe them.

He remembers planning an escape so that he could finally reach his mother but common sense kicked in before he attempted to make a very long and unrealistic journey for a 9 year old, that and the fact that Robb grassed on him.

Thoughts of Robb made him all warm inside, unable to stop the easy smile growing on his wind battered face as they stormed along at a great speed. Thoughts of Robb merged into thoughts of all his siblings, he loved them all to death and missed them dearly, even Sansa who was somewhat cold with him he missed. She was his baby sister, he would always love and protect her, all of them.

Wonder if any of them are betrothed? Wonder if Robb has gotten married? Wonder if Arya is still an annoying little rascal? Wonder if Lady Catelyn’s mellowed the fuck out since he left?... probably not.

He shook his head in the breeze huffed out a laugh. He’d hopefully be finding out all of this in the next coming months. He had some snooping and sneaking to do in regards to information about his mother and it would all start at the opposite end of the country to the North.

And hopefully end if the rumours were in fact true.

‘You’re making my head hurt with all that thinking Jon.’ Came Kireina’s exasperated voice in his mind.

He smiled as he ran his hand down her back in the hopes of soothing her. ‘Sorry, just anxious to get started that’s all. So many questions that need answering, hopefully the effort will be worth it in the
end.’ He replied.

The motions he was making with his hand on her smooth scales seemed to be calming her somewhat and a pleased purr reverberated through her chest. A thought popping into his head that had to be addressed.

‘We’re gonna have to be careful with you Kireina.’ He said.

‘What do you mean?’ She asked.

‘Westeros think that dragons are extinct. The first glimpse of you and they’re gonna either try to hurt you or spread the information that you exist to all corners of the country, including King’s Landing. We’ll end up being wanted and hunted.’ He explained.

‘Let them hunt us, I’ll fucking kill them all if they touch you!’ Kireina roared through their bond.

Jon smiled at how overprotective she was over him, probably how a mother would be with her children.

He shook himself from them thoughts before he fell down that rabbit hole.

‘We should be alright, you just need to keep a low profile. That would involve being high in the sky a lot of time, thankfully through our bond we can essentially still be together. Out of sight but not out of mind if you will.’ He explained.

‘Also, who taught you that naughty word? You shouldn’t be swearing young lady.’ He joked.

‘You’re a bad influence.’ She answered as she huffed. He just chuckled.

The air around them was slowly but surely getting cooler as they dipped through the clouds to check to see what was below. The build-up of moisture within the clouds soaked Kireina and him through and when they emerged from the cloud, they realised why, it was chucking it down with rain.
“Fucking brilliant, I'm bloody soaked.” He grumbled to himself as he wiped his face in an effort to clear his face. He expected a retort from Kireina, telling him to stop complaining or to stop swearing but all he got in return was silence.

It would seem she was too busy observing something to care about his moaning and a few moments later she confirmed his belief. ‘Look, in the distance...do you see them?’ She asked as she seemed to pick up pace to reach whatever it was she could see.

He had to squint a bit but after a few seconds he could indeed see what she saw.

Out in the distance on the horizon he could just about make out a few shapes. As they flew closer, he worked out that they were in actual fact separated bits of land, islands if you will.

‘We need to get above the clouds before anybody on those islands sees us, if there is anybody on them that is.’ He explained to Kireina who proceeded to rise back up through the rainclouds, in turn soaking them through again. Jon wasn’t bothered about that anymore though, he was more interested in what they’d just found.

The little breaks in the clouds here and there allowed him to get a couple of glimpses of the oncoming islands. There was one to the right and one to the left. The one on the left was a lot bigger than the one on the right and seemed to be made up of small mountains. There didn’t seem to be anything exceptionally awe inspiring about these islands and the weather just seemed to make them look even more miserable.

‘Can you see anything interesting Kireina? I’m struggling at the moment.’ He asked. Maybe she could see something of worth.

‘Not much to look at Jon. There’s some odd looking buildings built on some narrow rocks coming up to your right but apart from that, no, there’s nothing interesting at all here.’ She said to him, even she sounded disappointed in what they found. Jon was currently racking his brain on where they could possibly be.

After a few moments of flying high he made out the narrow rocks to his right that she’d mentioned just then.

She was right, there were buildings on top of these rocks. In fact, they weren’t just buildings, they were castles. Castles on each one of the rocks and they seemed to be connected by thin bridges if his
eyes didn’t deceive him.

He was positive he’d heard about these castles from somewhere, something Maester Luwin taught them as a kid or from a book he’d read himself perhaps...

_Fucking Pyke._

_The bloody Iron Islands._

Images of Euron Greyjoy’s face flashed through his mind as he tried to control himself from not going straight down there and fucking shit up. Other images flashed through his mind as well, the one most noteworthy being the image of hundreds of soldiers lining up just to have the privilege of spitting on the decapitated head of their _Emperor._

That helped. That helped calm him.

They were both silent as they passed over the piss stained islands, with a start he realised that if these were indeed the Iron Islands then they actually back in Westeros and more specifically, just off the west coast of the Riverlands.

.Where his biggest fan was from ...

He needed to confirm this, he needed to know that beyond these islands was the mainland, he needed to know so he could plan accordingly.

_‘We need to pick up the pace a little Kireina. If my hunch is correct then these right here are the Iron Islands and just beyond them should in fact be the mainland.’ He told her._

_‘I thought the North was all hills and snow, not anything like this. Is the rest so gloomy and miserable?’ She inquired. She sounded a little excited at the prospect of new land to explore._

_‘Aye the North is all green fields and snow-capped hills but these right here are the Iron Islands, probably the least appeasing place in the seven kingdoms. This is actually where that cunt Euron originated from. If his loyal army hadn’t taken the head with them to parade around to_
all the towns, I would have dropped the thing right in the courtyard of Pyke.’ He explained.

Kireina huffed, probably the closest thing Jon would hear to a dragon laughing. They bolted higher up into the sky to avoid detection from any eagle eyed ironborn, the last thing they needed was somebody already blabbering on about a dragon sighting.

‘Remember, you’ll have to stay out of sight if you can. A sighting of you will jeopardise this entire trip and would probably have the crown trailing our backs. The news of a dragon in westeros would probably get the royal family moist at the thought of claiming you.’ He explained. The Targaryens would no doubt send endless amounts of scouts throughout the realm and reward anybody who helped them capture Kireina.

She’s mine, they can get fucked.

They could all get fucked.

He wouldn’t be putting up with any of these spoilt brats that call themselves lords and ladies. They could try to demean him or slight him based on his bastardry but it’d be like water off a duck’s arsehole with him...duck’s back? He shook his head, he wasn’t 100% sure of the saying. He was sure of one thing though. The nobles won’t know what had hit them.

‘Bear to your right Kireina...we need to be heading south.’ Was all that was said.

Ned

Ned rubbed his eyes as the last of the ravens were written, a call to all his northern bannermen that one Ramsey Snow, natural son of Roose Bolton was wanted on the charges of kidnapping, rape, murder and flaying of, according to Lord Varys, 13 different women. A bounty was put on the man’s head in the chance that the monster would be dealt with swiftly.

A raven had been sent to Lord Bolton inquiring whether or not the man knew of his son’s actions. The letter he received back was cold and straight to the point in denying his acknowledgement of his bastards’ actions. Ned wasn’t sure whether or not to believe the man.

“Jory!” He shouted as he gathered up the sealed scrolls in a pile.
His captain of the household guard stepped through the door to his solar “Yes Lord Stark?” He asked.

“Can you get these to Maester Luwin” He said as he handed over the scrolls “They're addressed to all the houses in the north, the faster we find this Ramsey Snow the better.” He replied.

Jory nodded “At once, Lord Stark.” said the man as he exited the solar and closed the door.

He leant back in his chair, the creak of it filling the silent room. He pinched the bridge of his nose as he thought over the recent events that had transpired. So many things he had to think about that had occurred during the last week of the Targaryen’s stay, they’d been gone a month now but it was still fresh in his mind.

The Sword in the Morning, Ser Arthur Dayne was the first thing that came to mind. After seeing Ser Arthur’s cold attitude towards him and the very frost talk he’d had with the man, he was still completely lost as to why the he was so mad with him.

Flashback...

He nodded to the famous Kingsguard, often referred to as the greatest swordsman in the realm. The man side eyed him and carried on looking forward as if Ned wasn’t even there.

“Ser Arthur.” He nodded as he attempted to greet the man. He was answered with silence.

“May we have a quick chat, I’d like to get something off my chest.” He asked as Ser Arthur just looked at him for a few moments before giving him a curt nod.

“I can’t help but notice a sense of enmity from you when it concerns me. I’m not sure what it is that has caused this but I have it my right to at least know why you despise me so much. Maybe then I can work to fix whatever the problem is that you have with me.” He asked, hoping that he didn’t come across as hostile.

The Knight silently regarded him for a moment before speaking up “I heard what happened to your son, unfortunate set of circumstances if you ask me. You have to wonder though, what forced him to
choose a life away from you.” The man coldly replied.

Ned turned to the man in confusion “I’m not sure what my son has to do with you hating me.” He said. The mention of Jon worrying him a little, especially from the mouth of Rhaegar’s shadow.

The knight ignored his query “Some might think his upbringing and treatment was what made the boy snap and choose a life out there on his own instead. I imagine Lady Stark wasn’t the worst affected by the boy’s departure.”

Ned felt his ire rising at the implication of him not being able to handle his own household “Yes, my son was treated a little less favourably around some people but that had nothing to do with his family, he’s always been loved by his brothers and sisters. Granted Lady Stark could have been a little more accepting with the lad but a part of me couldn’t be mad at her, I’d disowned her when I claimed Jon and brought him back to Winterfell. She could have forced him out, sent to live somewhere else but she didn’t because I asked her not to make me choose.” He finished, somewhat annoyed with himself that he’d even entertained answering the man’s subtle jab.

The knight regarded him with a frosty gaze “Maybe you should’ve stuck to your marriage bed then Lord Stark. Maybe you should’ve honoured the woman by marrying her before siring a child on her. Maybe all this could’ve been avoided.”

What the fuck did any of this have to do with the man’s clear hatred of him?

“I appreciate the advice on how to run my household Ser Arthur but I’m still not sure what any of this has to do with the problem you have with me.” He replied in a cold tone.

The knight seemed to smirk at that, like angering him was some sort of game he’d just succeeded in “Let’s just say, you’re not that much different from that pig I slaughtered on the Trident.” The man seemed to sneer out.

Pig he slaughtered?...The Trident?...Robert.

How was he no different from Robert?

He really was confused now “What has Robert got to do with this?” He growled out. Ser Arthur didn’t look effected in the slightest.
The knight turned to him with the coldest look he’d seen from the man to date “You’ll never know, you don’t get to know, you don’t deserve to know.” The knight sneered and walked off.

That entire conversation he’d had with Ser Arthur occurred roughly a month ago and he was still having sleepless nights, racking his brain to work out what in the world the man was talking about. At least when he woke up in the middle of the night, he wasn’t waking his wife up in the process, fat chance of that happening with her sleeping in her own room.

The argument he’d had with her a few days before the Targaryens were set to depart back to King’s Landing was the cause of that. Turned out his wife was in fact trying her hardest to pair Robb up with the Princess Rhaenys and when Robb told her of his wishes, she blamed Ned. She blamed him for not wanting the best for his son and for letting him settle for some daughter of one of his bannermen and not for the most eligible girl in the realm. Of course, she’d never said any of this in front of Robb, she was happy that her son was in love and subsequently betrothed to Lady Alys after Lord Karstark had replied to his and Robb’s letters and agreed to the match.

The problem she had was that Ned had encouraged it. That he should have been more suggestive to their son of his duty and what was best for House Stark. That love was a beautiful thing but it didn’t go hand in hand with duty. Ned wondered if there was some warped thinking going through his wife’s mind, almost as if she was suggesting that their marriage was nothing but duty.

The shouting and arguing didn’t make a difference to her manoeuvring in the end, the betrothal between Robb and Lady Alys was made official and the Targaryens departed Winterfell blissfully unaware of the massive Catelyn Stark shaped headache they’d caused him.

His wife for a month now had been cold and bitter towards him, a feeling he had 17 years ago towards a certain silver haired prince. A feeling he now knew was nothing but naïve bitterness and immaturity towards the royal family and he was now ultimately regretting his actions greatly. Actions he couldn’t take back less he pay dearly for it.

Turns out the Royal family were actually decent human beings. The two princesses were kind, witty and easy to talk to, Queen Elia seemed like one of the sweetest ladies he’s ever met and King Rhaegar was kind and understanding. The pair of them seemed to be caring and loving parents to their daughter and even Princess Daenerys. Nothing like he expected from the family that brought the likes of Maegor the Cruel, Aegon the Unworthy and last but not least, Aerys the Mad King.

It was too late now though, he couldn’t take back the things that he’d done. Jon was gone and had been gone for quite a while now, he just hoped to god he was still alive and was living the life he
wanted. It was the least he could wish for the lad after he’d taken so much from him.

There was a knock on his solar door that broke him from his thoughts.

“Come in!” He shouted. The door opened up and revealed Jory.

“The ravens have been sent my Lord. Maester Luwin gave me these scrolls he’d just retrieved from the rookery.” Jory said as he handed him 4 scrolls.

“Thank you Jory, you may leave.” He said. Jory nodded and exited his solar to take his spot right outside the door.

Ned rubbed his chin as he looked down at the scrolls, he was hoping he was done for the day when it came to correspondences but alas it wasn’t meant to be.

He read through 2 of the scrolls, both were just simple requests for extra farm hands and builders for some of the surrounding keeps he’d commissioned to be rebuilt but the last 2 scrolls were the ones that were more disturbing. The first was a report of a missing woman who’d been travelling from White Harbour to Hornwood. The woman and her husband had a 4-man escort for their journey to there, the husband managed to escape within an inch of his life but the 4 guards had been murdered and ripped apart by hounds and his wife had been knocked out and kidnapped. The man wasn’t sure but he thinks the criminals actually allowed him to escape, to tell people what he saw. That was a disturbing letter.

The next was even worse.

It was a letter from Lord Karstark. His son, Lord Harrion and his daughter, Lady Alys had not yet returned home from their visit to Winterfell to confirm the betrothal between Robb and his daughter.

They’d departed from Winterfell nearly a moon ago...

Rhaegar
He looked around the room of the small council and greeted his lords as he made his way to the head of the table to take his seat. Ser Gerold and Ser Arthur took their places at the door as he sat down in his chair, the rest of the council following his action.

He nodded across to the opposite side of the table to his hand to commence proceedings.

Jon Connington, Lord of Griffin’s Roost, Hand of the King and dear friend rose to his feet and cleared his throat.

“I would like to thank all of you for joining the King and I to the very first council meeting of the year, the 3rd centenary of Aegon the Conqueror’s coronation.” He said proudly.

“I think the best way to start the meeting off would be an update on celebratory tourney we shall be having to commemorate this occasion, Lord Baelish?” His hand said as he looked at the Master of Coin.

The slender man smiled at Jon, a smile that failed to reach his eyes “Thank you, Lord Hand. The preparations for the tourney are going through as we expected. The prize money for the winners has been decided and placed to one side and the ravens to all the major and minor houses have been sent to inform them of such an event. With all being said and done, the tourney should take place in 2 months as requested by his grace.” Lord Baelish finished as he bowed his head to his King.

The Hand nodded his head and looked around the table, this gave Rhaegar the chance to speak with his Lord of Whispers.

“Lord Varys, what news do we have?” He asked. His Master of Whispers had an incredible talent for collecting information, even things nobody had any right knowing. It was a useful tool to have on his side, scary but useful.

The eunuch bowed his head in reverence “Your Grace, my little birds have been singing some rather peculiar songs at this time.” Varys said as he pulled his hand from beneath the sleeve of his robe and placed a few opened scrolls on the table.

“A few scrolls suggesting betrothals between their son’s and either of the Princesses, nothing new there. An interesting one from Lord Tywin, apparently a few lords and sailors in and around the Westerlands have either seen or heard rumours of a large beast in the clouds passing overhead. Some are saying it looked like a griffin or some sort of large bird, and some are even saying it could
have been a dragon. Lord Tywin has made it clear that if it was one person reporting it, he wouldn’t have wasted his time writing to us but there have been nearly 100 reports of the sighting.” His Master of Whispers said without an ounce of humour in his face. He was sure the odd man was japing.

His Master of Ships, Lord Aurane Waters butted in and laughed “Just a bunch of drunkards seeing what they want to see, nothing more. Honestly surprised you even brought this up, Lord Varys.” The Bastard of Driftmark said. The man was very good at his job but was incredibly full of himself, the endless amount of times he could be seen trying to charm his sister was proof of that.

Lord Varys spoke up “I’m the Lord of Whispers, Lord Aurane. If I weren't listening to the whispers then I wouldn’t be doing my Job properly would I?” He replied.

“There's a difference between whispers and fairy tales Lord Varys.” Aurane replied with a smirk.

“And there also happens to be a difference between bastards and Princesses Lord Aurane. Wouldn’t you agree?” The Lord of Whispers replied, turning his Master of Ships smirk into a scowl.

He needed this childish argument to be over already “Alright! You’ve both said your piece.” He said as both of the men had the decency to look down in shame. “Lord Varys, tell the lords who have requested the hand of my daughter or sister for their son’s that the Princesses are not currently looking for suitors and that when the time comes, they will be taken into consideration.” He said.

“As for the sightings and rumours of this ‘beast’, tell Lord Tywin that if there are any more sightings of it from him or any of his bannermen, he should inform us and we’ll send men to confirm it. Chances are Lord Aurane is correct and it's just a couple of fools playing tricks on Lord Tywin. More fool them.” He finished as Lord Varys nodded his head. With the King agreeing with him, Lord Aurane smirked.

He looked at his Master of Ships “Lord Aurane, what news do have?”

The man cleared his throat “Not much your grace, the royal fleet is in pristine condition and has been making trips through the narrow sea to keep an eye out for potential problems. Other than that, it’s been rather quiet....oh, I almost forgot, a ship with Martell sails was spotted a few miles out from King’s Landing at the break of dawn your grace. I’m not sure of its occupants yet but I will get back to you with that in good time.” The man finished.

“No need, I already know who is on that ship. Rooms for my brother, Prince Viserys and his
brother-in-law, Prince Quentyn will be required for when they arrive, could you see to that for me Jon?” He asked.

The Hand of the King nodded his head “Not a problem your Grace.”

“Good.” He looked around the table “Any more news for me?” He asked.

“Ah yes, the Crown Prince was looking for you your grace. He’s a rather proud father right now and wants to show off his daughter to you.” Jon said with a chuckle.

Rhaegar smiled. Aegon and his wife, Princess Margaery unexpectedly turned up from Dragonstone 2 days ago along with their beautiful month-old daughter, Princess Alysanne Targaryen. A head of wispy silver hair, bright blue eyes and a cute button nose, little Alysanne was the talk of the keep the past 48 hours and Rhaegar couldn’t be a prouder grandfather right now.

Elia had talked about the news of their son’s first child nonstop when they all arrived back from their northern visit. She wanted to go visit instead of waiting for the new parents to appear in the capital but the gods must have been listening because later that very day, the new little family had arrived at the Red Keep along with Ser Barristan and Princess Margaery’s brother and newly appointed Kingsguard, Ser Loras.

To say Elia was ecstatic to see her granddaughter would be an understatement, the look of awe on his wife’s face and the endless cooing at every little detail of the little angel had not failed to put a smile on everybody's mush in the Red Keep. Even Lord Varys who was either a brilliant mummer or was actually capable of showing human emotions was caught smiling.

“I’ll visit with them now if that’s everything. Any more news or am I free to see my granddaughter?” He said as he looked around the council room’s table. He was answered with shakes of the head and took that as a no.

With that he stood from his chair with the rest of the council following suit. He nodded his head at the occupants of the room as they bowed their head in reverence and briskly made his way out of the council room towards his son’s chambers, closely followed by Arthur and Gerold.

He heard them both chuckle as they just about kept up with his increased pace. When he looked over his shoulder to see what they found so funny they covered up their laughter with coughs. He just shook his head at them with a smile on his face and carried on heading towards the Royal wing of
Ser Barristan and Ser Loras were waiting outside his son’s chambers when they arrived.

“Sers. I hear my son has requested an audience with me, is he inside?” He asked as both knights smiled and nodded their heads in confirmation.

“Yes he is, your grace, along with Princess Margaery and Princess Alysanne.” Ser Barristan confirmed.

“Is the Queen not in there also? She’s been rather attached since they arrived.” He chuckled.

“She is not, your Grace. Queen Elia is currently in the Royal Gardens with Princess Rhaenys, Lady Olenna and Lord Willas.” Ser Barristan answered.

_I wonder what that’s about?_ He mused.

He nodded his head and turned to Ser Gerold “You may return to Queen Elia and retake up your guard of her since the small council meeting has ended. You know Ser Arthur will always be enough to take care of me.” He said as the old bull bowed his head and presumably made his way to the Royal Gardens.

He knocked on the door and announced himself before entering Aegon’s chambers. The first thing he noticed was Aegon looking up at him, sat behind his desk with an open book sat in front of him.

“Hello father, what a lovely surprise. What brings you here this fine afternoon?” Aegon or Egg as everybody called him said with a grin on his face.

“Hello son. Well, you see, the Hand of the King informed me that the Crown Prince was looking for me so I sought you out as soon as the council meeting was over...but I think we both know why I’m here.” He said with a smile.

Egg copied his smile with one of his own “Aye, I think I do. My wife and daughter are currently taking a nap in the bedchambers and nursery respectively, so you’ll have to be quiet when we enter.”
He said. Rhaegar noticed the proud look on his son’s face at the mention of his new budding family.

He nodded as Egg got up from his desk and made his way towards the nursery door, he looked over his shoulder at Rhaegar and put his finger on his lips as he slowly and quietly crepted the door open. His son entered the room and he followed him inside.

At the opposite side of the room was the beautiful crib him and Elia had gifted the new parents when the pregnancy was announced and inside was the most precious angel in the world.

Little Princess Alysanne was blissfully asleep in her crib, her small chest moving up and down with each breath and a tiny snore made Rhaegar melt internally.

He looked up at Egg “She’s a true Targaryen angel son, you should be very proud, the both of you should.” He said as he nodded his head towards the bedchamber Margaery was currently sleeping in. “I won’t disturb her now but I want another hold later on.” He said as his son smiled and nodded his head.

“You’ll have to get in line I’m afraid, I’ve already had promises of cuddles from mother and everybody else under the sun.” Egg said as they both exited the nursery.

He put his arm around his son’s shoulders, only just though. Aegon was now the same height as him. “Everyone is in high spirits over the birth of your daughter, a new Princess of the realm. It's an exciting time to be a Targaryen son, who knows what the future will bring.”

An exciting time indeed.

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Jon

The air around them was dry and humid and had been that way for a few hours now. The bearskin cloak that he’d had commissioned by a seamstress in Kochi had been discarded and packed away with the rest of his belongings due to the heat, even without the cloak he could still feel his tunic sticking to his back. The appreciated breeze that came with the honour of flying was still not enough to counter act against the sun beating down on him.

Dorne. They must be in Dorne. The lush greens and multitude of colour they’d flown over could
have only been The Reach but the greens had become sparse amongst the landscape, the only colour being the reds and whites of the sand below them.

They’d been flying nonstop for the entire day in an attempt to make good time on getting to their destination. *Kireina* had been flying the fastest she’d ever flown with Jon on her back, either she was trying to impress him, which was working or she was as keen to get to where they were going as much as him.

At this moment in time, the sun had begun to set and the cool air of the night had begun to creep in. Stretching his arm towards and into his bag, Jon grabbed his cloak and wrapped it around his shoulders. He still marvelled at the excellent job the seamstress had done with the bear pelt he’d provided her with, not only was it warm but it was also functional in case he ever found himself in a fight or on the run.

Looking down towards the ground, Jon noticed the river they’d been following the past few hours getting wider and wider with every mile *Kireina* ate up. He hoped and prayed this was the right river they were following, that this was in fact the *Torentine* river that would ultimately lead him to the castle he was seeking out.

Starfall. The home of his mother if the rumours were true. The home of one Ashara Dayne.

On their journey here, he’d thought of what he would say the moment he clocked eyes with her, those haunting violet eyes that were whispered about around Winterfell. Would he become speechless? Would he fumble with his words as he tried to take in every detail about the woman? A woman he’d only dreamt of before now.

Would she welcome him with open arms or scorn? Would she answer his questions and more specifically, would she answer the question he’d always wanted to know...

*Why did you leave me?*

He shook his head, he was getting way ahead of himself. She might not even be my mother. This was just the first step in trying to find out who his mother was and assuming the first step would be the only step would be naïve.

*Where do I go if she isn't my mother though?*
The only thing he knew was that he was born in Dorne, people had whispered it, Lord Stark had confirmed it to him when he asked...it was the least the man could do.

He’d whittled it down to a certain time frame and desperately hoped he was correct. If he was, it would make this a lot easier. In the rebellion, Lord Eddard Stark had departed from King’s Landing after King Rhaegar had taken control of the city. Him and some of his men went to Dorne to retrieve his sister who, unfortunately, had perished from some sort of fever when they got there, something Lord Stark had always been closed up about. In fact, the whole situation involving his aunt was clouded in mystery.

He would then travel back to King’s Landing with his sister’s bones to show to the King and Queen who, it turned out, had married Lyanna Stark. Depart by boat from the capital, arrive at White Harbour and travel back to Winterfell.

_So my mother was either in Dorne or resided in between White Harbour and Winterfell..._

_FUCK!..._ He thought as he slammed his fist down on his thigh.

He huffed with frustration. Why couldn’t Lord Stark just tell him? What the fuck was so hard about that? It would make it all so much easier for everybody involved.

All he knew was that as soon as he had sufficient evidence and research, he’d be throwing the whole fucking lot into Lord Stark’s face and watching closely for the cracks to emerge, giving him the chance to smash through them and into the truth. One thing was for certain, if he didn’t know who his mother was already, he wouldn’t be leaving Winterfell without the truth.

As dusk turned to night, the darkness came with it. The reflection of the moon on the river guiding them along. _Kireina_ seemed to speed up in her already blistering pace, intrigue whispered in the back of his mind through their bond. He noticed what she was so interested in a few moments later.

An Island. And more specifically on that island was the castle he hoped was Starfall.

The real question was how the fuck was he going to approach without causing a scene. The last thing he wanted was mass hysteria when he was trying to be as discreet as possible.

They’d have to land on the outskirts of the river and camp out for the night, then early next morning
he’d have to go and find a crossing or a boat to get over there. Yes, that sounds like the best idea.

And so that is what he did. After landing and making up a little camp for the night, *Kireina* set off to have a little nosey around her new surroundings with the instruction of keeping out of sight as best as possible. The moment she was spotted that was it, they were done and would probably be hunted down by every fucker with a hunger for glory and a death wish.

Not much trouble was found through the night, an intrigued wild animal here and there was about the worst of it. It wasn’t long before the sun was rising on his face and he was being woken from his fitful sleep. It wasn’t that he was uncomfortable, quite the contrary. A solid ground to sleep on for the first time in weeks was a godsend. No, he found it hard to sleep because of what he could be learning today. Today could possibly be the day he met his mother.

After fully waking up and having a wash in the river for the first time in 2 weeks he packed up his cloak he’d slept on and made his way towards the small docks that were further up the river. His sword belt and swords were tied around his waist in the walk up there and he came to realise that he may find a backstrap to hold his swords would be more ideal when moving about, it might be more ideal in general.

He arrived at the rather quiet dock and approached a man who was clearly selling the service of ferrying people to and from Starfall.

The man bolted up from his seat when he saw Jon approaching “Ah, friend, how can I help you on this fine morning?” The balding man asked in a thick dornish accent. His cheery tone annoying Jon to the core this early on in the morning.

He was in no mood for pleasantries and got straight to the point “How much to cross the river to Starfall?”

The man rubbed his chin as he eyed Jon’s person, eyes lingering on the swords around his waist “A dragon.” The fool dared to ask for.

“A dragon?! I’m not paying that!” He answered in annoyance.

The daylight robber had the nerve to grin “Those are my prices, take it or leave it. You could swim...or even fly, that way you wouldn’t get wet.” The man finished as he laughed at his own joke.
“Don’t tempt me.” He whispered under his breath.

“What was that?” The man said.

“Nothing. Listen, I’ll give you 20 stags.” He said.

The man laughed and, in the process, broke any patience Jon had with him “No.” The man rubbed his chin pretending to be in deep thought. “50 stags.” He counter offered.

Jon was getting annoyed, it was too early for this kind of shit. He realised he’d make a shit salesman, he just didn’t have the patience for it “30 stags and I won’t cut you in half.” He growled out.

The man’s smile fell and he looked down from Jon’s face and to his hands that were resting on each of his swords.

The man put his hands up in defence “Now now, no need for trouble. I’m just trying to earn an honest living.” The man admitted.

He was done with this whole conversation and just wanted to get across the river “20 stags now.” He said as he handed the coin over “And 20 stags when we get there. Do we have a deal?” He asked.

The man seemed to release a breath when Jon had finished talking “That suits me fine my friend.” He said as he saluted Jon and motioned for him to follow him on to his small boat.

The journey across was quiet, it would seem Jon had spooked the man and turned him into a mute. The closer they got to Starfall the more awed he was at its appearance.

The castle looked like it was part of the island itself. White stone walls and tall towers made up the most of its structure, the tallest of which must have been the famous Palestone Sword Tower.
As they made their way around the island, he realised the island did in fact have a bridge that connected it to the mainland. He looked across to the man who was ferrying him and he had the decency to look away.

“I suppose it's my own fault for not looking properly.” He said as the man gave him a smile.

“Happens to the best of us friend.” The sailor replied as they approached the docks. As soon as the boat came to a stop he got up from his seat and handed him the 20 stags he promised. The man thanked him and seemed to hang around in the hopes of finding more custom for his return journey.

Jon was too busy to notice whether or not he was successful as he was approached by two guards wearing dark purple robes.

“State your business traveller.” One of the guards said whilst the other eyed his swords. Straight to the point, he liked their style.

“I would like to request an audience with Lady Ashara.” He answered.

Both the guards chuckled at the request “What makes you think we’d grant you that request?” One of them said in a thick dornish accent.

He knew it wouldn’t have been that easy “Because I’m getting into Starfall one way or another and I imagine you’d rather it be because you granted my request and not because your shit at your job.” He replied without a hint of humour.
The guards looked at each other and one nodded to the other before one of them seemed to walk back up to the castle. Him and the other guard stood there in silence as they both seemed to sus one another out.

Jon broke the silence after 5 minutes.

“How long you been doing this?” He asked in his attempt at small talk. He didn’t care how long this random man had been a guard that’s for certain, why would he?

His only response was a grunt as the guard looked back up towards the castle, probably hoping his friend would save him from the stranger asking him odd questions.

“Do you think he got lost?” He asked. He was clearly making the man uncomfortable and he couldn’t for the life of him care. Thankfully, based on the man’s sigh of relief, the guard hadn't got lost and was making his back down to them.

“Lady Ashara has granted you an audience but your weapons have to be handed over.” The returning guard said.

He eyed the precious dragonsteel blades and looked back at the guards “I accept. But if steal them, damage them or in any way mess around with them and don’t worry I'll know, you’ll regret it.” He warned as he handed over the blades. The guards eyed the odd swords with genuine interest.

The journey to the castle was quick, he got a few intriguing looks here and there but overall it was very uneventful. The guards were quiet all the way there and it wasn’t long before he was being escorted to a solar inside the main keep. The main keep itself was very neat and pristine, white stone and tapestries of House Dayne’s sigil of a shooting star and sword adorning the walls. Jon was broken from his thoughts when they stopped in front of a pair of white painted doors.

*Is this it? Is this the moment I meet my mother for the first time?*

One of the guards knocked on the door “...”, the guard turned to him “What’s your name?” He asked.
“Jon, Jon Snow.” He replied. He had no reason to lie.

The guard spoke up so the occupants of the room could hear him “Jon Snow is here for his audience he requested my Lady.”

The door was ripped open and there stood not a middle-aged woman but a younger one about his age. He looked down at her and couldn’t lie to himself, she was a rather beautiful young lady. She had pitch black hair that flowed down her back, a heart shaped face, dark grey eyes and a subtle pink blush on her cheeks as she made eye contact with him.

“Clarissa! Don’t be so rude!” A woman’s voice called out from the other side of the room.

The young woman looked chastised and exited the room. One of the guards who escorted him here followed her down the corridor, she turned around and had one last look at him before turning a corner out of sight. He received a small nudge in the back from the remaining guard and entered the room.

Stood at the other end of the room behind a desk was the most beautiful woman he’d ever met.

The guard spoke up “Lady Ashara, this is the man who requested an audience with you, Jon Snow.”

Lady Ashara nodded her head without taking those alluring dark violet eyes off of him “You may leave us.” She said as she looked back at the guard.

“Are you sure my lady?” The guard replied.

“I'm positive, you can go now.” She replied. Jon hadn't torn his eyes away from her yet.

The guard must have bowed or something, Jon was too distracted to tell, all he knew was that as soon as the door was closed it was just the two of them. They both drank in each other's appearance before Lady Ashara broke the silence.

“Why have you come here?” She asked with a little bit of aggression.
It was too late to back down now and with the aggression taking him by surprise he just blurted out the first thing that came to mind.

“Are you my mother?”

You could've heard a pin drop.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks again for reading my ramblings lol, the reaction has been more than I could have ever expected :)

Again, all images are taken from a Google Image search.
Jon

Time seemed to drag on endlessly as he awaited her answer with bated breath. The look of shock and confusion taking over the woman in front of his very eyes, he just hoped he’d not fucked this up with how tactless he’d been with his loaded question.

“No.” Was her answer.

That one word. Who would think one word could do so much damage? A spear to the heart, a hope ripped apart in front of his very eyes.

He looked up at her eyes in the hopes it was a slip of the tongue, an involuntary reaction to seeing her son for the very first time in 17 years, almost like she couldn’t believe who was standing right in front of her very eyes.

Instead of seeing that, all he saw was a look of determination and to Jon...annoyance.

“Are you sure?” He asked and instantly regretted what he’d said. Are you sure? It’d be pretty hard thing to miss.

The annoyed look grew on her face, *yep, he’d fucked up.* “Am I sure?” She asked in a low tone of voice. She shook her head “Is this some sort of jape? Who are you, did my brother send you in some form of joke?” She asked.
He knew he needed to start this whole thing off with a fresh start. He breathed in and shook his head “No this isn't a joke and I think we’ve got off on the wrong foot, my fault entirely.” He cleared his throat “My name is Jon Snow, I’m Lord Eddard Stark’s b...”

He didn’t get to finish as he was abruptly interrupted “Ned Stark? Don’t ever mention that man’s name in my presence ever again!” She fumed, momentarily taking Jon by surprise. “The man is nothing but a liar and a coward!” She continued. She looked back at him fury in her eyes, now was not the time to be oddly aroused by this force of a woman.

She’s not your mother, she said so herself. There’s nothing odd with admiring this fiery dornish woman.

“And I’m guessing you’re his son, the one he had outside his and his wife’s marriage bed?” She guessed.

“You can say bastard you know, it's actually funny how little that word or what it means affects me anymore.” He said with a grin. He appreciated the way she worded the circumstances of his birth but the subtlety was unneeded at this point, the word had lost its edge and couldn't be used as a weapon against him anymore.

She looked annoyed at his reply “I know I can say that word, I just choose not to. It's a horrible word in the first place and the way it's used is meant to be demeaning.”

He was starting to like this woman even more. He only just realised something though “Wait, so you’ve met Ned Stark before?” He asked. He’d heard the rumours before, the rumours of him being smitten with the lady right in front of him but that’s all he thought they were, rumours.

It seems the plot thickens he thought to himself.

Now he really saw the anger spew from her entire being “Met him? That man was supposed to be my husband! The promises we made to each other didn’t seem to be even worth their weight in piss to that man. The rebellion happened and I wasn’t even an afterthought to him.” She growled out.

She wasn’t done either “The last thing that man ever said to me was his promise to me. He promised he would talk to his father, promised he would make his father agree to the secret betrothal we’d mutually agreed on.” She sat back down at her desk and sighed “We were in love or more specifically, I was in love like the fool I was. Evidently he’d gotten what he wanted and completely
forgot about me shortly after.” She finished.

Still processing what she’d said he still asked what he probably knew the answer to “And what was it he got from you?”

She looked up at him like he was stupid “Do I really need to spell it out for you? A good looking lad like you must have had some action with the ladies, loved them and left them no doubt...just like your father I suppose.” She said, bitterness laced in every word.

“Don't compare me to that man, I’m nothing like him.” He almost shouted out.

She had the decency to look down in shame “Sorry, don’t listen to me. I shouldn't be taking it out on you. The man is full of secrets and if you're going around asking people if they're your mother I’m guessing he’s been keeping secrets from you as well.” She said as she looked on at him in pity.

“17 years I've been alive and every time I've asked him about my mother, he’s said he’d tell me when the time was right. I got bored of waiting for him to decide when that was and just left. Best decision I’ve ever made.” He said.

She gave him a smile “No regrets?” She asked.

He sighed “The only regret was not personally telling my siblings I was leaving.” He shook his head “It was necessary though, if they'd got wind of my plans I would've been watched like a hawk and would’ve never found the opportunity to leave.”

Ashara left her desk and moved over to a cabinet at the side of the room. She picked up a decanter and poured them both a glass of red wine, dornish red he assumed.

“Were you close with your brothers and sisters?” She asked as she handed him a glass.

He took the glass and thanked her “Thanks. Yeah, we were close, I’d like to think we still are. I love them all unconditionally and would do anything for any one of them. I just hope my time away hasn’t soured our relationship.” He finished as he necked the entire glass, the burn in his throat welcomed.
She quirked an eyebrow as he went and refilled his glass. “If you love them and the feeling is mutual then I imagine they just miss you.” She said as she took a sip from her glass. “I bet your father misses you as well and maybe even Lady Stark in some sense.” She said but it sounded more like a question.

He snorted as he returned to his seat. “I couldn’t care less if Lord Stark misses me, he made his choice, I made mine. It's up to him to live with those choices the same way I’ve lived with mine.” He said.

“And Lady Stark?” Ashara said with a mix of intrigue and anger.

He let out a laugh. “Lady Stark...That woman is a fart in a hurricane when it comes to the bigger picture. Granted, she didn’t need to be nice to her husband’s bastard but she could have at least treated me with an ounce of humanity.” He chuckled. “I thought I hated her I really did, but the few years spent away from her has made me realise that I just tolerate her existence. I think she was just angry with me because she had an excuse to be angry with the reminder of her husband's infidelity.”

“Didn’t Lord Stark speak up about your treatment?” Ashara asked. She looked rather annoyed.

He shrugged his shoulders as he took a sip of his wine. “He tried but what could he really do? Take his wife’s or his bastard’s side of the argument?” He grinned which seemed to catch Ashara by surprise, she must think I’m mad. “I was the worst shit to her in my last few months there. The way I saw it, I had nothing to lose.” He said. “The last day I was there, she struck me across the face for something I said.” He smiled as he looked out the window that was across the room, deep in thought. “She ever does that again I’ll break every bone in that fucking hand of hers.” He finished.

He looked back at Ashara who seemed to have been taken back by his little outbreak. “Sorry. Not something you really want to be hearing is it?” He said.

She shook her head. “No, it's fine. She sounds like a wonderful person.” She said. She looked down at her lap and stared at her hands, brow furrowed in deep thought. Whatever it was she was thinking of it seemed she’d made a decision with deep breath she took and released.

“Look, I can see that you aren't Lord and Lady Stark’s biggest fan but you care very much for your siblings.” She said. He didn’t like the serious look she had on her face, almost like something was about to happen. The dragonsteel dagger belted around his right ankle he’d been gifted by one of the rescued Daimyo from Euron’s ship was a reassurance.
He nodded as he saw Ashara visibly swallow.

“I’m going to tell you something and before I do, you need to know I had my reasons.” She said.

Jon was getting anxious “Ookay.” He replied.

“You were one of those reasons.” She said.

Now he was just confused. It must have showed on his face because she was quick to explain.

“I thought me and your father were in love with each other, that turned out not to be the case. He got what he wanted and left me to fend for myself after the rebellion.” She shook her head. “I understand he wanted to get his sister back but I'll never forgive him or House Tully for what they did. Greed from House Tully or Ned just neglecting to tell anyone of our betrothal caused me so much anger and resentment.” She said. She was practically shaking with emotion.

She took a calming breath before she spoke again “And then news came of your existence and all was lost. You were evidence of what I didn’t think Lord Stark was capable of. He was so kind and sincere when we first met and all the way up to the last day we saw each other. Evidently that was all an act that I fell for so easily, like the young naïve girl that I was. I couldn’t believe I’d found a man who saw me for more than just my looks.” She looked away from him as he saw the moisture building in her eyes “In a way he was the worst because I fell for it.”

Jon couldn’t believe what he was hearing, he knew his father had secrets but he didn’t know he had this many. Turns out Lady Ashara had her own when she spoke again...

“With the stories you’ve been telling me, with the way you were treated growing up, I made the right decision with what I did. She would’ve been taken away from me the same way you were taken away from your mother and she would've hated every minute just like you did.”

Now he was really confused “She? Who’s she?” He said. The next words that came out of her mouth were shocking to say the least.

“My daughter. Your half-sister.” Was all that was said.
His eyebrows shot up at that. The room was silent for a few moments as he tried to get his head around what she’d just said. Her daughter...his half-sister. He had so many questions to ask Ashara. Does Lord Stark know about her existence? If he did then why didn’t he tell any of them about their sister? Can he meet this sister of his? The questions ran through his head like a stampede.

It would seem that one of his questions would be answered straight away. “Would you like to meet her?” Ashara said.

He nodded “I would love to meet my sister.” He responded with a smile he couldn’t stop. It would seem that his answer was the right one as a smile lit up Ashara’s face in response.

He came here looking for his mother but ended up finding a sister instead. He shook his head as Ashara led him out of the room...

*What other secrets do I not know about?* He mused.

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**Ashara**

She walked along the pristine corridors of her home along with one of the house guards and the boy, no...man who was currently taking up the most of her thoughts. It was shaping up to be a rather boring day with how many mundane tasks she had to complete before the end of it but Jon had turned up and was turning out to be a pleasant surprise.

The first time she set eyes on him it was like looking at a young Ned...well, if Ned was half a foot taller, fifty pounds of muscle heavier and had a chiseled jawline under the thickest beard she’d ever seen. To put it bluntly, Ashara appreciated the view...until he opened his mouth and blurted out the last thing she expected to hear. The questioning on whether or not she was his mother put the whole situation into perspective, Jon was a very young man and she was a jilted, middle aged woman old enough to actually be his mother.

And when he revealed he was Ned’s baseborn son well, the bigger picture was revealed and her lustful tendencies were well and truly reigned in...*for now.*

“What’s your daughter’s name?” Came the young man’s question as they made their way towards her daughter’s chambers, essentially breaking her from her thoughts.
She turned to look at him and smiled. *Gods, he was a handsome lad.* His colouring was all Stark but whoever it was that turned Ned’s eye, she must have been stunning and most definitely passed on her beauty to her son. Her smile wavered at that thought. *Turned out Ned was like every man after all, using his other head to do the thinking.*

He quirked an eyebrow at her and she realised she’d not answered his question.

She cleared her throat “Her names Clarissa, named after her ancestor *Lady Clarisse Dayne.*” She answered as they rounded a corner and approached her Clarissa’s chambers.

Jon smiled and looked down “That's a lovely name my lady. Am I right in guessing that the young lady that I bumped into in your solar was your daughter?” He asked.

She nodded “You would be correct in your assumption my lord.” She said as she quizzically smiled when he shook his head.

“Just Jon my lady. I'm not a lord nor do I wish to be one.” He answered.

It was her turn to quirk an eyebrow this time “You do not wish to be a lord m...Jon? And why is that may I ask?” She questioned.

He smiled when she asked that, it seemed an easy smile, not one plastered on by the many lords she’d met in her lifetime “Being a lord just seems so...so constrictive, like there’s too many rules that prevent you from actually living.” His smile didn’t waver as he continued “In some odd twisted way, there’s something about being a nobody that’s extremely valuable. It grants you a degree of freedom if you will.” He finished.

“But with the circumstances of your birth, don’t you sometimes wish for that recognition of being trueborn? That one thing that stops the nasty comments or the poor treatment from the ones who, because of their birth, think they’re better than you?” She questioned.

He shook his head “Maybe a few years ago but not anymore. Now that I have a better understanding on things, the words that are used to bring me down mean absolutely fuck all to me. If a lord or lady tries to argue with me or attempts to belittle me with words about bastardry or what have you, I'll just laugh in their face. I'll laugh in their face because I know that’s all they’ve got, that they're nothing without their lordship. Using the gift of being trueborn that was bestowed upon them at birth as a weapon just makes that person look like a spoilt, stuck up cunt in my opinion. Sorry for the language
Ashara was very surprised with his answer, either he had a rather large chip on his shoulder or he did in fact believe in what he was saying. And with the sense he was speaking when talking about bratty lords being entitled based purely on their status of birth, she believed it was the latter.

She waved off his apology for his language, she was a lady not a septa. They carried on walking until they finally reached her daughter’s chambers, distinguished by the guard at her door.

The guard in question knocked on Clarissa’s door and announced that her mother was here to pay her a visit. It wasn’t long before the door was being opened and her daughter was looking into her eyes, the eyes of the Starks, the eyes of the man right behind her.

“Clarissa darling, may we come in? I’ve got somebody I would like you to meet.” She said as her daughter briefly looked over her shoulder, no doubt eyeing Jon up. This could get awkward if the faint blush that was appearing on her cheeks was anything to go by.

Clarissa opened her door wider to let her and Jon in.

Ashara scanned the room and noticed an open book on her desk, she picked it up and noticed it was the book her uncle Arthur had sent her for her last name day. It was titled *Dragons, Wyrm's, and Wyverns: Their Unnatural History* and according to Arthur, it was a rather difficult book to find a copy of. Fortunately for Clarissa, Arthur had a rather good source when it came to rare books. She imagined King Rhaegar was involved in that regard.

She turned to her daughter who was currently busying herself by cleaning and putting things back in their place whilst sneaking looks at Jon. “I'm surprised you haven't worn this book out Clarissa.” She chuckled as she picked up said book.

Clarissa stopped what she was doing and grabbed the book from her hands and closed it. “You know I love this book mother and with recent events that have come to light, I deem it necessary to read up on dragons further.” She said as she placed the book back down on her desk.

She quirked an eyebrow at that “You still believe in what you told me earlier?” She sighed “I don’t mean to rain on your parade sweetie but what you saw was probably some bird or some sort of weird reflection off the sea. I very much doubt what you saw was a dragon, they’ve been extinct for over a hundred years for starters.” She explained.
Clarissa shook her head as she huffed “I know what I saw mother.” She said as she looked directly into her eyes, eyes that diverted to the man stood at the door when Jon coughed.

Ashara at that point realised she not introduced the two “Oh gods, where are my manners. Jon, this is my daughter Clarissa. Clarissa, this is Jon Snow...erm...” She said as she struggled with how to present Jon to her daughter.

Jon cleared his throat and held out his hand for Clarissa to shake “I’m a close relative.” Was all that he said as they shook hands.

Clarissa quirked an eyebrow at that and looked towards Ashara for clarification.

\textit{Brilliant. Seems like subtly isn't something Jon is too fond of.}

She cleared her throat and briefly glared at the young man “Yes, a relative. Clarissa darling, you might want to sit down for this little chat.” She said.

Clarissa frowned and hesitantly sat on her bed, Ashara sat next to her and Jon brought a chair from across the room and sat in front of the pair of them.

She looked towards her daughter, Clarissa herself was too busy eyeing Jon up and down to even notice her mother.

“Clarissa...” She said as her daughter dragged her eyes away from Jon “We’ve talked about your father in the past, haven't we?” She said as a grim look came over her daughter's face “And I’ve told you who he is and why I've not told him about you haven't I?” She said as delicately as she could.

Clarissa sighed “I know mother. I've heard the reasons why and I can't help but agree with them...” She said before a whole different look took over her beautiful face “but a part of me wished he knew, wished he knew so he could see what he’s missed all of his life.” She finished.

Ashara knew how passionate Clarissa was about the whole situation regarding her father. She remembers when she told an eight year old Clarissa who her father was and then explaining it all further to her six years later. To say her daughter blew her top over Lord Starks actions would be an
“And I understand you wanting to hurt him, trust me, I know.” She said as she shook her head and looked up at Jon who was quietly taking in all the anger his father had caused to her and her daughter “You’re not the only one he’s hurt in the past Clarissa.” She finished as her daughter followed her line of sight.

Her daughter looked confused at first but that was quickly remedied with what she said next. “Clarissa, Jon here is Lord Starks son...your half-brother.”

Jon gave her daughter a little smile and wave “Hello Clarissa, it's an honour to meet you.” He said to ease the awkwardness of the whole situation.

Clarissa herself just shook her head in confusion “I don’t understand, I thought you lived with Lord Stark? What’s he done to hurt you?” She asked in an almost judgemental tone.

His smile disappeared at her question “You’re right, I did live under Lord Stark’s roof, and I went wanting for nothing. I got a bed to sleep in, I got regular meals every day, I got a decent education and I got to grow up knowing my brothers and sisters...by the way, you’d love every one of them just like I do.” He sighed “It's the torment that finally made me leave that place.”

Clarissa looked even more confused than before “The torment?”

He looked at her and then back at Clarissa “Listen, I’m just gonna be straight with you, I don’t deal well with any of this heavy shit and talking about it all is the last thing I want to be doing right now.” He said as Clarissa’s eyebrows shot up “I’ll just get straight to the point. Since the age of about 5 or 6 I’ve been asking Lord Stark about my mother and I didn’t stop for almost a decade with my questioning. In that time, the only thing I ever found out was that I was born in Dorne. I don’t know her name, where she lives, if she knows about me or if she’s even alive.”

“Well, I got well and truly fed up with the whole situation, coupled with the fact that Lady Stark was nothing but a raging bitch towards me and the pair of them seemingly angling for me to join the nights watch, I decided to take matters into my own hands and decided to just fuck off. The only regrets I have are that I couldn’t personally say goodbye to my siblings.” He said as he took a calming breath.

“Fast forward nearly 3 years after I left to now, where the only reason I’m in Starfall right now is
because of some dumb rumour that your mother was in actual fact my mother. Turns out she’s not but at least I made the right choice in coming here or I wouldn’t have found out I had another sister...The end.” He finished as he seemed to slump in his chair in relief.

Mother and daughter were both silent after what had been said, no doubt absorbing what had just been said.

Jon seemed to take that the wrong way “Listen...” He said as he rose to his feet “I’m just gonna go, this seems to have been a mistake. I’m annoyed that the search for my mother continues but I’m glad I got to meet you. It’s safe to say, I won't be informing Lord Stark of anything that has happened today...he’s not the only one who can keep fucking secrets.” He seemed to growl out as he picked up his chair and moved it back to its original spot.

Clarissa shot up from her bed “No wait!” She said as she grabbed hold of Jon’s arm.

Jon looked down at her, almost startled by Clarissa’s outburst.

Clarissa held his hand in between her two smaller one “At least stay for dinner...I want to hear about my brothers and sisters...I want to get to know you.” She said as she bit her bottom lip and looked up at him with her big grey eyes.

Whatever it was that Jon saw it seemed to do the Job as he all but melted at the look Clarissa was giving him. “Okay, I’ll stay. A warm meal sounds lovely. And it would be my pleasure telling you all about our siblings.” He said as Clarissa hooked her arm around Jon’s and headed towards the door. Ashara just shook her head and smiled at her daughter’s antics.

“Well, let me start off by telling you about our little devil of a sister...” Was all she heard as they exited the room.

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**Daenerys**

She lifted her skirts as she upped her pace, the corridors of the Red Keep were almost a blur with how light footed she was being, all to avoid the one person she really didn’t want to be talking to right now. Ser Jaime was hot on her heels in an attempt to keep up along with that annoying but charming grin he carried so very well. There was no doubt he knew the reason for her eager pace.
“Your Grace! He’s your brother, it can’t be that bad.” Ser Jaime huffed out as he finally caught up.

He nearly bumped into her as she stopped and turned around, a quirked eyebrow aimed at him “Really Ser Jaime? You’ve met my brother, one of the greatest moments of my life was when my brother told me Viserys was marrying and subsequently moving to Sunspear. You know why I don’t want to see him, the ravens have been getting more and more aggressive.” She said as she turned back around and carried on down the corridor.

Ah the ravens. Viserys had been living in Sunspear for around 2 years now and within the first 6 moons of his stay she’d received 5 ravens from him, each one getting more and more aggressive. To cut a long story short, her brother hated living in Dorne, hated living with the Martells, hated his wife and ultimately, hated their brother for making all of that happen.

The first 5 ravens she’d read and kept to herself, obviously Viserys needed somebody to vent to and she was kind of surprised she was the one he’d chosen. Even with him moving away she couldn’t get rid of him. But then the ravens changed, as much as her brother thought she was stupid and simple she, unluckily for him, wasn’t in the slightest. A pattern had started to emerge in the letters he would send to her and she cottoned on pretty early.

He was trying to get out of his marriage.

According to Rhaenys, who had heard from Tyene, who had been told by Arianne, Viserys had only ever visited their marriage bed the one time and that was the night of the wedding. She’d blushed when Rhae had told her everything that Tyene had told her, the fact that Viserys hadn't even finished inside Arianne due to his heavy drinking at the wedding feast. And since he’d not slept with her since, it was no surprise they’d been no pregnancy announcement.

So Viserys wasn’t even visiting his wife’s bed. He’d also mentioned time after time how he felt belittled and laughed at behind his back by everyone in Dorne, how nobody showed him the respect he should be shown except for the likes of his brother in law, Prince Quentyn and his new personal guard, Gerold Dayne. Prince Quentyn was another man she didn’t want to show the time of day to either and was very involved in her brother’s mad plan, a plan that was doomed to fail.

Turns out, Gerold Dayne was more than just a new personal guard, he was in on this elaborate scheme as well, along with her brother and Quentyn...with her unfortunately being the catalyst that tied this entire thing together.

Viserys wanted out of his marriage with Arianne but couldn’t end it without causing offence to the Martells. He couldn’t kill Arianne, she knew her brother had psychopathic tendencies but even she
knew he wouldn’t do such a thing. So, his way of fixing all of this would be to runaway to Essos for a few years, the Martells would be offended by his disappearance and demand an annulment and some form of compensation. And in her brother’s twisted mind, her marrying Quentyn was more than enough to fix that.

Gerold Dayne, or Darkstar as some people liked to refer to him as, also profited from this whole farce. The man believed if Viserys was out of the picture then he had a shot at taming the Princess of Dorne for himself. The whole situation made her sick and she wanted absolutely nothing to with it, thus she’d decided to ignore every single one of Viserys’ progressively worse letters.

And then he’d turned up in King’s Landing and she couldn’t ignore him as easily as she wanted to anymore.

She’d only seen him once since he’d arrived and that was during the welcoming party. She’d kissed each of his cheeks in a public show of endearment, fooling absolutely nobody who knew about their childhood. He’d gripped her shoulders like a vice when they’d embraced, not too dissimilar to when they were kids. A whispered breath in her ear “We need to talk soon sister.” was all that was said and he moved on to greet the rest of the family.

Viserys had used the excuse of seeing his new grand-niece for coming to the capital but with Prince Quentyn and Ser Gerold Dayne accompanying him, she wasn’t easily fooled...that and the fact that Viserys didn’t give a fuck about the ‘Half breeds’ of the family.

Daenerys and Ser Jaime hurried down one of the many corridors in the Red Keep with no particular destination in mind.

‘Maybe I should go and see Alysanne again, Viserys definitely won't be there.’

“Where are we going? if you don’t mind me asking, your grace?” Ser Jaime questioned as his polished armour clunked in the silence of the corridor.

“I’m not quite sure yet but anywhere that isn't in Viserys’ presence is always ideal. I think another visit to my grand-niece is in order, don’t you?” She said.

They were moving that quick that when they rounded one of the many corners in this maze she calls home, she collided into the chest of an unsuspecting individual. Ser Jaime held onto her shoulder and steadied her which gave her the opportunity to look up at whoever she’d clashed with.
“Your grace, what a pleasant surprise. If I knew you were in such a rush to see me, I would have come to you immediately.” Lord Aurane drawled out.

Dany rolled her eyes, it’s not that she hated the man, it was more to do with what he wanted, and he was barking up the wrong tree. The fact that he looked very similar to her brother Rhaegar was enough to make any form of intimacy with the man way too awkward and off putting, coupled with the fact that he was so far up his own arse he could probably taste his breakfast, Dany couldn’t for the life of her see Lord Aurane as anything but a pest.

“Don’t worry my Lord, I don’t think people being in a rush to see you is something you should be worrying about.” She said in the most innocent tone she could.

Lord Aurane just looked at the ground and smirked “Duly noted your grace.” He said before looking back at her “If I may be so forward in saying, you look beautiful on this fine day your grace.” He said as he seemed to put his best smouldering look on. To Dany, the compliment was as basic as anything she’d heard from any of her suitors and his face looked like a mongrel chewing a wasp.

She would play this little game though, if she kept him keen then maybe he could be useful against the many advances from her suitors, mainly Prince Quentyn.

She lifted her chin and looked him right in the eyes “I know.” Was all she said and proceeded to carry on walking, past the now smiling Master of Ships. She wasn’t a vain person but she wasn’t naïve enough to think she was ugly, their family had always been blessed with the great beauty of their dragonlord ancestors.

Ser Jaime caught up with her quite quickly, she could almost hear the smirk on his face when he spoke “Well played your grace, you know I’ve never been much of a fan of his and to see him dismissed so casually really warms my heart.” He said. She turned and looked over her shoulder and just smiled back at him.

“Dogs can be useful if they’re trained Ser Jaime, I’m dangling the treat completely out of his reach with one hand and tying the collar around his neck with the other.” She whispered to him in an amused tone.
Ser Jaime just shook his head and grinned “You’ve been spending too much time with your mother.” He said as they reached a door to the outside that lead to the Royal Gardens. Two guards bowed their heads as they opened the door for her.

She looked over her shoulder again at Ser Jaime “So what if I do, I love my mother and she is a remarkable woman.” She said in a tone that refused anything but agreement. Her mother was the most remarkable woman she would ever meet, a survivor and warrior in her own way. If her grace was a weapon, her mother could wield it and cut down any knight with minimal effort.

Ser Jaime to his credit looked down and almost whispered in agreement “That she is your grace, that she is.” He said as he looked back up at her with the most serious face she’d seen on him in a while before his eyes wandered just over her shoulder and widened.

He put his arm around her shoulder and ushered her towards the stables at the bottom of the hill. “Don't look now your grace but I've just seen the three people you’ve been avoiding all this time.” He said in a hushed voice.

Obviously when somebody tells you not to look you look anyway and Daenerys had always been an inquisitive soul. With quick look over her shoulder, the words Ser Jaime had uttered were confirmed. Viserys along with Prince Quentyn and Ser Gerold were having what looked like a rather interesting conversation with her nephew and niece, Aegon and Rhaenys. The pair of them were accompanied by their Kingsguard, Ser Barristan and Ser Jonothor.

With her mind already made up, she hurried her steps and approached the stables, a visit to the orphanage sounded like a wonderful idea right about now. She entered the stables with Ser Jaime close by and walked up to her horse, a light grey almost white mare called Silver, a name day gift from her mother 3 years ago.

With her mounted on Silver and Ser Jaime on his brown stallion, they both left the Red Keep into the busyness of the city to, ironically, seek some peace and quiet from some of the inhabitants of her home.

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Arya

“Arya Stark, sit back down right now!” Came the annoyed cry from Septa Mordane.

She completely ignored her as she exited the room, even her last warning from the old bat fell on
deaf ears. Sewing fishes into little bits of fabric was the last thing she wanted to be doing right now. She’d rather be climbing with Bran or sparring in the godswood with Rickon with any of the sticks they could find. What she really wanted to do was find out what had got her mother and father in such a state recently, whatever it was surely involved Robb since he was always in father’s solar as of late.

She was heading outside to look for Bran or Rickon when Jory walked past, giving her a small grin and shaking his head “Skipping lessons again m...Arya. Wouldn’t it be easier to just tough them out so you can at least avoid your septa’s and your mother’s ire?” He said.

She shrugged as she passed him and shouted over her shoulder “Not really. It’s fun to see how red in the face I can make them go. Mother gets very annoyed but Septa Mordane is the best, I’ve gotten into the deep reds with her now, I can’t be far off purple now surely?” She said with that grin that seemed to work on most people apart from her parents. Jory just chuckled.

Before she opened the door to the courtyard, she shouted back at him “Jory! Do you know where Bran and Rickon are?”

“Where do you think? They’re in their lessons like you should be you little troublemaker.” Came his amused reply. She liked Jory, he was her favourite guard around Winterfell. It was two things about him that stood out really, first he could actually take a joke and have a laugh unlike some people around here and second, whenever he caught her messing around with sticks in the godswood or wherever, he would actually giver her pointers and tips instead of snatching her fun away and sending her to her mother.

She rolled her eyes and huffed at his answer though, of course they’d be in lessons. “Fine, guess I’ll go find someone else to bug.” She said.

He laughed at that and turned around to head off to wherever it is guards go “You could just go back to your lessons.” He said over his shoulder.

“Sod off!” Was all she said as she opened the door and breathed in the cool northern air. She heard Jory laugh one more time before rounding a corner and that was the end of that.

She eyed the yard in search of her two younger brothers but that was empty apart from a few guards sparring, one of which was still sporting a crooked nose that her brother had so kindly gifted him with. Her face fell when thinking about him but recovered quickly before she fell down that hole of misery.
It's not the time for thinking about him right now, that comes one random night of the month where I can bury my face in my pillow before letting it all out.

With a deep breath to centre herself, she headed up towards the maesters turret where Bran and Rickon were no doubt receiving their boring lessons from Maester Lewin. She liked Maester Lewin but he didn’t half drone on sometimes.

She entered the turret and bolted up the stairs two at a time, it wasn’t long before she was reaching the top and pressing her ear to the door of the maester’s room. All she heard was a monotone voice speaking, the words of which she couldn’t decipher for herself.

She decided to knock on the door and hope for the best with the whole situation.

Maester Lewin was the one to answer the door, as to be expected. “Lady Arya, this is an unusual surprise. Especially since, just like the boys here, you are supposed to be in your lessons hmm.” The maester said in a somewhat amused tone.

She got up on her tip toes in an attempt to look over the old man’s shoulder to see what her brothers were doing. Unfortunately, her small height had once again betrayed her and her straining was in vain. With a huff, she planted her feet back down on the floor and looked up at the maester who had an eyebrow quirked, no doubt waiting for an explanation for her appearance.

“I’ve just come to see what Bran and Rick are up to.” She said in the most innocent voice she could muster. Unfortunately for her, absolutely nobody in Winterfell fell for her act.

“Again, you should be in your lessons with Septa Mordane young lady. What would Lady Stark say if she found out you’ve skipped another lesson this week hmm?” Lewin questioned.

“I finished early...” She lied “and I wanted to see if Bran and Rick had finished too.” She said as she smiled up at Lewin.

“FINISHED!” Rickon yelled from within the maester’s room as he emerged from the gap between Lewin and the door frame and slapped a piece of parchment into the maester’s hands. Maester Lewin didn’t even get chance to speak with the boy as he’d already shot down the stairs whilst furiously giggling at something that had clearly tickled him.
Between the gap she could see Bran still writing at a table in the middle of the room, he gave her a wave and a smile before looking back down at his work. Bran seemed to be the only one out of them all who actually enjoyed Maester Lewin’s lessons...somehow.

“Oh, that little...” She heard after she’d returned the wave Bran sent her with one of her own. She quirked her eyebrow at the old man, almost daring him to finish his sentence.

“You and that boy are going to be the death of me, mark my words.” He said as he shook his head. She looked at the piece of paper Rickon had given him and couldn't stop the laugh that emerged from her.

Rickon had drawn a picture of a dog or a wolf, she couldn’t tell, all she did know is that it seemed to have one too many limbs and happened to be pooping on a person who looked remarkably like a septa. He’d even signed his name at the bottom.

The stern look Maester Lewin was giving her made her reign in the laughter. She cleared her throat and composed herself.

“Maester Lewin...are you gonna keep that or can I have it?” She asked. It was a work of art and it would look splendid on the wall in her chambers.

He shook his head and muttered something under his breath before replying “Yes I'll be keeping it and no you can't have it, Lord Stark will probably want to see this.” He said.

She couldn’t help it when she replied “Why? Does he need visual guidance on how to poop on a septa?” She said and didn’t wait for a response, she was already half way down the stairs when Maester Lewin shouted “You’re not funny Arya Stark! Your parents will be hearing about this!” Was all she heard as she exited the tower.

She laughed as she broke out into the fresh air and it didn’t take her long to notice Rick sat on a barrel across from her munching on an apple with a massive grin on his face.

“We are so dead when mother and father find out what we did.” Rickon explained as he jumped off the barrel.
“Where did you get that apple Rick?” She asked.

“Found it on Maester Lewin’s desk.” He said before taking another big bite out of said apple.

She quirked an eyebrow at him as they started walking off towards the godswood “Found it or stole it?” She asked.

He shrugged his shoulders and answered with a mouthful “I dunno. It was just there and nobody else was eating it.”

She shook her head and smiled as they walked under the arch that led to the godswood, Rickon was so random sometimes.

“I liked your picture by the way, you have a talent. I tried to retrieve it to keep for myself but Lewin seemed to grow attached to it rather quickly. You’ll have to draw another one for me so I can put it on my wall.” She said as she smiled at her little brother. Even at the mere age of 5, he was still shaping up to be her perfect partner in crime.

Rickon didn’t get chance to answer her request because she was dragging him into the thick bush surrounding the grove as soon as she heard the raised voices coming from near the heart tree. She put her finger on her lips and Rickon did the same as she listened in on what was being said.

“Are you sure?!?” She heard somebody say, it sounded like Robb.

“I’m almost certain Robb, Lord Karstark received a ransom note anonymously but has already made up his mind. He believes its Lord Bolton’s bastard and he’s already threatening to go to war with House Bolton because of it. This needs to get settled as quickly as possible before any war can be declared so I’m rounding up some of our best hunters and fighters in the North and we are going to hunt this monster down, mark my words.” Her father seemed to growl.

“I’ll kill him. I’ll kill him if he’s done anything to her...that’s a promise father.” Robb almost shouted.

What in the world has happened to get Robb so worked up? Done anything to her? Who’s her?
“We’ll get him Robb, I promise you that.” Her father replied.

“I know we will, because I’m going and I’ll put him in the ground myself.” Robb declared.

“Robb...”

“No father, this isn’t up for discussion. That cretin has kidnapped my betrothed, what kind of person would I be if I just sat back and did nothing? How could anyone respect a Lord like that?” Robb forced out. She’d never heard Robb speak to their father in such a tone before.

Whatever her father’s response was gonna be was lost to the wind as a guard seemed to rush into the grove shouting.

“Lord Stark, a note from Lady Stark...Lady Arya ran off from her lessons and hasn’t been seen since.” The guard huffed out as he caught his breath.

_shit._

She eyed Rickon who was doing a bad job at keeping the grin off his face “You're in trouble.” He whispered out.

In trouble indeed, and by the sounds of her father and brother’s heated conversation, she wasn’t the only one.

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Chapter End Notes

Hoped you enjoyed :)

Jon

The cool morning air blew around him as they flew high in the clouds. The air was cooler this high up and was a much appreciated respite from the humid conditions down below. The heat of Dorne however, was slowly becoming less and less of a problem for him as they travelled north, if he had to guess he would say they were back in the Reach but a part of him also thought it could be the Stormlands.

The cool air came with the necessity of staying high up in the clouds though, Kireina had already been spotted by Clarissa if her claims were true, and with the very detailed description of what she’d seen, he was inclined to believe her. They’d not been back in Westeros long and already people were noticing Kireina’s existence, the last thing they needed.

Speaking of Clarissa, he was glad he’d had the opportunity to spend some time with her. He’d never met a person so interested in swordplay that had never picked a sword up at all. She reminded him of Arya a little bit, if Arya gave a rat’s ass about other things a girl could enjoy. He in fact, profited from Clarissa’s interest in her more ladylike hobbies when she volunteered to give his hair a trim. What he expected to be a ten, fifteen minute job turned into an hour of chit chat and experimentation. Ashara had laughed when she saw the braid and he untied it there on the spot, one look at a grinning Clarissa was all that he needed to work out it had all been a piss take.

He shook his head in the breeze, a smile playing on his lips. Clarissa, as it turned out, was somewhat of a joker, always trying to say something entertaining to get people smiling. The meal they had yesterday evening was interesting to say the least. Him, Ashara and Clarissa had a cosy meal, food and wine was consumed, laughs were had and stories were told. Some causing frowns and sadness, others causing smiles and laughter. Jon felt so welcome in their home, it was mad to think that the two homes he’d stayed in since leaving his actual home, he’d felt more at home in. Maybe at the end of the day, it wasn’t Jon who was the problem, maybe it was something or somebody else.

Wouldn’t that be an interesting turn of events.

Day became evening whilst they finished off their meal and Jon was finding himself being invited to stay the night instead of his original plan of leaving after he’d eaten. A nice bed to sleep on had been missed between leaving Kochi and arriving in Westeros so he easily accepted their hospitality. A room was prepared for him and a much appreciated bath was made as well.
Spare clothes had been put aside for him since Ashara almost demanded his current clothes be washed before he left. Maids filled his bath with steaming water as he perused the room they’d prepared for him, Starfall was a very clean castle he had to admit.

A small blonde haired maid asked him to take his tunic off so that they could take it to be washed whilst he bathed, instead he just took the whole lot off with his back turned to them and plopped them into her arms before darting and submerging himself into the scolding bath. After the eyeful he’d given the poor girls, the maids left him in peace to soak, not without one of them volunteering to help him wash. He was a grown man, he knew how to clean himself just fine.

Sleep came easily that night and before he knew it, he was saying his goodbyes to the two Dayne ladies. He received a hug from Clarissa and she received a promise from him that he wouldn’t be a stranger and that he would come and see her again soon. According to her, there was supposed to be this big tournament at Harrenhal happening soon that she’d managed to convince her mother to let her go to and that that would be a perfect time to meet up again.

Ashara surprisingly gave him a hug as well, nothing much was said after, just a promise to stay out of trouble and to visit again soon. Even with it turning out that Ashara wasn’t his mother, she still welcomed him back into her home. She was a remarkable woman and Lord Stark had well and truly fucked up in that regard.

And all that led up to now. After retrieving his swords, he set off from Starfall on foot and snuck off into the red mountains. There, he was able to meet back up with Kireina and set off whilst hopefully using the mountains themselves as cover from any keen eyed travellers. He didn’t know why he was bothering though, she’d already been spotted once and probably a few other times by some random farmer or fisherman. Hopefully claims of a dragon sighting would be chalked off as madness or just plain seeing things...hopefully.

Now the pair of them where heading north...to see his other siblings...to confront his father...to get the answers he really fucking needed and deserved at this point.

They were a few hours into their journey now, a journey he told himself he wasn't delaying but in reality, he was. He was honestly scared how he’d react or how they’d react when he turned up. Just thinking about Lord Stark and his dirty secrets woke something inside him, like an ancient power being woken up from its slumber.

Probably frustration and anger...or trapped wind, who even knew anymore.
“I wonder what’s happening down there?” Came a bellowing voice in his head as *Kireina* disturbed him from his inner turmoil.

He looked over the side of his dragon, ‘*his dragon*’ he thought with a smile, *something he would never get bored of thinking.* The height at which they were at never failed to amaze him, the mini heart attacks he would have when looking down from a great height had dissipated in time, thank the gods.

As he squinted at the ground below, he could just about see some activity around a great big castle. To him, even at this height, it looked freshly built, with pillars and domes making up the main aesthetic of the structure. All of it was built with a mixture of red and white slabs of brick or marble, he couldn’t really tell from where he was sat at the moment. If it was indeed made out of marble then it must have cost the owner an arm and a leg to build.

“*Looks like somebody is retiring and building themselves a little summer home doesn’t it?*” He said to *Kireina* who huffed in what he hoped was her attempt at a laugh, he really hoped she was trying to laugh. It would be adorable...or disturbing, something for them to work on he thought.

“*You should be spending less time coming up with jokes and more time thinking about what you’re gonna say to your father. How many years has it been?*” *Kireina* expressed.

“She replied.

“*Fuckin hell! He hadn't realised it had been that long.*

“*And in those 3 years, have you come up with anything to say to the man?*” She asked.

Most of the things Jon wanted to say to the him had already been said in his years living there, most of them were unanswered questions. *Kireina* brought up a very good point it turned out, *what was he gonna say?* Would he be so against threatening the man? Threatening his own father?

Maybe he should just hound the Lord of Winterfell until he crumbled, one thing he did know was that he wasn’t leaving Winterfell again until he had at least some answers.
Who is my mother?

Is my mother dead or alive?

Did my mother want me?

Does my mother love me?

Why are you such a cruel cunt for keeping all this from me?

The questions were endless.

At the end of the day, the past few years had changed Jon into a very persuasive person when he wanted to be and Lord Stark would find that out himself in good time.

The time for pussy footing around the situation was over, it was definitely the time to get answers now. He was ready for them even if Lord Stark said he wasn't.

“When the time is right” his father would say. Well fuck that, the time for the truth was now!

He squeezed his thighs tighter around the bulk of muscle between his legs, urging his companion into a quicker pace. He could feel it now, the anxiety of actually turning back up at his childhood home and explaining himself was slowly fading away. In its place was a brewing excitement, an excitement of what? He didn’t know. Was it seeing his siblings again? Well he was already excited to see his siblings again so that couldn’t have been what quenched his anxiousness.

No, he was excited to confront his father, rage at him, scream at him...maybe do other things?

He shook his head, was he bitter? The things he would do that were conjuring up in his mind must have been the thoughts of a bitter man surely?

“To be fair, you do have a right to be bitter. There is an element of cruelty keeping a child’s
“parent from them...unless the parent in question was a monster.” Kireina projected. Even she wasn’t sure on the whole situation by the sounds of it.

What if his father had a genuine excuse from keeping the identity of his mother away from him? What if he was in fact, protecting him from something?

“ARRRGHH! FOR FUCK SAKE!” He screamed into the wind. He couldn’t afford to be second guessing himself anymore. It didn’t matter if his mother was a bread basket who ate children and drank her own piss, he needed to know himself instead of being protected from the truth. He was a big boy now for fuck sake, he could look after himself.

“Did that make you feel better?” Kireina asked him. He could hear and feel her humorous tone.

He sighed “It did, sort of.” He replied.

Whatever answers he uncovered when he returned to Winterfell, he hoped and prayed he could handle them. He was preparing for the worst but hoping for the best and at the end of the day, Lord Stark’s response couldn’t be as bad as his gut was telling him it could be.

The answers couldn’t possibly tear his relationship with his father apart or what was left of said relationship. After the revelations in Starfall and the different outlook on his father, anything at this point was possible. Hell, in some mad turn of events, he could at the end of all this, end up actually being trueborn. There could be a keep or a castle just waiting for him somewhere with his name on it and he was oblivious to it.

Surely not?

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**Aegon**

He grabbed his waterskin and took a generous mouthful and poured the rest of its contents all over his face and head. The breeze in the air cooling his hot face after a rigorous sparring session with the Kingsguard.

“That was a rather good session today, your grace.” Ser Arthur said to him as the dornishman pulled out his own waterskin.
Aegon glared at the man but there was no malice behind it, obviously Ser Arthur knew this and proceeded to grin “Good session? For you maybe. I swear you enjoy humiliating me sometimes.” He said, a grin slowly forming on his face.

Ser Arthur chuckled at that “You wound me your grace. I don’t humiliate you because I enjoy it, I humiliate you because it’s the only way you’ll learn.” He said as he avoided the thrown cork of Aegon’s waterskin. At forty name days old, Ser Arthur still had the reflexes and movement speed of a cat.

Aegon grumbled at him “The day somebody slaps you about in a sparring session will be declared a day of celebration around the realm, mark my words good ser.” He said as he walked over to a servant and handed him his sparring sword.

Ser Arthur laughed at that “And I welcome that day with open arms your grace, sometimes being regarded as the best swordsman in the realm can get quite tiring with all the sparring sessions I'm invited to, let somebody else do them for me is what I say. This body isn't getting any younger.” He said as Aegon saw the grin plastered on the man’s face.

He just shook his head “Funny man.” He muttered under his breath, with the chuckle he heard, Ser Arthur had heard him loud and clear.

The good nature of the whole situation soured when he caught a glimpse of his uncle at the other end of the yard.

He turned to Ser Arthur “I’m gonna head up to see my two girls, fancy escorting me there?” He said as he made his way towards the exit of the yards without even an answer from the Sword of the Morning. Based on the brisk movements from the knight to catch up with him, the answer was yes.

Ser Arthur was always a very observant man, today wasn’t any different. “I saw Prince Viserys at the other end of the yard just then, with how quick you left, I’m guessing that ‘little chat’ he wanted with you yesterday didn’t impress you.” He said in a knowing tone. Everybody in the Red Keep knew what his uncle was like, everyone apart from Viserys himself.

Aegon just gave him a grim smile as they walked past a bowing servant “Well, to put it simply Ser Arthur, no it did not.”
Ser Arthur just shook his head as he walked side by side with him “What’s the Prince done now your grace?” He asked.

Aegon let out a humourless laugh, he couldn’t believe what his uncle had been subtly proposing to him. Viserys wanted supporters for his plan but he wouldn’t be finding any in between him or Rhaenys “Get this, he tried to convince me that my cousin, Prince Quentyn, is a perfect match for Daenerys. The way he was talking about it, to him it’s a sure thing and all it needs is father’s approval.”

He shook his head “Apparently, him and Quentyn want me and Rhae to have a word with father in the hopes of convincing him of the match.” He laughed “It’s almost like he doesn’t know father’s stance on the whole arranged marriage thing, he would never agree to it.” He finished, looking at the knight for his agreement.

Ser Arthur looked down and coughed, that made Aegon frown.

“He would never agree to the match, would he Ser Arthur.” He said in a sterner tone in the hopes of getting an answer out of the now visibly cagey Kingsguard.

Ser Arthur cleared his throat “I wouldn’t like to say, your grace.” He almost muttered.

Aegon stopped walking and held his arm out in front of the knight, he looked at the man’s face and squinted in suspicion “You know something, don’t you?” He said.

Ser Arthur looked at him and shook his head “I’m not inclined to tell you, your grace.” He said.

Aegon got slightly annoyed at that “What do you mean? If you know something about all this that I don’t know then I want to know.” He said in a slightly louder voice, servants walking past looked at them as they passed them in the corridor.

Ser Arthur sighed “I’m not inclined to tell you because the conversation was between your mother and father, I was just merely inside guarding. You know what the Kingsguard’s vows dictate, I cannot break my King’s trust by sharing his conversations and secrets with others. Even if that person does so happen to be his son and the crown prince.” Ser Arthur finished.
Aegon huffed and started walking again “Fine, don’t tell me. Looks like we are paying my mother a visit then doesn’t it. Do you happen to know where she is at the moment.” He asked. Ser Arthur didn’t look happy that Aegon was snooping in his King’s business.

Unfortunately for Ser Arthur, Aegon hadn't asked him anything he shouldn’t be asking so begrudgingly told him his mother’s whereabouts “She’ll be having afternoon tea with your grandmother and some of the other ladies in court. It would be wise not to disturb them, your grace.” Ser Arthur said very hesitantly.

Aegon shook his head and waved his hand “No no, it won't take long. I just want to ask her a few questions that’s all. She’ll be back to having her ear chewed off by Lady Olenna in no time.” He japed. Ser Arthur saw no humour in it if his face was anything to go by.

It only took them a few minutes to get to where the afternoon tea was being held, even with his mother being the Queen of Westeros, his grandmother was the real alpha in these meetings, and if he was being honest, she was the real alpha in a lot of other things that went on in the Red Keep as well.

Ser Oswell and Ser Jonothor were stood outside the door to the Dowager Queen’s room, both of them giving him a bow.

“I won't keep you good sers, I’m just here to have a word with the Queen.” He said as Ser Oswell rose an eyebrow.

“The Queen is currently in a meeting with the Queen mother and Lady Olenna, would you like me to pass a message on, your grace?” Ser Oswell asked, almost like he couldn’t believe anyone was willing to disturb the Dowager Queen when she was in her element.

“No no, it’s alright. I just want a quick word with her that’s all. Grandmother won't mind, I'm her favourite.” He said with a grin. Ser Arthur snorted behind him and Ser Jonothor’s eyes lit up with mirth.

He turned around and looked at Ser Arthur. To his credit, the knight had recovered quite quickly and he was met with a stone cold face.

He turned back around and quirked an eyebrow at Ser Oswell, the knight sighed “Very well. On your own head be it, your grace.” He said and knocked on the door to announce Aegon to the room.
“Prince Aegon is here and would like to have a word with the Queen, your graces.” Ser Oswell said through the gap of the door he’d stuck his head through.

“I’ll be one moment ladies.” He heard his mother say. Her turned around to Ser Arthur and gave him a grin.

His mother arrived at the door and looked at him “What is it Aegon? We’re kind of busy in here at the moment.” His mother asked with a quirked eyebrow.

“Can we discuss this somewhere private?” He asked, eyeing the Kingsguard.

His mother did the same and sighed, she turned back around into the room “I won’t be long ladies, discuss between yourselves.” His mother said to the occupants of the room.

She then exited the room and looped her arm with Aegon’s “We can go to my solar since its just down the corridor.” She said and he nodded his head in agreement. Ser Oswell stayed where he was, guarding the door to his grandmother’s room and Ser Jonothor fell side by side with Ser Arthur as the two monarchs strode along towards their destination.

His mother turned to him “What is this about egg? Has something happened?” She asked.

He carried on looking forward as they walked “I was hoping you could answer that for me. It may or may not have something to do with Daenerys.” He said.

His mother quirked an eyebrow at that and looked over her shoulder at Ser Arthur. Aegon may have inadvertently gotten Ser Arthur into trouble when he said that.

They made it to his mother’s solar in no time, he told both the knights to wait outside for them until they were done. Ser Arthur looked like he wanted to protest but one quick glare from his mother killed that idea off almost instantly.

His mother walked over to her upholstered lounger at the side of the room and sat down, she patted the empty space next to her so Aegon followed and took a seat himself.
“What’s all this about then? I have a feeling Ser Arthur has been loose lipped. I’ll have to have a word with him about that.” His mother said as she looked at him inquisitively.

He chuckled “He might have but don’t go too hard on him, he did say he was in the room when you and father were having a discussion, he didn’t tell me anymore than that.” He said.

She nodded and then waved a hand in front of herself “Well? What is it you want to talk about?” She said.

“Well it’s about Daenerys.” He said as he looked at his mother “Me and Ser Arthur were talking and the subject about marriage came up, specifically Daenerys and marriage. I said father wouldn’t be forcing Dany into any sort of arrangement she didn’t want and when I looked at Ser Arthur for his agreement on the matter, he just closed up...Has something happened?” He asked.

She looked down at her hands that were resting on her lap and sighed “Me and your father have been discussing not only Daenerys but also your sister’s future as well.” She said. “We are worried and have been worried for a few years now. We’ve both had a word with Dany and Rhae and gotten absolutely nowhere with the stubborn sods. It doesn’t help that the Rhaella is wholeheartedly on their side of the argument.” She said as she huffed out.

“Is that what you were discussing in there with her just now?” He asked with a furrowed brow.

“Pretty much. Lady Olenna was there as well but I’m pretty sure she’s fishing for a betrothal between Rhae and her grandson and not to actually come up with helpful suggestions. Like the woman hasn’t enough with her granddaughter being Queen one day.” His mother said.

He loved both Rhae and Dany but he felt like they were being a bit too stubborn when it came to marriage. In his eyes, this ideal man that they are waiting for didn’t exist and they need to lower their expectations “Did you come up with any good ideas?”

His mother let out a humourless chuckle “Not really. Rhaella came up with one idea but it sounded like wishful thinking more than anything.” His mother said.

“And?” He asked.
She furrowed her brow and shook her head “She was saying that maybe the upcoming tournament at Harrenhal might help discover some hidden gems for the girls. If this is being touted as the biggest tournament in Westerosi history then surely they’ll be somebody there for them to meet. All the Lords and their sons will be there, maybe one of them will crown one of the girls Queen of love and beauty, maybe not. All I know is that if nothing has changed after this tournament then Rhaegar might have to put his foot down. He’s had a few lords and ladies on his back and it’s going to get to a point where the excuses have to end, I’m afraid. The girls won’t like it but it’s not like they haven’t had years to make a decision.” She finished in a sad tone.

He patted her leg with his hand and stood up “Well, let’s hope this tournament is fruitful then mother. I really don’t want it to get messy after.” He said as his mother stood with him.

“At this point, they should just marry each other and be done with it.” His mother said with a chuckle. He just shook his head as they made their way to the door.

_Careful what you wish for mother, Rhae and Dany would take that offer in a heartbeat if it meant getting their own way._

_They always find a way._

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_Ned_

It was late in the evening when they crested a hill and saw Hornwood in the distance, about an hour's ride from where they were. There was a fair few of them that had made the journey and they’d made very good time since setting off just before dawn. From Winterfell there was him, Robb, Theon, Ser Rodrik and a couple of house guards, from Castle Cerwyn there was Lord Cley Cerwyn and a few of his house guards and from Torrhen’s Square, Ser Helman Tallhart had brought along with him 5 of his best trackers.

All together there was about 25 of them and hopefully even more of them when they arrived at Hornwood where hopefully, Lord Halys would add to the group. After a rest tonight, there should be around 30 men ready and waiting tomorrow morning to sniff out this little beast Roose Bolton calls his son.

He looked to his right where Robb was sat mounted on his horse, next to him was Theon who was quite clearly whispering some tasteless jape into his son’s ear based off the grin that was plastered across his face. It’d been like that for a couple of hours now, Theon had been desperately trying to get a laugh or a smile out of Robb but his son was having none of it. The whole situation they found
themselves in had made Robb miserable and quiet, not that he blamed him like.

“Will you just fuck off.” He heard his son say in a harsh whisper towards Theon. Thankfully, nobody was close enough to the three of them to hear his outburst other than Ser Rodrik who looked down and chuckled.

“Fine! I’ve done nothing but try and cheer you up these past few hours but if you want to sit there and be miserable for the rest of the journey, go ahead. I thought we’d got rid of the brooding one but it seems I was mistaken.” Theon growled out.

Robb looked like he’d been slapped but recovered rather quickly, anger clearly overtaking him as he lifted his left arm and curled his hand into a fist. Thankfully Ned was there to grab his arm before he caused a scene and got chins wagging around camp.

Ned glared at Theon for that comment, the young man looking rightfully admonished “Ser Rodrik, take Lord Theon here and check around the men to see if they are ready to continue.” He said.

Ser Rodrik sat up straight and raised his chin before nodding to his Lord “As you wish Lord Stark.” He then turned to Theon “C’mon you, you’ve caused enough trouble for today.” He said as the pair of them made their way down the hill, Theon having one last look over his shoulder at Robb.

He leant over to talk to Robb “You want to be careful with your actions when you’re around your bannermen, you shouldn’t have let him get a reaction like that out of you.” He said but all he got back was a frown.

“Did you not hear what he said? He’s been bothering me all day with his stupid jokes and the comment about Jon was crossing the line.” His son said as he looked away from Ned and looked across towards Hornwood.

Ned looked down and sighed “I didn’t like what he said about Jon either but we still have to keep a lid on our emotions.” He said as he looked back at Robb.

Bizarrely, Robb wistfully smiled and then chuckled “In certain situations I find myself in, I always wonder what Jon would have said or done if it was him in my shoes. His memory is a comfort in those times.” He said as he looked down and shook his head “I imagine you wouldn’t have had the chance to grab his arm to stop him from hitting Theon, and even if you had managed to grab hold of him, he would’ve still swung and probably ragged you off your horse in the process.” Robb said as
he let out a laugh “And after, he’d have probably even ask what you were doing on the floor.” He finished.

Ned smiled at Robb’s shared thoughts. He definitely hadn’t forgotten who his brother was and everything he’d said Ned could see Jon doing in his mind’s eye.

*It beat seeing the other things he saw.*

Last night he’d dreamt of a scenario he fully expected to find the group in when they inevitably discovered this Ramsay Snow. There wasn’t a confirmation on whether or not he’d been working alone with his criminal activity but there’d been a few rumours about a group of men-at-arms who were very loyal to the boy.

A group of men who’d fought tooth and nail with Ned’s men but had ultimately fallen.

That was the only good thing that had come out of that dream.

Ramsay Snow had never been discovered...but his trophy room had. A trophy room that contained a multitude of corpses, most of them women, most of them flayed.

Apart from one.

A body hanging from a noose and tied to a beam of the old hunting shack. Arms and legs hacked off and skin peeled back from muscle, a body completely unidentifiable if it wasn’t for the raven locks and the dead silver-grey eyes of his sister staring straight at him. Eye’s that were bleeding along with his nose and mouth, a mouth that was still moving, like he’d somehow survived this horrific trauma just so he could see him one last time. A whisper in the wind as the word Jon’s living corpse whispered reached his ears and wrenched his heart.

*“Mother?”*

Ned had never moved so quick from his bed as he reached the chamber pot to wretch whatever was left in his stomach at the time. There was no Catelyn to disturb either, she was in her own room after the argument they’d had about Robb and his insistence on being involved in the hunt for this murderer.
The truly sickening thing about this dream was that it was a genuine possibility that they would find some sort of trace of Jon. When he’d left Winterfell 3 years ago, he’d left not a single trace behind and nothing had been discovered since.

What if Ramsay had managed to get hold of him? What would he do if they found evidence of Jon’s demise to the hands of Roose Bolton’s crazed monster?

He’d probably break down that’s what. Nothing would stop Ned from doing the exact thing he’d just told Robb not to do, the lid on his emotions will be well and truly thrown into the wind.

His son broke him from his thoughts “You’re thinking about him, aren’t you?” Robb said as he looked at Ned.

“Not a day goes by where I don’t think about your brother.” He said as he looked away from Robb and looked to the horizon.

There was silence for a few minutes before Robb spoke again.

“Do you regret it?” His son said in an iron tone, determination written all over his face when Ned looked at him confused.

“Do I regret what?” He asked, almost snapping at his son. Anxiety building in his stomach.

“Do you regret your actions? What you did to him?” Robb replied as he turned to Ned and looked him straight in the eye. Ned didn’t like this one bit.

“What I did to him? What are you talking about Robb?” He anxiously replied. He kept a straight face to emit a sense of calm but inside he was getting annoyed at the questioning.

Robb huffed “C’mon father, we both know the real reason Jon left, let's not act dumb now.” He said exasperated.
Now he was visibly annoyed “We are not speaking about this right now, do you hear me?” He growled out. Robb was over stepping.

Robb let out a humourless chuckle “He told me that that’s what you always said to him whenever he would ask about his mother.” Robb shook his head “He used to come to me after he’d asked about her sometimes, we’d just talk about whatever but I was his brother, I could see it bothered him a lot more than he showed. And in the end, I think we both know the reason he felt he couldn’t stay in Winterfell anymore. Knowing there was somebody in his home who had the answers to all his questions but refused to answer them for years must have been torture. And as much as I hated the fact he just left without saying goodbye properly, I couldn’t for the life of me blame him for leaving.” He said.

Robb turned to him, Ned just sat there and absorbed everything that was being said, receiving jab after jab to his heart with every truth Robb hit him with.

“Well couldn’t you just tell him? All of this could've been avoided if you had done. Jon would be sat on a horse to your left as we speak, he would've been less miserable if he had known. Maybe take the time to notice some of the girls that had took a shine to him, he might have even married one of them and had a babe. Hell, he might be out there right now, married with his own child and we would never know about it. All because you couldn’t tell him something that he had a right to know, something so fucking basic that to this day I still can't believe you let fester for so long. I’d still have a brother if it wasn’t for you.” Robb growled out as he looked away from his father with an almost disgusted look on his face.

Robb had never spoken to him like that before, ever. He’d clearly been holding that in ever since Jon had left all those years ago. Ned, as much as he wanted to, couldn’t argue with anything Robb had said. His secrecy was definitely one of the main reasons Jon had deemed it impossible to live in Winterfell anymore. Ned had thought about this a lot but could never see how that could push him away so much. Catelyn wasn’t the nicest to him sure, but even Jon would've admitted that he gave as much as he got sometimes.

Jon also loved all his siblings with a burning passion and they loved him, their reaction to Jon disappearing into the night was proof of that. Him not knowing about his mother wouldn’t have pushed him to running away when he’d be leaving behind his brothers and sisters as well, would it?

Well, yes, yes it would, and Robb had explained exactly the reason why he’d left.

He was torturing him. Not physically but mentally. And there was only two ways that torture would stop, either Ned telling him about his mother or running away from it.
Ned had taken one of those choices away with his secrecy and left the lad with no choice but to leave.

Robb’s explanation filled the gap he’d been trying to work out himself and the realisation of the truth was damning.

He cleared his throat, if only he could clear his conscience as easily “Robb...”

“Don’t bother father, I get it, we’ll talk about this some other time...when the time is right, yeah?” His son said to him and didn’t give him chance to reply as he trotted back down the hill towards camp without so much as a look back.

He turned back and looked over at the horizon, he closed his eyes and took a deep breath. His leather gloves creaked as he gripped the reins of his horse in an attempt to steel himself against the flood of emotions cascading towards him. At the spearhead of the onslaught was the one emotion he’d felt for longer than he could ever remember...

Guilt.

Jon

The sun was setting and the cool air of the night was drawing in, Jon pulled his cloak tighter around himself. They were making very good time, Kireina had pushed herself for nearly 12 hours straight and they were now probably somewhere in between the the Riverlands and the Vale. He only knew this because they’d flown over a city that could only be King’s Landing with its sheer size and that was about 3 hours ago if he was having a guess.

He’d already told her to slow her pace down and conserve energy, he’d asked if she needed a rest but he was answered with a growl and a comment about being insulted at his lack of confidence when it came to her stamina. With him well and truly told off, he’d made the decision to keep flying through the night. The cover of night was too good to pass up on and his decent night’s sleep in Starfall had given him the energy to attempt the all nighter.

“Are you sure you don’t want to rest?” He said to her just to make sure.
“No! My lungs aren’t small and pathetic like yours. I’ve made bigger journeys than this before, don’t worry.” She said.

And she was right, they had made bigger journeys, the flight back to Westeros coming to mind. She’d lasted almost 3 days before resting on that trip.

“Okay okay, I’ll stop asking. Sheesh.” He said through their bond as he rolled his shoulder and adjusted the back strap he’d fashioned out of his sword belt for his katana’s. When they eventually landed, he would have to fine tune his creation in the hopes of making it a little more stable and comfortable than it already was. Even after one day he could see and feel the advantages of carrying his swords on his back instead of his waist, Kireina for one had stopped complaining about the blades tapping against her scales when they were flying.

He looked over the left side of Kireina to see what they were flying over in the hopes of seeing something identifiable. A huge river forking off into 3 smaller rivers was all there was to see at the moment.

Yep, they were in the Riverlands. What Jon was seeing had to undoubtably be The Trident. There were no other rivers like it in this area of Westeros.

He remembers the stories about the Trident, the location where some say the rebellion all but ended. He remembers the lessons from Maester Lewin about the whole ordeal, hearing stories about something that his father was present in was unusual to say the least. He also remembers how quick Lord Stark shut down any questions about the events around the Battle of the Trident as the history books were calling it, how quick he was to anger when a young Jon Snow had asked if he’d seen the battle between Ser Arthur and Robert Baratheon and even apoplectic when King Rhaegar was mentioned.

Kireina broke his thought process with a rather jarring question “This ‘King Rhaegar’, does he share the same blood as you?” She asked like it wouldn’t shock him.

“Share blood? With the King of Westeros? No. I might have a bit of valyrian blood like you claim but it must be a thimbles amount compared to the milk jug that he would have.” He said as he recovered from the heavy question.

“That city we flew over a few hours ago, I sensed a concentrated amount of dragon blood somewhere within. Is that where this ‘King Rhaegar’ resides?” She asked. She was being rather inquisitive at the moment.
“That’s where the Royal family resides, House Targaryen is what they’re called and yes, that is where the King resides, along with the rest of his family.” He replied.

“Interesting.” Was all she said.

“Not really but whatever floats your boat sister.” He said, a deep grumble his response.

After a quick landing near the river for a piss break, him and Kireina set off again and started their cold, dark and quiet journey through the night sky of Westeros. About 6 hours into said journey, Jon had managed to rest his eyes for nearly an hour. The risk of actually falling asleep and falling from Kireina’s back was worth it as he let the sweet pleasure of closing his tired eyes take over. Kireina shouting at him through their bond had eventually stopped the chance of sleep taking him and the chance of him falling to his death.

The blacks and greys of the sky were blending with the reds and oranges of the dawn. They were currently flying over a large body of water and had been for the past 2 hours. It was either the Bite that was in between the Vale and the North or his estimations were completely wrong and he had no fucking idea where they could be.

“We need to land soon Kireina, my eyes are fucking gone and I can barely see straight anymore. Just a few hours shut eye and we’ll be back on the road...or in the sky.” He said, most of his energy being spent keeping his eyes open.

“How about we land in that city over there?” He asked. That city had been Kireina’s back. She clearly had the superior vision and had proven that on many occasions at this point. Finally, after half a minute of squinting in the wind he spotted what she’d seen.

Question was, where were they? A city, on the coast of the Bite, northbound...White Harbour?

Fuckin hell, if they were in White Harbour then Kireina had done exceptionally well with the flying.

None of that mattered now though, there was a city, which meant there was inn’s, which meant...beds.

God’s he was exhausted.

“You're gonna have to land a mile or so outside the city, I’ll have to walk the rest of the way.” He said to Kireina. She just huffed like he’d said something stupid.

Under the cover of the very early morning sky, Kireina glided down and landed softly in a large enough opening of the woods about a mile north of White Harbour or whatever the city was called. He didn’t really care at this point, he’d worry about it when he’d had a kip. He climbed off her back and brought with him his bag of clothes and his other bag with the two precious family heirlooms secured inside. He looped each bag on each of his shoulders and shrugged them to get them into a comfortable spot for his mile walk. He took a step towards Kireina’s head which was currently resting on the cool ground and pressed a gloved hand on her snout.

“I won't be long, just a couple of hours to rest and get sorted and we’ll be on our way again.” He said to her. No need for whispered thoughts between each other’s minds.

“Just call for me when you’re ready, I'm going off to hunt since we are so close to the sea.” She said through their bond.

“Be careful and stay out of trouble.” He said as Kireina started to lift and straighten her body in preparation of taking off.

“You're more inclined to get into trouble than I am, stay safe.” Was all she said as she took off into the morning sky, sending a huge gust of air into the trees surrounding him and shaking them to the roots.

It took him around 45 minutes to drag his almost comatose body to the city, a good humoured warning from one of the guards at the main gate to not cause any trouble with any of those swords
on his back was the only bit of trouble he experienced on his way into the now confirmed White Harbour.

White washed stone, cobbled streets and a strong whiff of fish would be the best way to describe the city if you were to ask him. He would have described it in a bit more detail if he wasn’t desperately looking for an inn to collapse in.

A quaint little inn called The Maiden’s Rest caught his eye, it was hidden down one of the smaller alleys of the city and seemed perfect for his purposes.

A couple of stags lighter and he was settling in to his small but cozy room complete with a feather bed and thick furs. He’d told Kireina he wouldn’t be long but as soon as he dropped his belongings on the floor and collapsed into the comfort of the mattress, he was starting to regret his promise. He took all his clothes off with the least amount of effort he could get away with and all but chucked them across the room for future Jon to worry about. Within 5 minutes of climbing under the furs and dropping his head on the pillow, he was out like a light.

A few hours later, he was woken up to the sounds of bells outside. Well, he’d like to say it was the bells that had woken him up and not the disturbing ending to his dream.

He was tied to a tree in the middle of the woods and it was dark out. He didn’t know how he’d gotten there or who had tied him up, the only thing he does remember is feeling the edge of a steel blade scraping across the soft tissue of his eyeball.

That was enough to wake anybody up and blink frantically.

He stretched his arms and legs under the furs and heard the cracks of his joints as he woke up in the north for the first time in 3 years. He just laid there for 5 minutes and let the sounds of the city dull his mind.

“Good, you’re awake! Hurry up!” Kireina spoke in his mind.

He grumbled as he cracked his back and sat up on the edge of the bed “For fuck sake.” He mumbled. He rubbed the sleep from his eyes and rummaged through his bag for a clean tunic and pair of breaches. He would have liked a bath and some grub before they got back on the road but it
seemed *Kireina* had other plans.

“No time for any of that, I found something earlier and I think we need to investigate.” *Kireina* said. She sounded a little anxious.

“Does it involve pork sausages and crispy bacon?” He asked.

“No...” She replied.

“Then I don’t need to investigate shit.” He finished as he finished dressing. He put his dirty clothes in his bag and place his two bags, his sword strap and his cloak on the messy furs of the bed before tying his dagger to his right leg and pushing his feet into his boots.

“I’m serious Jon. What I’ve seen reminds me of Euron all over again.” She said in a steel tone.

“Cunt.” Was all that came to mind.

“Jon...”

“Fine! I’m moving.” He huffed as he put his cloak on and strapped his swords to his back. “Meet me where you dropped me off earlier.” He finished as he shouldered each of his bags.

He left the inn but not before the plump middle aged woman who was running the place escorted him out with an arm around his waist and a friendly goodbye. He was also pretty sure she’d squeezed his bum as he made for the door but he was just too sleepy to react.

Groping aside, he made his way back to the main gate that he’d come through earlier in the day but not without buying himself an apple and a buttered roll from one of the market stalls on the way there. He’d demolished both of them by the time he’d got to the main gate and he was washing it down with the warm water that was left in his skin.

Thankfully, the exit from the city was trouble free and he was half an hour into his journey before he sensed *Kireina* close by, he could really sense her anxiety now.
He picked up his pace and was in the clearing 10 minutes later, Kireina was already laid there waiting for him.

“Hurry up!” She growled.

“Hello to you too.” He said as he tied his bags to her back. He received a growl in response.

“Alright alright, I’m hurrying up. Gods, what’s got you in a rush anyway?” He asked as he positioned himself on her back and settled in.

“Bad people.” Was all she muttered as she took off into the air, disturbing a large murder of crows from the trees.

“Should have just killed em if they were bothering you so much.” He said as he scratched his beard. He should've asked Clarissa to trim his beard while she was messing with his hair.

“There’s innocents there as well, I couldn’t risk it.” She said as they seemed to veer to their right.

This annoyed him a little “Where are you going? We’re supposed to be going north not east.” He said but was growled at in response.

“Have you not been listening? We need to go help these people, I just hope we aren’t too late.” She said as she started to really pick the pace up.

So she was serious then.

What the fuck had spooked her so much?

She said that what she’d found had reminded her of Euron so by the sounds of it, they were dealing with a nutjob who kept prisoners and did unspeakable things to them.
Brilliant, that’s all he needed shortly after waking up. And he was pretty sure he had a headache coming on as well. Lovely.

They’d flown for about an hour before Kireina said anything else.

“There, do you see it?” She said.

No. He did not see it. They were so high in the clouds the ground was just a blur of green.

“See what?” He said in a rather annoyed tone.

“The smoke.” She replied.

He looked down and surprisingly enough, he could see the smoke.

“Yeah I do. But you do know it’s probably just somebody cooking their dinner, you know that right?” He said. Had she really dragged them this far off their path to Winterfell for this?

“From what I can see, they’re doing more than just cooking dinner.” She muttered.

He sighed “And what can you see?” He asked.

“Prisoners.” Was all she said.

He shook his head, as much as he wished he could, he couldn’t in good conscience ignore this. Not after everything that had happened to Euron’s prisoners. The faint sound of barks and howls could be heard down below.

He patted Kireina on her flank “Set us down near them but not too close. If what I’m hearing is what I think it is, they’ve got dogs with them.” He said as he hardened his resolve and made his decision.
There could be a fair few people down there and coupled with the fact they had dogs well, Jon wasn’t stupid enough to take them all on himself.

He took a deep breath and released it as he came to a decision that he hopefully wouldn’t regret.

Today would be the day *Kireina* would be officially introduced to the northern people.

*The gods won't be able to help them where they'll be going.*

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Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed that :)

Chapter 12 should be out by next Friday.
The Bolton Bastard

He stabbed his dagger into the table in annoyance and turned to one of his men, Ben was his name and he was supposed to be the one looking after his bitches.

“Ben! Go and see what the girls are barking at. Let's hope they’ve sniffed out another game for us to play.” He sneered. It would seem the reports on their activities had spooked a few folk and the roads were experiencing less and less people travelling on them as a consequence.

His kennel master grunted as he got up from where he was sat, whetstone left where he’d been sharpening their flaying knives. Those beauties had seen a lot of action in recent days, the latest of their trophies was hanging just outside and the next ones on the list were in the back room of their newly acquired hunting shack, tied up, gagged and praying for a miracle.

He smiled at that.

The pair that they’d captured a few weeks ago had been an interesting hunt to say the least, a lot more interesting than some of snivelling whores they’d used previously. A man and a woman with a 6 man escort was what they’d sniffed out, the guards were taken care of fairly easily. One of his lads, Skinner was his name, he’d lost a hand in the fight. They decided to put him out of his misery, a knife to the heart while he scrambled for his lost hand was the kindest thing to do. His bitches ate well that night thanks to Skinner.

Lord Harrion and Lady Aly Karstark were their prize in this particular hunt, a high value pair indeed. Damon, one of his men, had suggested ransoming them, sending a letter to Rickard Karstark. He wasn’t doing what he was doing for money though, no, he wanted to play and play they did.

All the pleading and promises had done nothing to help their cause, they needed to learn that not even the highborn were safe from Ramsay Bolton.
The game was simple, every time him and the boys would come to them, Lady Alys had to let them have their way with her. He would obviously be the one to take her maidenhead, it’s only right a trueborn does the deed. Unfortunately, Lady Alys didn’t understand the simple rules and refused as much as she could for somebody tied up and gagged. He laid out the rules for her once again but also told her the consequences if she didn’t play along.

Every time she refused them, her brother would lose a piece of himself, simple.

12 days had passed and she’d refused every approach, her brother would tell her every time they arrived to not give them what they wanted. The dull man must realise he’s only got a limited amount of many body parts before it started to become a real problem for him, and when he did finally die, Lady Alys’ time would be up.

He had to give Lord Harrion a bit of credit, he was soldiering on with their game, some might even say he was winning. Ramsay however, he knew the man was starting to struggle and it was oh so beautiful to be there to see it.

At the moment he was 10 fingernails, 10 toenails, 4 teeth and an earlobe down. At the end of the week, they’d be starting on fingers and toes but Ramsay wanted both of his ears by the end of the day. Lord Harrion’s stubbornness was grating him a little but he wouldn’t show the man his annoyance, no, he’d show the man the sharp end of his flaying knife.

He heard the muffled cries of the man in question and got up out of his chair to check the back room they were in.

The grotty old wooden door banged against the wall as it was swung open, startling the pair of Karstarks cowering within. The smell in the room was pungent, a bucket in the corner of the room filled to the brim of their own making. Damon wanted them to clean it out since the smell was starting to spread into the main room of the building but he was having none of it. It added a new flavour to their game, an increased pressure to get out of that room. A part of Ramsay wanted them to find a way out just so they could hunt them all over again.

Wouldn’t that be fun?

“You pair of cunts are making more noise than my darlings out there, what’s the matter? Finally seen the light and decided to forfeit in your quest to beat me in our little game?” He said with a sharp grin as he spun his dagger in the palm of his hand. He moved across the room and stood in front of Alys,
he slid the flat side of his cold steel against her cheek as she whimpered.

Her eyes were full of tears, she had such wonderful eyes, he knew he wouldn’t find it difficult staring into them when he took her. Those eyes he was admiring turned to her right to look at her brother, her unmoving brother. Had he...?

He flicked a strand of grimy hair from the face of the downtrodden lord, a light prick of his dagger against the man’s cheek and the blood began to slowly trickle down his face. There was still no movement from the man.

His head was leant down, eyes closed and chest unmoving. What a shame, the game was starting to get interesting but Lord Harrion didn't seem interested in staying to witness the outcome.

“Oh dear” He said as he bent his knees and squatted in front of the seated Lord. He turned to Alys whose eyes were now wide with realisation “No big brother in the way anymore now. The boys will be very excited to hear about dessert tonight, you’ve kept them wait....”

The top of the assumed deceased lord’s head connected with his nose as the pair of them ended up on the ground. He shook his head from the jarring shot and kicked Karstark square in the gut whilst he was laid next to him. The Lord himself howled in pain and writhed on the floor, still completely tied up to his chair.

He lifted Lord Harrion back into a seating position and struck him square in the face with his fist, blood pouring from his nose. Lady Alys cried in anguish at the sight of her brother being struck.

“Clever” He said as he waved and pointed his dagger at the man “Very clever, but you didn’t think about these did you” He said as he grabbed the ropes tied to the man and decided to tie them a little tighter. The Lord whimpered at the added pressure.

“We are gonna have so much fun with the pair of you tonight. We might even let you watch as Lady Alys here becomes a real woman, would you like that Harrion hmm? Would you like to see your little sister pay for your little ruse? See her mounted by every man in this shack? Yes, I think I’ll allow it with it being such a momentous oc.....”

He was interrupted by Damon rushing in through the door “Lord Bolton!” He all but shouted as he gathered his breath “Girls have got a scent, going mad they are, think it might be something big. Ben went to check with a couple of the dogs but hasn’t returned yet.” Damon finished as he left the room
He turned back to his pair of prisoners “Looks like my men will be in a wonderful mood when they return from the hunt!” He said with a beaming smile. He turned to Alys “Who knows, if they’re in a real good mood they might make it feel nice for you tonight.” He said as he brushed a strand of hair from her face and cupped her chin “I won’t though, I want you to remember it, I want you to feel the pain in more than just your cunt, I want you to feel it in your entire being.” And with that, he pushed her face away and made his way out of the room, remembering to bolt the door. He smiled as he heard the sobs from within.

Damon was looking through the window with concerned look on his face as he grabbed his bow and his whip “Something doesn’t seem right out there boss.” He said as Ramsay joined him at the window.

“There’s nothing in these woods we should be concerned about, we’re at the top of the food chain out here.” He looked at Damon who didn’t look convinced “Don’t worry friend” He said as he placed his arm around his shoulder “We’ll get a good hunt out of this, I can just sense it.” He then grinned “And we’ve got afters for dessert.” He finished as he nodded his head to the locked room.

He turned to the rest of the room that consisted of him, Damon, Yellow Dick, Luton, Alyn and Grunt. His boys.

“Right you sorry lot! Ben’s gone out there already, let's go join him!” His men got up from where they were sat preparing “LET THE HUNT BEGIN!” He roared as the rest of the room followed suit with his cry.

Before they even left the shack however, Ramsay realised something was wrong.

_The bitches have stopped barking. They never stop until the hunt is over._

He put his hand up to cease the chatter that had taken over the room. Damon was giving him that concerned look he had been before.

He was now weary.

_This could get interesting..._
He loved a challenge, it made the prize that much juicier.

He made Yellow Dick, a truly awful man to look at, open the door and go out first. The rest of the group were already prepared for a fight that everybody was now expecting due to Ramsay’s change in demeanour.

Yellow dick didn’t even get chance to open the door fully before the rest of the dogs were scratching at it and squeezing through the gap to shelter inside. That was unsettling and it only got worse when the girls started whining.

Damon looked at him even more concerned if that was possible, all he could do was furrow his brow in confusion “Wolves?” Damon asked.

He shook his head “We’ve hunted wolves before, the girls don’t have a problem with them as long as they stay in a pack and we’re with them with bows. No, whatever it is has to be something new.” He looked around the room, the men were waiting for his instructions like the good servants they were.

“Whatever it is, whoever it is...I want its head right there.” He said in a cold tone as he pointed above the fireplace.

His men looked worried but nodded their head in affirmation.

Damon and Grunt leashed all the dogs that were in the shack with them and practically dragged them out of the front door, they did not want to go outside in the slightest it would seem. No matter, they needed to follow, they needed to track and hunt, they needed to win.

The group entered the woods that Ben had been last seen entering with a few of the other bitches. He’d not returned and the dogs in question couldn’t be heard in the distance at all.

A part of him was telling him that something was very wrong as they tentatively advanced into the thicker depths of the woods.

Damon came up to his left “I think it might be a better idea to hold out in the shack my lord. The girls
are dragging their heels and the men seem reluctant to go any further.” He said.

Ramsay turned and grabbed Damon by the throat and held his dagger near his neck, he felt the man gulp from underneath his palm.

“You want us to hide, is that it? Ramsay Bolton doesn’t hide which means you don’t hide, understand?” He growled as he lightly slid the dagger across the length of the man's neck, just enough pressure to break the skin and nothing. He didn’t want to kill his men, he begrudgingly needed them right now.

Damon closed his eyes and nodded. He gasped for breath as Ramsay released him from his hold.

“Good! Glad that’s all settled then.” He said as they started walking again. The rest of his boys seem to collectively sigh in relief now that the little outburst from Damon was over.

He climbed over an uprooted tree along with the rest of them...a freshly uprooted tree.

He held his hand up and let out a small whistle to let the group know he was stopping. The men stopped around him and looked at him for further instructions, they’d have to wait though, he was too busy trying to work out why he was experiencing a sense of dread in the pit of his stomach.

He looked to his right and saw another freshly uprooted tree not too far away from the first one, there was even another one even further away from that one.

*Something is very wrong...*

Yellow Dick turned to him and “What do we do now boss?” He whispered.

He was about to answer but Alyn annoyingly cut him off from his position further away at the front of the party “Err boss....you might wanna see this.” He said, a slight wobble in his speech.

He moved towards the front of the party, passing a few more thick trunked tree’s before standing side by side with Alyn and seeing just what Alyn wanted his to see.
He just couldn’t work it out. None of it made sense.

In front of them was a large clearing, and not a natural clearing it had to be said. 10 or so uprooted trees completely trampled and broken into the soil beneath them. The earth itself looked like it’d been ripped to shreds like he’s seen his dogs do to a whore’s face.

“Ben...” he heard Alyn say to his right. He looked at the man and followed his line of sight, Alyn was right, Ben was here.

But he was dead. Very dead.

All they could see was the top end of his body, eyes bulging out of his head, profound veins ready to pop all over his face and neck. The other half of him was under the immense pressure of a fallen tree, he couldn’t see the damage but if he had to guess, the tree probably crushed his entire lower half, including half of his torso and without a doubt, killed the man instantly.

He saw Damon shake his head “What a way to go.” He said.

“Yes, crushed to death by a tree.” He said and huffed shortly after “I can't be dealing with weak links in the group. That tree did us a favour.” He finished.

Damon’s face didn’t change when Ramsay looked at him. He didn’t get chance to retort with something that would no doubt get his tongue ripped out as the whole group, including him he begrudgingly had to admit, were shaken to their core by the intense and increasingly stronger rumblings of the earth.

“What the fuck is that!” More than one person said as they looked around the outskirts of the clearing they had all now moved into the middle of. The bitches were whining even more now and Yellow Dick and Grunt were struggling to keep them under control.

“Shut up and let me think!” He hissed as he tried to work out what direction the sounds were coming from. To his left and his right he heard the unsheathing of steel, it seems that his men had made up their decision and were preparing to fight whatever the fuck was about to come out of those tre....
Ramsay Bolton is never speechless.

Ramsay Bolton is never fearful.

“Wha...How...” Was all he could breathe out.

*I think I might die now...*

He’d never given much thought about his own mortality. He just assumed he’d live till he was grey. It was jarring to think his end was hulking its way towards them at a tremendous speed, each step making his entire being shake. He couldn’t run or hide from this. He had to die or fight. He didn’t want to die right now, he had too many plans to see through. He would have to fight, yes, fight is what he would do.

Ramsay Bolton will be one day remembered for the many feats and accomplishments he’d achieved but none of them will be more memorable than the day he slayed a dragon single-handedly.

“C’mon then you cunt, let’s see what you’ve g...”

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**Jon**

He heard the crunch of bone reverberate through *Kireina’s* neck as she bit the first man clean in half with one snap of her vice like jaw. The men surrounding the now destroyed man just stood there in disbelief, half of them looking at *Kireina*, the other staring at the remains of their friend she’d just chewed down on. Whimpering dogs fleeing the scene and leaving the rest of these men to be judged by death incarnate herself and based off of the second man being torn in half, she wasn’t in the mood to let them off in the slightest.

It was over in a matter of seconds.

The final man, who foolishly attempted to wrap a whip around *Kireina’s* neck, was picked up between the dragon’s teeth and catapulted across the clearing, hitting the base of a tree with a sickening crunch and snap before slouching into a pile on the ground unmoving.

He surveyed the area they were stood in from the back of *Kireina’s* huge figure, carnage
everywhere. Corpses and trees strewn about the place, to his left he spotted the first person the pair of them encountered from the group earlier, crushed under a tree in an attempt to avoid Kireina’s feet. Too busy mesmerised by her sheer presence, the man had not even seen the tree fall as Kireina meandered around the forest with her massive bulk, unintentionally uprooting tree left and right in the process.

In the end, mother nature had done them a favour ending the man, some of the things he was saying to the pack of dogs he had with him were disgusting. Mentions of hunts and torture and flaying was all the convincing he needed that the best course of action was to remove this man and the rest of his friends from society. Kireina was wholeheartedly behind his decision and proceeded to get on with the dirty work herself, not that it was especially taxing for her. He did give her one rule though, scare the dogs, don’t kill them. He had a soft spot for canines and these dogs didn’t know any better than their owners.

Kireina let out a huff “We should check that shack I spotted earlier, there might be more of them.” She said almost impatiently.

He checked his back to make sure his swords were still secured and checked his ankle for his dagger, all were present ‘I’m gonna go in quietly, we’ve made enough noise and mess to alert a town here.’ He said as he made his way down off her back and on to the destroyed earth below. “All the witnesses of your existence are all here, we’re back to nobody knowing about you and I would like to keep it that way for as long as I can for now.”

He patted her flank “Back up in the clouds with you, I’ll be fine and if I'm not you’ll sense it won’t ya?” He said as he tried to soothe the anxiousness he felt from her.

She huffed again, he’d worked out that that was her way of showing him her annoyance, almost like a dog would. He found it somewhat cute.

“Fine, but If I sense trouble, I’m getting you out. I don’t care who sees me.” She said and set off from the ground into the air with one big flap of her wings. She’d not even said bye the cheeky sod.

He followed her quick ascent back up into the clouds with his eyes, in the corner of his right eye he noticed the plume of smoke that they’d spotted coming from the shack earlier. Thankfully, it was rather close to where he was right now so he didn’t have to tramp through this bloody forest for hours.

He started walking in the direction of the smoke, climbing over a few trees in the process.
Gods, she really doesn't know her own size, does she?

Within 10 minutes of walking, he was just outside the shack. From the tree he was peeking around, there didn’t seem to be anybody home. He circled around the building, noticing two horses tied up around the back of the shack and something he really didn’t want to see. Flayed corpses. Fresh by the looks of it, blood dripping on to the ground from where the body was hung like a butcher’s wares.

He looked down and shook his head, flaying had been outlawed in the North centuries ago when the Boltons bent their knees to Winterfell and agreed to abandon their practice of flaying their enemies. Seems like there were a few who hadn't heard the news.

After circling the shack and confirming there were two doors into the place, he threw a rock through the door that was wide open at the front. The aim was to draw some sort of movement inside but there was nothing, not a peep.

With a deep breath, he darted across the front yard of the shack and pressed his back to the wall next to the front door, he steadied his breathing and closed his eyes to focus on any sounds that were coming from inside. He heard a shuffle, a small one but it was a shuffle all the same.

There’s somebody in there...

He pulled his dagger out and assumed a defensive stance, Master Miyamoto had always said the best form of defence was a good offence but the situation he was in right now didn't seem like the best time to be running in like a banshee.

He slowly peeked around the corner of the doorway and into the front room, nothing but a couple of tables and chairs, a lit fireplace and a few discarded drinking horns. He looked up to check the ceiling for any movement, you could never be too sure, Master M had proven that one training session when he pounced on him from above inside his hall one morning. He couldn’t believe it when the old man had landed on him and then proceeded to show him how he’d even got up there. Now Jon checked every ceiling of every room he entered.

It wasn’t a big shack, clearly it was an old hunting shack but it was still a nice one, made up of a combination of wood and brick, even had its own brick fireplace. There were four doors in the room, one on each wall. The first door he’d just walked through and the one directly opposite him was the back door to where the horses were tied up. The door to his immediate left was cracked open just a
little bit and he quickly peeked through it, nothing but bedrolls laid across a wooden floor, couple of lanterns and a what looked like the only bed that was in this place.

He could only see forwards through the gap so he was weary about walking in. What he planned would alert anybody in the building but stop him from getting his throat sliced, so with his mind made up he kicked the door as hard as he could, it swung wide open and slammed against the wall behind it with a mighty thud. A quick look confirmed the room was empty and as quick as a cat, he darted across the main room and pressed his back to the wall next to the final door in the hopes of catching someone off guard.

He calmed his breathing again and listen closely for any movement from the last room. Another shuffle and additionally, muffled speech, one higher pitched compared to the other one.

*A man and a woman. Prisoners or hostiles? Was this a trick?*

He looked down at the door knob and waited for it to turn, when he looked at it, he realised something. The door was bolted and locked from the outside.

*He was 95 percent sure these were prisoners now.*

He loudly banged on the door twice with his fist and shouted “Anybody in there!?” He asked. The muffled shouting and almost sobbing from the pair of voices almost confirmed his belief that these weren't hostile, almost.

“Stand back! I’m gonna break the door open!” He said as the pair inside went quiet. The bolt on the door wasn’t the thickest thing in the world, he looked around the room in the hopes of finding a key but the chances were that it was probably melting at the bottom of Kireina’s stomach at the moment.

He unsheathed one of his blades and lined it up in the small gap between the door frame and the door. He heard whimpers from within when his blade slid through and emerged on the inside of the locked room, with a lift and a quick downwards swing, he managed to sheer the old bolt on the door. He pulled his sword back but still kept it ready for when he opened the door, this could still be all some sick twisted game being played on him.

With his free hand, he twisted the door handle and pushed the door open, before anybody could jump him, he leapt backwards and readied his blade at the other side of the room. The whimpering and mumbling were much louder now that the door was open, but what he noticed even more was
The smell.

*The fuck has been happening in there?*

“Hello?” He shouted from across the room, still waiting for the ambush. He wrinkled his nose in an attempt to fight the strong odour. His greeting was met with even louder cries, a woman’s voice attempting to say something but struggling with it.

He slowly approached the room, the wall behind the door had nobody behind it since it was laid flush against it. “I’m putting my weapon down and I’m coming in.” He said as he made an effort to make the steel of his sword being placed on the floor as loud as he could. He grabbed his dagger and approached the room in the hopes somebody went for an easy kill on an unarmed man.

He peered around the door frame and inside towards the other end of the unlocked room. Clearly a storage room, boxes, shelves and what have you spread around it. Two people, a man and a woman, gagged at the mouth and tied to a chair each. The man was older looking than the woman who looked almost his age.

They were both looking at him with wide eyes, he had one last look to see if they were armed before walking up to them and taking their gags off. The girl was crying the moment he took them off.

The man to his left looked at him like he didn’t know what to make of him “Did Ramsay send you?” He asked with a hoarse voice. He looked battered and bruised, a couple of missing teeth and a nose caked in dry blood.

He shook his head as he checked the girl, both of them looked like they’d seen better days but there was a clear difference between the pair when comparing the treatment of the two. The girl was shaking like a leaf, tears in her wide, bloodshot eyes and her hair was dishevelled. The man had clearly taken the brunt of the physical torture.

He lifted his dagger to cut her binds, both of them flinching when he revealed it. They both calmed a little bit when he started cutting at the ropes around the girl's feet.

“I don’t know who that is.” He said as he broke through the rope around her feet and moved on to the one tied around her stomach “If he was one of those cunts with the dogs then he’s dead.” He said as he finished cutting the second rope. He looked at the man who looked a little less weary than before “They're all dead.” He finished as he went around the back of the chair to cut the final rope.
around the girl's wrists. The man turned his neck and kept his eyes glued on him throughout the whole process.

The girl got up from her chair on wobbly legs and started rubbing her wrists. “Are you sure? Did you do it? Please, I need to know they’re gone.” She asked as she started to tremble with fear, she looked over her shoulder to the open door.

“I’m positive. There were 6 of them and a bunch of dogs. The hounds fled but the men are most definitely dead, very dead.” He said as he worked on the ropes around the man.

The girl seemed to deflate when he said that, like a pressure being lifted, a steadying breath easing the state that she was in. The man’s binds were finally free and he had to help him to his feet as he seemed to struggle somewhat.

The girl came across and took over helping the man, they seemed familial, either that or they were good friends or even lovers.

He stepped back towards the door and checked to see if the coast was still clear. They wouldn’t be staying here much longer; the horses round back would rectify that.

He turned around “What are your names?” He asked as the pair of them slowly made their way out of the stench riddled room. He closed the door behind them as they passed through in the hopes of locking it away forever.

They beelined towards the table which had a few drinking horns, bits of cheese and hard bread left on it. The man turned around and looked at him then looked at the girl who still looked a little worried.

*Understandable given the situation.*

The man nodded his head at him “You first, what’s your name?” He asked as he wolfed down some cheese before glugging whatever was left in the horn he’d picked up.

*Should he lie? There was no reason to he realised.*
“Jon.” He said as he headed towards the back door and opened it. He turned back and picked up and sheathed his katana that he’d placed down earlier.

“Jon what?” The girl asked as she drank and ate at a slower pace than the man.

“Jon Snow.” He finished as he grabbed the shovel that was leant against the wall next to the door. He wasn’t gonna leave these flayed bodies unburied.

They slowly followed him out the back door and leant against the wall, they watched him dig two holes for the two bodies that were hung up near them.

“Jon Snow? As in Lord Stark’s ba.....son?” The man said as Jon slammed the shovel into the ground a little harder at the mention of that man.

He huffed out “The one and only.” He said as he worked as quickly as he could with the hole. He didn’t expect to find himself digging graves today but he supposed that was just life, kicking you in the dick one minute then sucking it the next.

“And you two, what are your names since I've just revealed myself?” he asked as he finished the first grave and started on the second.

“My name is Harrion and this is my sister Alys.” The man, now revealed as being called Harrion, answered.

_Harrion and Alys. Those names ring a bell but he couldn’t quite put his finger on it._

“Well it's nice to meet the pair of you, wish it was under more agreeable circumstances.” He said as he ripped the soil apart with his shovel.

Alys chuckled and so did Harrion “I met you 10 years ago Jon, when my father came to Winterfell for a visit and brought me along with him. I danced with you at the welcome feast, don’t you remember?” She asked.

Danced with him? He’s only ever danced with...
His eyes went wide when he looked back at them “Alys? Alys Karstark? And Lord Harrion?” He said to which the pair confirmed with a nod.

He shook his head and finished off with the second hole, he then chuckled “Small world.” He said as he walked towards the two hanging bodies. The mood instantly changed when he looked upon their remains.

*Kireina’s quick death was a mercy for them. They deserved a whole lot worse.*

The two Karstarks looked down at the ground, almost in respect as he cut the two bodies down. He ran into the shack and emerged back outside with two white sheets he found in the bedchambers. He wrapped both of the bodies in a sheet each and gently picked them up and placed them in each one of the respected graves. He shovelled dirt over the top of them and closed his eyes for a few seconds after in respect. They’d be left in unmarked graves but at least they’d been returned to the earth instead of being left out to dry like somebody’s washed clothes.

He returned to the two Karstarks and placed the shovel back where he’d gotten it from in the first place. He turned to them and assessed them both now they were in broad daylight “Are you able enough to ride one of these horses?” He asked the pair, mainly looking at Harrion who looked a lot worse than Alys.

They both looked at each other and seemed to come to an agreement without even speaking “Yeah, we should be alright. Me and Alys will share, she’ll have to take the reins. Bloody cunts messed up my hands with what they were doing to me.” Harrion said as Jon nodded.

He looked around as he prepared the horses for their journey, if push came to shove, he’d have to introduce them to *Kireina* if the situation became dire but for now, they’d have to rely on horses.

“Do you have a rough idea where we are?” He asked.

He walked over to the horses and closed his eyes while he had his back to the pair of them and attempted to reach out to *Kireina*. She wasn’t far away but he didn’t know if she’d be able to hear his thoughts from where she was. “*Can you spot any landmarks Kireina?*” He asked her through their bond.

“I know at one point we stopped near a river west from here. When we were apprehended, we
weren't far from the Dreadfort according to our escorts. Ramsay and his men travelled south with us, I know that at least.” Aly said.

“We had to go around the Sheepshead hills, mainly to avoid Hornswood scouts.” Harrion added.

“*Is everything okay? Are you hurt?*” Kireina asked almost frantically.

He finished with the first horse and moved to the next one, both of the stallions seemed very keen to be away from this place. He couldn’t blame them.

“Yes, I'm okay. I've got a couple of people that needed help and I'm gonna need some sort of direction to go in. Did you see any castles or anything?” He asked. He was pretty sure their best bet was to head towards Hornwood, but he wasn’t exactly sure of the direction.

“The forest is too dense for me to pinpoint anything. You're probably going to have to go north.” She replied.

Forest is too dense. North it is.

“We are probably in The Hornswood forest so heading northwest is probably the best idea. House Hornwood should welcome you surely?...Unless I've missed something since I've been away?” He said as he finished with the second horse and turned to them with a quirked eyebrow.

“No, you haven't missed much I’m afraid, other than your father searching high and low for months looking for ya and this one here becoming your sister-in-law soon.” Harrion said as he struggled but just about managed to mount his horse. Aly followed him up and sat at the front to take the reins.

He kinda walked into the whole ‘your father has been looking for you’ comment he had to admit. He knew Lord Stark would have looked for him but he hadn't thought it would've become public knowledge about him leaving. He thought Lord Stark would've respected his choice when it came to leaving but...

...Sister-in-law?!
He looked at the pair as he effortlessly mounted the red stallion, it seemed very keen to get going, stomping its two front hooves into the soil.

“Sister-in-law?” He asked them as they slowly started trotting away from the murder shack this Ramsay liked to call his home.

Alys nodded and smiled as both horses trotted away, northbound “Aye, me and your brother Robb are to wed. Me and Harrion were on our way back to Karhold after our visit to Winterfell to confirm the betrothal. That’s when all this happened.” She finished as her smile faltered slightly.

He huffed and smiled. Robb was betrothed, that was the first bit of news about his family he’d gotten in 3 years. He looked back at Alys who now had her eyes looking ahead of them, she was a pretty lass he had to admit, a proper northern girl for his brother. He was made up for him.

A few hours had passed since they’d left Ramsay’s house of nightmares, conversation had been free flowing, Harrion had soldiered on despite his clear discomfort due to his injuries and they were making good time he thought. What he didn’t like was the fact that the sun was quite low in the sky now and the oranges of the evening sky were starting to dim with every step they took.

“We might have to make camp soon, carry on in the morning.” He shouted over his shoulder at the pair of them following behind.

“Anything is better than being back in that place.” Alys replied, Harrion grunted in agreement.

“There’s smoke about 10 minutes north from where you are.” Kireina whispered in the back of his mind. She’d stayed close to them throughout the entire journey, high up in the clouds. The world’s best personal tracker she was.

He really hoped that smoke wasn’t another shack full of nutjobs, he’d dealt with plenty of them today.

As promised, 10 minutes later, smoke plumes could be seen just ahead through the canopy of the forest. He slowed his pace down just a little and Alys did the same with their horse.

“What's the matter Jon?” She asked, worry written all over her face. Harrion tapped her on the
shoulder and pointed up into the trees, he’d obviously seen what Jon had seen too.

“How do we proceed? I’m not gonna be much use if this is a fight in front of us but I’ll fight if I have to.” Harrion said.

He slowly approached the edge of the forest and peeked out from in between the dense tree line. There wouldn’t be another fight tonight.

A castle loomed in the distance, nowhere near as big as Winterfell but still a sight to behold.

This has to be Hornwood, for the love of god be Hornwood.

He wanted to make sure they got to safety before he left, this unfortunate detour had cost him almost a day. He could have been in Winterfell by now if it wasn’t for this Ramsay cunt.

“Is that...” Alys proclaimed as they moved up next to him.

“Hornwood Castle. Thank the gods.” Harrion answered.

Thank the gods indeed.

The three of them slowly trotted out of the treeline and made a beeline towards the huge gates of the castle.

“Let’s hope somebody is in.” He said with a grin. Alys just shook her head and smiled at him. The relief for the pair of them must have been immense.

The castle walls loomed tall ahead of them, with very little fanfare, the front gates slowly rose and revealed two mounted knights heading straight for them. One of them was holding the banner of House Hornwood, a brown bull moose on a field of dark orange. An orange that almost matched the sky.

“Halt!” One of the men shouted in a harsh tone. Jon and Alys stopped the horses in their tracks.
“State your business.” The same guard who’d spoken to them asked whilst eyeing up the three of them. One of the guards looked at him and then just over his shoulder, no doubt at the two swords on his back.

He looked at Alys and Harrion, they seemed to be struggling how to approach this. He decided to help out.

“This is Lord Harrion Karstark and this is Lady Alys Karstark, we request food, shelter and access to one of your ravens if it wouldn’t be too much trouble.” He said in his most superficial lords voice he could muster. Alys just looked at him with an eyebrow quirked and a small grin on her face.

He turned back to the guard who was speaking to him and noticed the man’s eyes had widened. It would seem this wouldn’t be as difficult as he’d expected it to go. However, before he could open his mouth again, both guards were unsheathing their swords.

*There goes that idea.*

He quirked an eyebrow at the pair of guards, he could take them quite easily but it wouldn’t look great if he did, it’d end up causing more headache than it was worth.

“Very bold of you to try and ransom Lord and Lady Karstark in person, bit of a thick decision but it gives us an easy job. I know a few Lords who would like to make an example out of you.” One of the guards sneered as they started to move closer to Alys and Harrion, almost like they thought they were protecting them.

Before Harrion or Alys could open their mouth to correct them, Jon was beating them to it “I see common sense isn’t your strong spot. Use your fucking head next time before throwing accusations around. If I was ransoming them, wouldn’t they be tied up or something?” He said. The guards looked at the two Karstarks, both of them showed just how annoyed they were with the pair of idiots in front of them.

Both of the guards seem to come to the same conclusion and sheathed their swords. One of them spoke up “Apologies. The castle and the surrounding area have been on high alert since Lord Hornwood had announced Lord and Lady Karstark had been kidnapped.”

“Can’t have been on that high of an alert, we walked right up to your castle gates unperturbed. You
need better scouts.” He said in an uninterested tone.

“Jon! You're not helping.” Alys chided. He just grinned in response.

“Enough of all this! Are you gonna let us in or not? Fetch Lord Halys, we’ve met once before. Anything to get me in there where a bath, some food, a maester and a feather bed could be found hmm.” Harrion exclaimed. It looked like it took the remaining energy in the man’s body to raise his voice to the pair of dolts.

The guards looked at each other before riding past the three of them, back towards the castle gates. One of them shouted over their shoulder “Follow us but any funny business and you’ll regret it.”

“Probably not but okay.” He whispered under his breath. Alys heard him as she rode by and slapped him on the shoulder like a mother chidding a child, Harrion just smirked.

Homely would be the word he’d use to describe the inside of the castle walls. It was like everything was 25 percent smaller than Winterfell, Jon was almost charmed by it all as he looked about the place. A few more guards were eyeing the three of them up and some workers even stopped what they were doing to witness the spectacle of Jon riding a horse.

“Please, no more trouble. You have no idea how much I need a hot bath and some warm food.” Alys said as she leaned closer to him.

He held up both of his hands in mock surrender “You can do the talking, my lips are sealed.” He said as they came to a stop and dismounted from their horses. Harrion was a bit wobbly on his feet but shook off any help, Jon just shook his head as he handed the reins of the two horses to the stable keeper.

Northerners could be so stubborn sometimes.

The three of them were escorted into the main keep of the castle and told to wait there as one of the guards disappeared, to get Lord Halys he presumed, and the other kept an eye on them. The guard watching them was looking at Jon intently so he decided he’d do the same and just stared at the man with what Gerion used to call, his Tywin glare.

Jon won the imaginary war as the man looked away.
**That’s right bitch, look away.** He grinned over his success and stopped when he saw Alys looking at him unamused. He looked back at the guard who now had a grin of his own.

“This *Prick.*” He said under his breath. The guard heard him and started moving towards Jon but was stopped by a bellowing shout from the other end of the hall.

“Harrion! My good man, it's so good to see you in one piece. And you, Lady Alys! Lord Robb will be very happy to know his intended is safe and unharmed, he’s been very worried I tell you.” A grey-haired fellow boomed across the hall. This was Lord Halys he presumed.

Alys to her credit, curtsied to the lord “Thank you Lord Halys, news about my intended is always welcome, hopefully as welcome as we are in your castle? The past few days have been truly awful my lord, my brother here will be in need of your maester and we’d appreciate accommodation for the night if that’s okay my lord?” She asked. You wouldn’t have thought she’d just been through hell with how she’d spoke.

*Robb’s got a good one there.*

Lord Halys waved her off like she’d asked for something absurd “Of course it's okay Lady Alys.” He shook his head and smiled at the two Karstarks “Lord Robb will be ever so pleased to see you, wracked with worry that one earlier. They should be back soon, getting dark out there.” He said as he held out his hand to Harrion and shook it.

*Back soon? Robb is here?*

He couldn’t think more of it as the Lord of the castle moved across to him and eyed him up and down.

“And who is *this*?” He asked as he looked in Harrion’s direction.

“This was the man who saved us, if it wasn’t for him, I don’t know what would be happening to us right now.” Harrion said as he gave a sad look in Alys’ direction.

Lord Halys turned back to him “Well he certainly looks like he can handle himself, especially with
them two swords on his back that he shouldn't really have at the moment.” He said as he looked at the two guards that had escorted them. They had the decency to look down in shame with their failure to claim his weapons at the gate.

“Do you have a name lad?” Lord Halys asked as he turned back to him.

“Yep.”

Lord Halys shook his head and grinned “And are you gonna tell us it?” He asked.

“Probably.”

“Jon...” Alys warned.

“Ahh! So, its Jon. Jon what?” Lord Halys said as he grinned at Alys and then looked back at him.

“Snow.” He replied. Lord Halys’ eyes widened.

“Jon Snow...Lord Stark’s lad?” He asked. Lord Halys’ eyes lit up like he’d struck gold.

He just nodded his head in response. It was out there now. Jon Snow was back in town.

“This just keeps getting better and better.” The man seemed to mutter to himself.

Harrion cleared his throat “Lord Halys, if it wouldn’t be too much trouble, we’d like to get out of these dirty clothes and I really would like the maester to take a look at me.” He said, clearly impatient now.

“Ah, yes yes of course. Donella always said I could talk the ears off anybody when I wanted to, of course she’s the one who gets the worst of it...”
Harrion just raised an eyebrow.

“I’m rambling. Right, you two follow me. Jon, these servants will take you to the kitchens for something to eat while I get the rooms prepared.” Lord Halys said as he escorted the two Karstarks away. Alys looked over her shoulder at him and mouthed ‘Be good’ at him. He just saluted her and she shook her head.

He could smell the food before he could see it, and when he did, he realised just how hungry he was, he’d had nothing all day. It looked like the leftovers from a feast but he didn’t care, one of the servants handed him a plate and told him to help himself. He nearly kissed the man.

With his plate full and a horn of ale, Jon made his way out of the kitchen and into the halls where a different servant showed him to his room. There was no conversation between the two of them even with the girl constantly eyeing him up, it would have been rude to speak with a mouth full of chicken. He wasn’t in the mood for conversation either, he was buzzing with excitement instead, excited to see his brother again.

_I hope he’s not mad. I don’t know how I would handle that._

He was shown into his room, it wasn’t large but it had what he needed. A roaring fire, a featherbed and a hot bath. The servant curtsied and left him to it.

He placed his food and drink on the table and took his blades off his back. He grabbed his plate and horn and sat on the bed, he almost sunk into its softness. He lent against the wall the bed was next to and quietly enjoyed his dinner.

_I’ve got good food, good northern ale, a nice soft featherbed and a steaming hot bath. He was also gonna be seeing his brother again, the gods were looking down on him today. Hell, he might even treat himself tonight and toss himself off before he goes to bed._

With his food polished off, Jon undressed and sank into the copper bath he was provided with. The muscles in his arse and back were singing in pleasure at the relief from all that riding. He cleaned himself off fairly quickly and just laid there with his eyes closed, letting the heat soothe the rest of his body. If he wasn’t too careful, he’d fall asleep with how blissful it was.

He must have been laid in that bath for nearly half an hour, it might have been even longer if it wasn’t for the clear commotion that was happening outside his room. He looked over his shoulder at
the door, if he was about to be attacked, he wouldn’t hesitate to fight his assailant stark naked. Thankfully he wasn’t about to be attacked, going on the shout he heard outside from his window. Somebody was at the gates and by the sounds of it, they were being opened.

Robb!?

He’d never got out of a bath quicker in his life, water sloshed all over the ground as he towelled off with the fresh linens he was provided with. He dressed as quick as he could, strapping his swords and his dagger in their appropriate positions. He ran his fingers through his damp curls and picked up his horn of ale before necking the remains of it in a single gulp.

Please don’t be mad Robb.

There was a knock on the door and he must have startled the servant with how quick he opened it.

“Lord Halys has told me to tell you the search party has returned mi lord.” The man said as he bowed and walked off.

With a spring in his step he all but jogged through the keep and out of the front door. He was surprised at the amount of horses and dogs that were in the courtyard.

Search party? Robb must have a small army here!

There was a lot of movement in and around the horses that were currently being moved to the stables. There was a small crowd in front of him and he was stood at the back trying to see if he could spot those tell tale auburn locks, what made him scrunch his face in annoyance was the sight of one Theon Greyjoy.

Of course that prick was here, why hadn’t he considered that earlier?

His face calmed and a smile grew as he saw his brother, he had a few more inches on him now, still a poor excuse of a beard though. He chuckled at the thought of that, he’d told Jon years ago that he couldn’t wait to grow one.
His brother was in an embrace with a woman, from the back he couldn’t really tell but if he were to guess by the beaming smile his brother had on his face, it was Alys.

He was glad he’d been in the right place in the right time. He would have to thank Kireina for her intuition, if she’d not got his butt moving this morning it could have been a whole different story.

He saw Lord Halys walk up to Robb and shake his hand, Alys was currently stood next to Robb with both of her hands holding one of his, almost hugging his arm. He couldn’t spot Harrion but if he had to guess, the Lord was probably still in with the maester.

Lord Halys then moved across to someone stood behind a horse and held his hand out, who he saw made the blood in his veins run molten, he could hear his heart beating in his ears and his vision narrowed.

*Why did I not think I’d be this angry? Why does he have to be here right now? Am I supposed to play nice because we have an audience? WHAT THE FUCK DO I DO?!*

He would have to think fast, the man in question had Lord Halys whispering in his ear and his eyes darted all over the place like he was looking for something.

“Where!?” The man said, almost yelling at Lord Halys. Robb looked at the man confused.

That’s when Lord Halys looked around himself and finally locked eyes with Jon and smiled. Jon wasn’t in the mood for smiling anymore.

He was pointed at by Lord Hornwood and all eyes turned to him, especially the two Starks that were in the yard.

Robb was almost crying when he finally realised who he was looking at but the other man...

Lord Stark.

Well, he looked like he’d seen a ghost.
“...Jon?” Lord Stark almost whispered, almost like he didn’t want to scare him away.

Jon just looked at him with cold eyes and didn’t respond.

Chapter End Notes

Just a side note, the Ramsay death was supposed to be a lot worse but I couldn't really find a way of fitting a death in that involved him being beheaded and sown to the body of one of his hounds. It would have been a nice callback to the Robb & Grey Wind mutilation after the Red Wedding but it just felt forced imo so yeah...

On a lighter note lol, hope you enjoyed it, I should still be able to get the next chapter out next week.

And again, Happy Holidays x
The Return

Chapter Notes

Felt bad leaving you with a cliffhanger over the holidays so I decided to get this out to you a little earlier, think of it as my xmas gift to you, my lovely readers.

The next chapter will be in the new year so I will take this opportunity to wish you Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year :)

Enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ned

People were staring at him and Jon, eyes shooting left and right in between the pair of them. His heart felt like it was gonna explode out of his chest, he could feel the rapid beats throughout his entire body. His ears had a slight buzz to them and his breathing was becoming harder and harder to grasp with every second that passed.

To his right was a grinning Lord Halys, to his left was a smiling Robb with his intended joining in with him, he was so glad they’d got her back. Thankfully, her and her brother had been rescued, rescued by the boy...man that was stood right in front of him a few feet away.

Him and Robb couldn't believe it when one of Lord Hornwood’s scouts met up with them stating that he’d been sent to tell them that Lady Alys and her brother Lord Harrion were back, safe and sound within the walls of Hornwood castle. When he’d asked how they’d managed to escape, the scout just said ‘some bloke found em, Lord Halys has said he wants to present him to you when you arrive.’ To say he was intrigued to meet this man was an understatement, Robb had even suggested giving the man lands for his deeds before riding off towards Hornwood without even waiting for him.

He’d not seen Lord Harrion when they arrived but they were so happy to see Lady Alys safe and unhurt when they finally entered the courtyard. Seeing his son and his future wife embrace justified his choice even more that Alys was more ideal for Robb than either of the Targaryen Princesses. He hadn't married for love when he was younger, dark hair and violet eyes flashing through his mind momentarily, but he was gonna try his absolute best to give his children the chance to, and with the way the two young ones were holding each other, he’d not failed his son.
You failed one of them though, didn’t you? His conscience uttered to him.

He was now staring across at the man he’d failed for so long, and he was staring back.

Wherever he’d been for the past three years had done wonders for his boy, he looked strong and healthy. He must have grown half a foot whilst away, he’d been the same height as him before he’d gone but now, Jon must be the same height Brandon was the last time he saw him, maybe even more. His hair had grown out a bit as well, mainly the hair on his face, Robb will definitely be having words with him about that.

He smiled at that, his two boys were back together again, he smiled at the fact that Jon was back and the fact that he was indeed alright. Maybe the nightmares would stop now.

He carried on smiling as he took in the rest of his son before looking up and reaching his eyes, that’s when the smiling faded. Those eyes, those eyes that had haunted him for three years, one minute they belonged to Lyanna the next they belonged to her son. In the accumulated years of seeing those eyes, he’d never seen them look so hard and cold before, ever.

The glare he was receiving almost made him flinch, he could feel the blood from his face slowly draining away as he carried on looking at Jon. He could feel the anxiety firing back up again.

Does he know?

He slowly walked up to him, his heart beating quicker with every step. He could faintly hear the footsteps of his son and his intended following him.

If he knows, I’m fucked.

The look on his son’s face hadn't changed when he finally reached him, without a pause he grabbed him into a crushing hug, one part wanting to feel his son in his arms again and the other to hide his worries in the fur of his son’s cloak.

“We need to have a little chat when we’re back in Winterfell.” Jon whispered into his ear. No ‘Hello father’ or ‘I’ve missed you’, just straight to the point, like he was meeting a Lord he had no intention of being friends with, purely business.
He knows.

How?

The only other person who knew was Howland, he’d not seen the man for years. The man swore on his life to not tell a soul.

What had Jon done to convince him otherwise?

In fact, how would Jon know to go to Howland in the first place?

He swallowed hard as Jon squeezed him back within their embrace, almost to the point where he couldn’t breathe.

I can’t breathe...

He clapped Jon on the back a few times in the hopes he would let go but he didn’t. He didn’t want there to be a scene so he stayed as calm as he could. With one last squeeze that felt like it had rearranged a rib, Jon thankfully released him, not even giving him another look as he went towards Robb and embraced him a little more lovingly. He could hear the pair of them muttering into each other’s neck, it looked like the both of them were fighting the tears off.

Robby suddenly released him and punched Jon on the arm.

“Where the hell have you been!” He said, almost shouting. He grabbed Jon and started hugging him again. Regardless of the current tension, it still melted his heart to see the two of them like this.

“I’ll tell you later. But first, you need a bath, you stink. Not fair on my sister-in-law having to put up with that.” Jon said as he smiled back at Robb before winking at Alys.

Robby smiled back at him before holding Alys’ hand and planting a kiss on the back of it, poor lass didn’t know where to look with that blush on her face.
The three of them walked back in through door to the main keep, Alys holding Robb’s hand and Jon with his arm over Robb’s shoulder. This was probably turning out to be one of Robb’s best days in recent years.

He was nudged on his right shoulder by Lord Halys, he caught a quick glimpse of a miserable looking Theon in the background. “Turned up at the main gates with Lord Harrion and Lady Alys, bold as brass that one, well and truly showed up my men at the gates according to Lord Harrion.” The Lord of Hornwood smiled and shook his head.

“How is Lord Harrion? I didn’t see him in the welcoming party.” Ned asked as the pair of them walked into the main keep themselves. He was already looking around to see if he could spot Jon.

Lord Halys sighed “In a bit of a shape to be honest, maester was dealing with him last I saw. He did confirm one thing though, it was Roose’s bastard that had caused all this mess.” He said.

He’d thought as much.

“Any word on where he is?” He asked as they made their way towards Lord Halys’ solar.

“Dead. Harrion told me so, claims your son had sorted him out, got the bastard’s associates as well.” He said “Got a good one there Ned, if my Larence had been born a girl I’d have suggested a match ha!” He said as he chuckled.

Jon has killed. It would have come eventually but it still shocked him to hear that his son had taken another’s life.

*You can’t judge.* His conscience whispered.

“Never mind, I’m sure a good looking lad like that won’t be short of suitors. Hell, if no woman wants him, we’ll have him. Would probably improve our guard tenfold.” Halys said as he grinned. They’d reached his solar but Ned couldn’t for the life of him understand why he was even here. He wanted to see Jon, he needed to see Jon right now.

“Halys, I know it’s rude of me to say but if you don’t mind, I would like to go see Jon. It’s been
three years since I've seen him and I’ve got so many questions to ask him.” He said, hopefully not offending the Lord.

Lord Halys nodded his head and started moving Ned back down the corridor they’d just walked through “Of course of course, my wife says I could talk for westeros haha. Please, go and see your son, we can talk later my Lord.” He finished as Ned thanked the man and made his way towards Robb’s room, no doubt he’d dragged Jon in by his ear.

It didn’t take him long to get to the corridor their rooms were in, Ser Rodrik had found him on the way but Ned had dismissed him and asked him to guard the corridor he was heading down.

The door to Robb’s room opened whilst he was walking down, Jon came out of the room smiling.

“You be good Alys, don’t want to get Robb in trouble.” He said into the room. He heard Robb say ‘Piss off’ which caused Jon to laugh. The smile on his face dropped when he clocked eyes with Ned. “I’ll see you two later.” He said before closing the door and walking in the opposite direction from him.

“Jon!” He shouted. Thankfully, Jon stopped walking and turned around.

“What?” He almost growled out.

“3 years without a word and that’s all you can say to me?” He said. Wrong thing to say with the way Jon’s face morphed into a look of anger.

He visibly gulped.

Jon just turned back around and carried on walking away.

“Jon, talk to me.” He said as he followed him down the corridor. Jon reached a door and entered the room within. Most likely the room he was given.

Jon stood at the door and held it open for him “Get in then, you wanted to talk.” He said as Ned entered the room and scanned it. The slam of the door made him jump and spin on the spot.
Jon was walking right towards him, it was only now Ned realised he had two swords on his back.

*He won't hit me...will he?*

He released a breath he didn't know he was holding as Jon walked past him and sat down on the bed. He walked across the room himself and stood next to the bed, pointing at it and looking at him.

“May I sit?” He asked.

“No. Get a chair.” Jon replied, emotionless.

*This is gonna be awful.* He thought as he grabbed the chair at the table and sat a couple of feet away from him, just enough room to avoid Jon lashing out.

*He seems in the mood for a fight.*

He sighed as he looked at Jon, coming to the realisation that he was a man now, a very moody man.

“What er...what did you and Robb talk about?” He asked.

Jon looked at him.

*Why was he so scared of him all of a sudden?*

*He knew why. It's because he knows the truth and the truth was damning to him and his family.*

“It’s none of your business what me, my brother and my sister-in-law were talking about. But if you must know, we were talking about their wedding and how excited they were, that's until some maids brought in a bath for him and I was chucked out so Alys could take care of him.” He said as he ran his hand through his hair.
Ned was momentarily worried “Wait, there not....”

“What? Fucking? Probably not. I bet his mother has taught him how terrible it is to do that out of wedlock.” He said “I doubt you’d be the one to teach him given the circumstances.” He finished as he got up from the bed and walked over to the table where a jug of ale was waiting, he poured himself a horn full.

Ned wasn’t offered one.

Why was this going so badly?

He looked at Jon who was now returning to sit back on the bed “Where have you been Jon?” He asked, almost pleading to understand how they had found no trace of him.

He shrugged “None of your concern. What’s important is that I’m back. Back to see my family.” He said.

“None of my concern?!” He almost growled as he stood up out of his chair and stood above Jon “It was everybody’s concern! Do you have any idea how many people have been looking for you? Even the crown had people searching for you!”

“I did tell you in the letter I left that I was leaving for my own sake, you sending half the continent looking for me shows that you couldn’t give a fuck about my wishes or choices.” Jon stood up then and looked at him, hard. He couldn’t get over the effect it had over him “I left for a reason, I didn’t do it because I was bored, I didn’t do it in some scream for attention, I did it for me!” He growled out as he moved across the room to look out of the window.

“I’ve learnt so much while I’ve been away, met so many good people, evolved as a person. I let my brothers and sisters down, leaving them behind with nothing but a letter. But If I was given the chance to change anything I did, I wouldn’t change anything at all. I have no regrets, I’ve returned a better man than I left as, that’s just a fact.” He said passionately.

He was about to open his mouth but Jon beat him to it.
“I wasn’t gonna return you know. I was gonna stay where I was, a place that felt more like a home than Winterfell ever did. The only thing’s I really missed were my siblings and Gage’s pies.” He said as he took a swig from his horn.

Ned felt gutted “Did you not miss me? Not even a little bit?” He asked, afraid of the answer that awaited him.

Jon looked back at him with determination in his eyes.

“You’re the reason I came back.” He said in a hard tone.

His heart was doing little flips hearing him say that, what he said next ceased said flips and made him anxious again.

“I came back because you have something that belongs to me.”

He furrowed his brow in confusion, mainly to hide what he really felt.

Fear.

Jon caught his expression and explained further “Don't worry, I’m not gonna claim Ice for myself or, as much as your wife would expect me to, take Winterfell from you or Robb. No, you have something of mine that is a lot more important to me and I think you know what I'm talking about.” He growled out as he got closer and closer to Ned.

And Ned knew exactly what it was that he wanted. The same thing that made him leave three years ago had made him return for it. It would seem that it was the only thing Ned could really give to the lad anymore.

His mother's identity. Something he was thankful Jon didn’t actually know about as he feared earlier.

I’m sorry Jon but I just can’t tell you.
“Don’t worry Lord Stark. It’s nothing too serious, just a little chat about my mother will suffice. See, nothing to be worried about. And I’ve decided we can have this simple chat in your home, gives you chance to come up with a good enough excuse as to why this information has been kept from me for seventeen years.” Jon said in what sounded like his most condescending lords voice ever.

“Jon...”

“It's late Lord Stark, been a very busy day today and my bed is calling.” Jon said as he put his hand on his back and started pushing him towards the door.

“Oh, I almost forgot.” Jon said as Ned walked out of the room. He turned around and almost flinched at the look that was being aimed at him.

“If the hear the words ‘when the time is right’ being used as an excuse when we get back, I won’t hesitate.” Jon said in a low tone.

He looked at him in confusion “Hesitate? Hesitate what?” He asked. Jon had really changed, that was very evident now.

He smiled “Don’t use the excuse and you won't find out.” He said, slamming the door in his face after.

He walked away in a daze, hopefully in the direction of his bed.

Jon wouldn’t accept anything but an answer to his burning question and expected an explanation as to why it took so long to be answered.

I’m fucked.

... Unless

This would take some thinking but, in the end, his family would be safe and Jon would have his
answer.

*The answer just couldn’t be the truth that's all.*

He just had to make the lie stick and prevent anything from debunking it seeing the light of day.

*He’d heard the rumours all around Winterfell, he wasn’t deaf to them. He just had to convince Jon of their credibility.*

And hope him or Jon never meet the woman ever again.

---

**Rhaenys**

20 years old.

She was 20 years old.

That fact hit her like a runaway carriage.

*I'm getting old, I'm not long for this world anymore.*

She must have said those thoughts out loud since her mother was tutting at her “You're not getting old darling, stop being dramatic.” Her mother said as she helped her with her hair. She had maids but her mother still enjoyed doing her hair from time to time, mainly on special occasions.

Like her name day.

She didn’t want a massive fuss being made over it but according to father, since all the family was in King’s Landing for the first time in years, they were going to do just that.
Much to her annoyance.

Especially with some of the people he’d invited for it. Unfortunately, the people she would have liked to have appeared were unable to for whatever reason. Uncle Oberyn and Ellaria couldn’t make it because they were visiting Ellaria’s father in Hellholt, Uncle Doran couldn’t because of his health and Arianne was almost running Sunspear single handedly due to her father being away at the Water Gardens and Viserys and Quentyn being in King’s Landing.

She should have been annoyed but she wasn’t, because she didn't want this, especially with who had turned up at the Keep.

She knew the reason for it but she refused to believe her father would stoop to that level. Cersei Baratheon, the wife of Stannis Baratheon and her brood had been invited for the celebrations, along with her brother-in-law, Renly. Rhaenys wanted to believe her father had invited the Baratheon clan to keep good faith with the family he’d fought against in the rebellion but she knew better. It was to get her closer to Joffrey and Renly.

She’d met Renly once before when he'd visited her father on behalf of his brother Stannis. Tall, handsome, charming and seemed like one of the easiest people to talk to. He was a little up himself but not as much as some Lords she’d met before and most importantly, in her father’s eyes, unwedded.

Unfortunately for her father, Renly was as about as interested in wedding her as she was with him. At first, she didn’t understand why he seemed so uninterested in her and she had to admit, it wounded her pride a little but then she noticed why he wasn’t interested.

She didn’t have the right parts between her legs.

And she didn't look like Loras Tyrell.

At the end of it all, she felt ridiculous for being annoyed at a man who didn’t find her desirable, even when she wasn't that interested in him in the first place. She was still civil with Renly for the rest of his stay but he would always annoy her now for making her feel stupid.

_Annoyed with a gay man for not desiring you, whatever next?_
Her pride would get her into trouble one day.

And then there was the other one. The other person on the list of suitors.

Joffrey Baratheon, the wretch of Storm’s End Dany liked to call him.

She’d only ever met him once as well and my god was he the most ridiculous boy she’d ever had the displeasure of meeting. His mother was nearly as bad as him so it was clear where he got it from. Myrcella and Tommen must have been gifted to that family by the gods just to even out the crazy, both of them were saints compared to the wicked witch and her little monster.

That was unfair, Cersei Baratheon wasn’t that bad. She was one of the most protective mothers she’d ever seen, the problem was, she was a little too protective. To the point where her son could do no wrong.

Something that was very dangerous for House Baratheon and maybe even the realm.

If a betrothal between her and that boy was ever announced, she’d be gone by the time the sun rose the next day. Probably leave a special present in one of her father’s desk draws, probably eat some of that spicy beef stew that didn’t agree with her that one time, make it extra special for him.

“What are you smiling about?” Her mother asked as she finished with her hair.

“Nothing.” She replied as she stood up from her chair.

“Liar.” Her mother replied but said no more of it.

They were disrupted by a knock at the door and Ser Oswell poking his head through it.

“Sorry to disturb your graces but Lady Baratheon is seeking an audience with you, my Queen.” He said.

She just rolled her eyes as she looked at her mother. A look of annoyance could be seen on the
Queen’s face as she nodded her head.

“I’ll be with you shortly Oswell, I’m just going to finish talking with my daughter.” Elia replied as Ser Oswell nodded his head and shut the door.

“You know what she’ll be wanting you for don’t you? She’ll be trying to get you on board with betrothing me to that vicious little idiot she calls a son.” She said as she looked over her jewellery in consideration.

Maybe the rubies today.

She heard her mother scoff from the bed she was currently sat on “It’s no secret that I would like you to marry sooner rather than later but I’d choose you being unmarried for the rest of your life before I promise you to that brat.” Her mother said.

She looked through the reflection of the looking glass at her mother and gave her a sheepish smile “Thank you mother. I know I said I would at least try more and I did when we were back in Winterfell with Robb Stark.” She shook her head “Robb had other ideas though, with the way he talked about Lady Alys Karstark, he was already in love. I couldn’t destroy that.” She said as she started tying her ruby encrusted gold bracelet on her wrist.

She started putting her earrings in but stopped mid action “That reminds me, has there been any more news regarding Lady Alys’ disappearance? I can't imagine what Robb is going through right now.” She asked as she eventually put her earring on.

The other earring was just about in when her mother replied “Not yet no. Lord Varys has been keeping a close eye on the scene ever since we received the letter Lord Stark sent announcing hers and her brother's disappearance. According to Varys, Lord Stark believes it’s a kidnapping and even went as far as to name the perpetrator.” She said.

“And who has he been accusing?” She asked.

“Ramsey Snow, Lord Bolton’s son.” She answered as she stood up from where she was sat and walked over to the table, plopping a grape in her mouth from the fruit bowl that laid on it.

The word ‘Snow’ brought forgotten thoughts back to her mind.
“The Starks haven’t had a great time of it with all the disappearances they’ve had, have they?” She said as she looked over which rings to wear.

“And what is that supposed to mean, Rhaenys?” He mother asked in a rather annoyed tone. She turned and looked at her, a stern look, almost angry was what she was met with.

She frowned in confusion “Well, Robb’s intended has disappeared recently as we have just been discussing and a few years back, Lord Starks son disappeared without a trace as well.” She explained as she saw her mother’s stern look fade. She almost looked embarrassed now.

She turned back to her jewellery and started trying a few of the ring on “Why, what did you think I meant mother?” She asked, still fiddling with her rings.

“Nothing. Just forget I ever said anything.” Came her mother’s curt reply.

She knew exactly what had just occurred but she wasn’t gonna mention anything to do with Lyanna Stark again with what happened in Winterfell between the two of them.

Her mother sat at the table and carried on nibbling at the grapes in front of her. Rhaenys was quite aware of what she was doing and found it rather amusing.

“I know what you're doing mother?” She said as she stared at the looking glass and contemplated her appearance.

*Good enough.*

“I have no idea what you are talking about my sweet Princess.” Her mother said in a light tone.

She rolled her eyes and finally looked at her mother.

“I thought you had a meeting with Lady Cersei to attend to mother? Or had you forgotten?” She said as the corners of her mouth started to rise.
Her mother followed suit then all of a sudden snorting before turning back to the bowl of grapes that she found ever so interesting.

“I do, but she can wait.” Her mother shook her head “Never liked that woman, don’t like the way she looks at your father or Egg either.” She said.

“Now now mother, the quicker you meet with her the quicker you get to return to me so you can help me choose what to wear at the feast tonight.” She replied.

Her mother really smiled then “When did you get so wise?” She said as she stood from her chair and walked over to her.

“Besides, I know exactly what you can wear tonight.” She said as she made her way to the door.

She turned in her seat and looked in her mother’s direction, a look of intrigue on her face as she saw the sly grin grow on her mother’s “What?” She asked.

Her mother opened the door and turned around to look at her “Why one of your name day gifts of course. The rest I’ll give you shortly after.” She replied “A special gown for a special occasion, your 20 years old now you old bat...you're not long for this world anymore, remember?” Her mother said with a cheeky grin.

“Mother!” She huffed, caught completely off guard. Her mother just chuckled as she walked out the room and closed the door behind her.

Robb

Something was off.

They’d been riding back to Winterfell for a few hours now, leaving Alys behind in Hornwood was one of the hardest things he’s ever had to do, especially since they’d only just got her back. She’d told him that she’d miss him but reassured him that it wouldn’t be long before they were wed.
He’d told her to send him a raven when she arrived back in Karhold, his worry becoming more profound after recent events. After a kiss goodbye and a firm handshake with Lord Harrion, Robb, his father and his brother all set off with the rest of their party, all the way back to Winterfell. The excitement of getting back home was felt throughout the entire group, or so he’d thought.

His father looked like he was marching off to war.

It was very apparent that words were had between his father and Jon.

Him and Alys had heard raised voices from down the hall after Jon had left and returned to his room a couple of doors down. He’d expected to hear his father having a strong word with his disappearing son but what he hadn’t expected was Jon’s raised voice giving as good as he got. He’d never heard Jon raise his voice to their father, in fact, he’d never heard Jon raise his voice to anybody, ever. He’d always stew quietly somewhere on his own after any kind of confrontation but the new Jon seemed to have no problems with barking back at the patriarch of House Stark.

If there was one change he’d noticed within his brother, it would be this new confidence that seemed to radiate from him like an aura. It wasn’t the only change he’d noticed either, it was mainly his physical changes.

Robb was always the big brother of his siblings, showing a good example to Bran and Rickon, keeping Arya out of trouble whenever he could and humouring Sansa when she’d talk to him about some of her womanly interests. All in all, Robb was the protector of his brothers and sisters, the big brother who kept them safe from themselves and others.

Jon had smashed that image into a thousand pieces the moment he locked eyes with him in the courtyard.

He’d still protect his family to the best of his ability if the occasion were to arise, but nowhere near as well as Jon probably could. His brother looked like he’d just come back from fighting a war and training in a mountain for a few years. He was bigger than him before he left but now it was just annoying, the years spent away had been good to Jon he had to begrudgingly admit. As much as he’d have wanted him to stay, he couldn’t deny those years away had made him into a better, more refined man.

He felt shameful when the idea of Alys preferring Jon over him came to his head, he loved his brother but the thoughts wouldn’t go away. They stuck with him when the three of them talked in his
room, they slowly dissipated though, the more and more they talked it was clear that the relationship between his betrothed and her saviour was more familial than lustful. He’d laughed when Jon had said that his sister-in-law had already told him off a few times for bad behaviour and that he was borderline afraid of her wrath.

His jealousy had completely disappeared when Alys had sucked his face off as soon as Jon had left the room.

Alys had left him before he’d finished his bath, before the touches here and there became more than just touches. A kiss goodbye before slipping out of his room left him with a grin on his face that just didn’t want to go away. His day had finished off well, Alys was back and so was Jon.

He shook his head to disperse his thoughts and looked across to where Jon was sat on a red stallion conversing with Ser Rodrik. The old man was bellowing with laughter with whatever Jon was telling him, in his peripheral vision he could see Theon riding next to him with a look of misery on his face.

He knew exactly why he was miserable.

He leant over and spoke in his ear “You had a go at me a few days ago for being miserable, maybe you should listen to your own advice and cheer up.” He said as Theon eyed him with an annoyed look.

“Oh, you're talking to me now are you? There was me thinking I didn’t exist.” Theon grumbled out as he stared straight forward.

He sighed “C’mon Theon, be reasonable. I've not seen Jon in three years, none of us have. I'm ashamed to say that I actually thought he’d passed away a long time ago so you can imagine what I felt when I saw him in good shape when we returned to Hornwood.” He said. Theon and reasonable didn’t really mix but he was hoping he could eventually get him and Jon on good terms.

When dragons fly the skies again probably.

“I've not been ignoring you, I've just been preoccupied that’s all.” He finished, dreading the reason why Theon was now grinning.

“Oh aye, and what’s been keeping you *preoccupied* eh? It wouldn’t happen to have something to do
with that pretty lass of yours leaving your room last night with a red face hmm?” He asked, looking almost predatory.

_Damn him._

He shook his head and looked away from him “None of your business, but if you must know, I’ve been trying to figure out what has happened between father and Jon. They’ve barely spoken a word to each other since we set off. Doesn’t help with the longing looks father’s been sending Jon all afternoon either.” He said.

Theon just scoffed at him “Jon Jon Jon, anyone would think you’d rather marry him than that little lady of yours with how much you talk about him.” Theon mocked.

He looked back at him “Why can't you just get along with him? It would make everybody's lives a little easier. Have you even spoken to him since he’s been back?” He asked.

“Have I fuck, not had the chance to with everybody else clambering over each other to talk to him. It’s not like I want to talk to him anyway, I have nothing to say to the bastard.” He replied.

He looked across to where Jon was and realised he was moving over to speak with him “It looks like you’ll get your chance now.” He said as he nodded in Jon’s direction.

Theon attempted to bolt off but Robb grabbed his shoulder “Oh no you don’t, we’re talking this out like grown men. Hell, you might even like the new Jon, give him a chance.” He said as he felt Theon’s shoulder slump under his hand.

“Fine.” Theon growled out.

Jon approached them both and moved to the other side of Robb “Robb, Theon.” He said as he nodded at the pair of them and clapped Robb on the shoulder.

_At least one of them was trying to be civil._

“Jon.” He said as he nodded back at him. He noticed Theon didn’t bother saying anything.
“What were you and Ser Rodrik laughing about just now?” He asked as he eyed his brother. Jon was currently burning a hole into the back of their father’s head.

He definitely needs to have a private word with him about that.

Jon shook his head “I was just mentioning some of the antics I’ve found myself getting into in the past three years. He seemed to find some of it funny and I couldn’t help but laugh along with him.” He said as he smiled at him. He found that Jon was out of his shell a lot more than he was before he left.

Theon chuckled next to him.

Please don’t say something stupid, please don’t say something stupid.

“Probably laughing at you than with you.” He said, as he laughed at his own words.

Fuck sake.

Jon to his credit just laughed along with him “Yeah probably, some of the things he was laughing at I didn’t think were that funny but obviously I was wrong. Nice nose by the way.” Jon said as he smiled back at Theon.

Theon’s smile dropped and he just looked away.

“Can we just put this all past us and move on? Are you telling me that three years away from each other hasn’t calmed whatever trouble you had between the pair of ya?” He said, frustrated at their attitude towards each other.

“I moved on a long time ago brother, I was just complimenting Lord Greyjoy here on his wonderful nozzle. The artist who created such a piece must have been a genius.” He said, still with a smile on
his face.

“Jon c’mon...” He said, exasperated with the whole conversation at this point.

Jon sighed “Fine.” He said as he moved his horse across to ride next to Theon. He could see a small sneer on Theon’s face as Jon moved next to him.

Theon actually flinched when Jon shot his hand out towards him, he recovered and looked down at it in confusion.

“I’m sorry about the nose, let bygones be bygones eh Greyjoy?” Jon said as he held his hand out for Theon to shake.

*Shake the hand you idiot.*

Theon begrudgingly shook his hand but not without something stupid spewing out of his mouth “Aye, let’s move on eh, bastard.” He said as he tried to pull his hand away. Jon held it like a vice if Theon’s face was anything to go by.

*I give up with these two.*

“You wanna be careful Theon, Greyjoy’s are dropping like flies lately.” Ominously growled out at Theon, still gripping his hand hard.

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?” Theon exclaimed as people started to turn and look at the pair of them.

“Nothing. Just make sure you don’t find out that’s all.” Jon finished as he released Theon’s hand and moved his horse back next to Robb.

He looked at Jon and ducked his head “Jon, Theon has the right of it, what was that supposed to mean?” He asked in a hushed tone as people started minding their own business again. He noticed his father’s intense stare aimed directly at the pair of them.
Jon shook his head “I might tell you some other time, we’ll see.” He said as he looked across towards Theon who looked like he wanted to run Jon through. “I’ve met your uncle you know, I wasn’t a fan but I suppose I wasn’t the only one to be fair.” He said.

That perked Theon up a little “My uncle?” He said with genuine interest.

Jon nodded “Yeah, your uncle Euron. I suppose we should be thankful you didn’t turn out as bad as he did, fucking nut case.” He sneered. A look of disgust appearing on his face.

*That was probably the biggest compliment Jon has ever given to Theon.*

“No one has seen my uncle in years, where did you find him?” Theon asked. He seemed genuinely interested on news about his family.

“A long way away from here.” Jon answered as he clocked eyes with their father who abruptly looked away. Theon just huffed at the answer he got.

Now he really wanted to know what had happened between Jon and their father.

He nudged Jon’s shoulder and nodded in their father’s direction “What’s all that about then?” He asked.

Jon looked at him “I think you know what *that* is about.” He said. Robb just shook his head.

Jon sighed and nodded towards their father “Name the one thing I've always wanted from that man?” He asked. Realisation hitting Robb like a force.

He nodded his head and looked down in resignation “Your mother.” He answered, not even having to look up to know he was right.

“Yes, my mother. We had a few heated words last night and I told him we were having a chat about her when we arrive back at his home.” Jon answered.
Robb shook his head “Our home, it's always been our home, your home.” He said with authority.

Jon smiled and shook his head “No its not Robb, it's never been my home. I know what a home feels like and it felt nothing like Winterfell ever did. Don’t get me wrong, I love the place and a few of the people in it, but what that place did to me were never the actions of a somewhere I'd call home.” Jon answered.

He knew it was bad enough for him to run away but he didn’t know it was that bad. A feeling of anxiousness started to bubble in his stomach.

Was Jon not planning on staying?

Would he be disappearing again for another three years?

“It’ll be different now Jon, you just wait and see.” He promised. Even to his ears it didn’t sound all to convincing.

Before Jon was even able to reply, the front of their retune started moving their horses into a gallop. Him, Jon and Theon joined in.

Ser Rodrik moved across to join in with their small group “What's all this in aid of Ser Rodrik!” He shouted across to him.

“We’re a few miles out from Winterfell and your father wanted to get back before nightfall!” Ser Rodrik shouted back. He nodded at the old knight.

Home.

All he could think of were people's reactions to seeing Jon arriving with them.

This could get messy.
Ayra

She rolled her eyes as Bran went off on another rant, she was positive he was trying to wind her up and annoyingly, it was working.

She turned to him as they sat there in the main hall finishing their dinner “Will you shut up about it already.” She said, exasperation evident in her tone.

Her brother looked so excited with the way he bounced in his chair “I can't Arya, it's so exciting. How are you not excited?” He said.

She huffed “I’m not excited because I'm pretty certain you were seeing things, that's why.” She said.

Bran shook his head “Nope, I saw it with my own eyes Arya. Flying high up in the clouds, it was hard to see but it was there.” He said.

She finished the last bit of her chicken pie “You didn’t see a dragon Bran, it was probably a bird. Now will you stop blabbering on about it.” She said as she about polished off her plate, Gage really was a wizard when it came to pie making.

Bran just leant back in his chair and crossed his arms; operation brood was a go.

Jory came through the hall doors and moved towards their mother, whispering into her ear and shooting off again in a hurry.

Wonder what that’s about?

“Right children, finish off your meals, your father and brother’s retune have been spotted and should be home shortly.” Her mother said as she looked at them all with a small smile on her face.

Now that was more like it. Things were getting a little dull around here lately, maybe her father or Robb would have some stories to tell. Hopefully they’d found Alys as well, she’d not really talked to
her that much the few times she’d been at Winterfell but she seemed nice and Robb seemed to act very silly whenever she was around, almost like a lost puppy.

Jory stuck his head through the door “They’re about 5 minutes away my Lady.” He said and returned to whatever he was doing outside.

“C’mon then.” Her mother said as she rose from her seat and placed a hand on Sansa’s back “We don’t want to keep your father and brother waiting.” She finished as they all rose from their seats and headed out into the cold evening air.

They were stood in the courtyard for only a couple of minutes before they heard the sound of hooves in the distance, the excitement was brewing inside her.

“Stop fidgeting Arya.” Her mother chided. She just rolled her eyes as the main gate to the courtyard was opened up by two guards and a group of horses trotted their way in.

She noticed her father straight away, all the way at the front where he belonged, then she noticed Robb and Theon. Theon looked the same as he always did, annoying and up himself, but her brother Robb looked happy, very happy. The grin on his face almost made her grin for some reason, and she would have if time hadn’t just stopped.

Sat on a horse next to Robb was a very familiar boy, a boy who was looking in her direction and smiling at her, a boy that was making it hard to breathe for her and made her eyes water.

She could almost feel her mother tense up next to her as she felt a tear run down her cheek.

Her legs had a mind of their own as she started sprinting towards him, towards her brother, towards Jon. She heard behind her Bran and Rickon gasping and her mother once again telling her off but she didn’t care, not one bit as she collided with Jon’s body and wrapped her arms around him, burying her nose into his mid-section. She felt arms wrapping around her and then she was being lifted into her brother’s arms, she buried her face into his shoulder and just let the rest of her tears leak into his furs.

“Jon...” She mumbled into his shoulder as she felt a hand stroking her hair. “I’m here little sister.” She heard him say as she felt Bran and Rickon’s collision with him.
She wasn’t listening to what he was saying to them as she gripped him harder with her arms, she wasn’t letting go of him anytime soon.

Jon dropped to one knee as he stopped stroking her hair before wrapping his arm around Bran and Rickon bringing them into their embrace, it was now a big group hug between the four of them. She heard Rickon sniffling next to her.

She pulled her face from Jon’s furs and looked at Jon, she could still tell it was Jon but now her brother wasn’t a boy anymore.

*Still her favourite brother though.* She thought as she buried her face back into his shoulder. He still smelled the same.

“Give him a chance to breath Arya.” She heard Robb say as he chuckled.

She begrudgingly released him from her death grip as he stood back up, he was taller than she remembered.

She heard somebody approaching from behind, when she looked over her shoulder, she noticed Sansa and her mother walking towards them.

“Jon.” Was all her mother said as Sansa slowly walked up to Jon and gave him a quick hug, almost afraid he wasn’t gonna reciprocate the embrace. Jon wrapped an arm around Sansa’s shoulders and returned the hug like she knew he would. Her mother made a face that she didn’t care much for.

“Catelyn.” Jon responded.

That seemed to annoy her mother with how her face soured but she surprisingly kept her mouth closed as she reached for Sansa, who reluctantly left Jon’s embrace and returned to her.

“Let’s get everybody sorted out and settled in, get the cooks working on some food for everybody.” Her father said as she looked towards his steward, Vayon Poole. The man nodded and walked off to carry out her father’s orders.
She held Jon’s hand in a death grip as they made their way to the main hall, Bran and Rickon excitedly asking all manner of questions as Robb chuckled behind them.

“I’ll tell you all you need to know tomorrow after a night’s sleep lads. All I want to do is destroy one of Gage’s pies and sit amongst my brothers and sisters while I’m doing it.” Jon said with a smile as he looked down at her with warm eyes and squeezed her hand.

The next hour or so was the best time she’d had for three years.

Jon was now walking her to her bedchambers, the excitement of the evening had crept up on her and now she just wanted to sleep, and hopefully wake up the next morning realising this was all real and that Jon was really back.

He gave her a big hug when they entered her room “I’ll be here tomorrow morning when you wake up, don’t worry.” He said into her ear as she hugged him back.

He knew her so well.

She punched him in the arm as he released her “You better be, stupid.” She said as she grinned up at him. He just ruffled her hair in response, she hadn't realised how much she missed him messing up her hair.

He opened her chamber door to leave but she spoke up before he left “Jon?” She said.

“Yeah?” He said as he held the door open and looked over his shoulder.

“Love you.” She choked out as she felt her eyes tearing up again. Damn him for making her soppy.

“Love you too, little wolf. Sleep tight.” He said whilst fighting his own war with his tears. He quietly closed the door behind him.

She got changed into her night clothes and jumped straight under her furs. It didn’t take her long to get to sleep, all she could think of was that Jon had come back to her.
She didn’t hear her father open her door to check on her, or see his face match the soft smile that was present on hers as she dreamt of all the things her and Jon were gonna get up to.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed it :)

The confrontation between Jon and Ned might have seemed a bit tame but I can assure you, that was just the tip of the iceberg.
Lies

Chapter Notes

Been very busy over the last couple of weeks and it seems like it will be much of the same for the next few, I can only apologise in advance for less frequent chapters.

I will try my best to get a few a month out for you though, the response I've received from this has been very surprising to say the least.

Anyways, enough of my life story,

Hope you enjoy :)

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Jon

The morning rays broke through the slats of the window covers and into his old room, a room that held all types of memories. Some good, most bad. He remembers the miserable nights he spent trying to get to sleep but kept awake instead, his mind would wander, his wandering would turn into worry, mainly worrying about his future.

He stretched his entire body under the furs, the crack from his back felt like heaven. His night's sleep had its interruptions but at the end of the day he couldn’t complain, sleeping in his childhood bed gave him an extra comfort he didn’t think he would feel. He also didn’t expect to even have a childhood bed anymore, he thought that this room would have been completely stripped by now but obviously someone didn’t have the heart to do such a thing.

Almost like somebody had a guilty conscience. He thought.

He sat up and swung his legs off the bed, rolling his neck he noticed his recently collected bags. The interruption in the middle of the night was the explanation for their presence at the moment. An interruption in the form of a very big and very annoyed dragon.

Kireina had scared the living shit out of him in the middle of the night, thank the gods she had the sense not to make an actual appearance in Winterfell. She just decided to make an abrupt appearance in his dreams instead, something he didn’t even know she could do.
Turned out it wasn’t something he should have been incredibly worried about, she was just annoyed with the bags that were still tied to her back. He didn’t expect her to be so stroppy about it but clearly, she wasn’t impressed with having to lug his bags around when she really didn’t need to be.

Sneaking out of Winterfell had been easy 3 years ago, after many lessons from Master M, he could have done it with his eyes closed. Sneaking back in was a little bit more difficult but he still managed it with relative ease.

*Kireina* had been very happy to see him, either that or she was just glad to get those bags off her back. He’d giving her a kiss on the snout and a scratch under her jaw before she sprang back up into the night sky without a trace. After the huge mess she’d made in Hornwood Forest, she seemed to be a little caring of her surroundings now.

Now he was sat there on his bed staring at the bags that contained his clothes, valuables and two very dangerous swords to be found in possession of.

*I should really get these swords back to their respective owners soon.* He thought to himself.

He didn’t know how to go about doing that though.

“Oh hello, my names Jon and I just happen to have come across this sword, I think it might belong to you.” He thought amusingly. Who was he kidding, he was probably gonna be as straight forward as possible with them. From the stories he’d heard from Gerion, he was quite looking forward to meeting the great Tywin Lannister, he’d just have to take Gerion’s warning into consideration and be careful what he said. He didn’t want *Kireina* turning it into Casterly Dust if any harm came to him because of something stupid he’d said.

He sighed, he missed Gerion. Hopefully it wouldn’t be long before he’d be seeing him again, he’d made the man a promise after all.

He was asked to tell Gerion’s daughter about her father but Jon had another idea. It was a mad plan that might not even be necessary but if the girl was treated like any other bastard, the chances were high that he would go through with it.

It was how to go about it that would be the biggest pain in his arse.
And whether or not Kireina was open to the idea of it.

He scrubbed his face and rubbed the sleep from his eyes as he stood up and walked to the bowl of tepid water to wash his face, the cool water thoroughly waking him up in the process. Today was the big day, the day he would get the truth out of his father even if he had to beat it out of him.

Would he have to resort to that? Would he have to pay the consequences for attacking the Lord Paramount of the North?

Doubt Kireina would allow something like that to happen anyway.

All of a sudden there was an incessant banging on his chamber door.

Somebody's keen. He thought.

He dressed as quick as he could, pulling a tunic over his head in the process of walking towards the door, which was now shaking at the hinges with how hard it was being hammered at.

He whipped the door open and looked at the culprit with narrow eyes, eyes that immediately softened when he saw who it was.

“You're up!” His little sister chirped as she walked into his room and plopped herself on the furs of his untidy bed. An unapologetic smile plastered on her face as he attempted to scowl at her but failed miserably.

He could never be mad at Arya. Annoyed sometimes, but never mad.

“Pretty difficult for somebody to sleep through that racket, who knew somebody so small could cause such a big pain in my arse.” He said as he moved across the room and grabbed his dark blue gambeson. The gambeson in question was one of his favourites, Gerion had told him wistfully that it brought out the colour in his eyes, the man just laughed when he’d replied that he would bring out the colour of his nose with his fist if he didn’t shut it.
Arya’s smile grew as she leapt from his bed and started sniffing around his bags “You're not mad, just admit it, you missed this.” She said as she fiddled with one of the straps on his bag, the bag with the two valyrian swords he soon realised.

He realised his mistake when he moved across the room in a flash and batted her hand away from the bag, a cheeky grin emerged on her face like a game had just been initiated. She knew he was hiding something now and she’d make goddamn sure to find out what it was, the way Arya always did.

“You're right, I did miss this...” He said as he moved the bag to the other side of the room, his little sister’s eyes glued to it. “...but I didn’t miss you snoopin....”

“What's in the bag?” She interrupted, he tried to play it cool as he placed the bag on the floor near the window. Unfortunately, the noise it made when he did put it down didn’t help in cooling her intrigue, if anything, it fuelled it.

“Nothing for you that’s what. Why are you here so earl...”

“Is it my present? Is it a sword? I’ve always wanted a real sword, mother says that I shouldn’t be playing with swords but I've always wanted to learn how to use one properly. Me, Bran and Rick sneak out into the godswood sometimes and practice with sticks. Sometimes Jory finds us and teaches us little tricks instead of telling on us, I like Jory. Can I have my sword now? Pleeeeeease?” She rambled on.

He sighed, he’d not really thought about presents when he decided to come back, he had other things on his mind at that moment. But looking at his pleading sister, who was doing that thing she always did with her eyes that made them look bigger than they actually were, who was quite clearly making her bottom lip tremble on purpose, he decided he would have to find a way to get a proper sword in her hand.

He was annoyed that her little tricks, that he was fully aware of, had worked so easily on him.

“No, it's not your present.” He said as crossed his arms.

“Oh...” She said as her face fell, she looked down at the floor and started nibbling on her bottom lip. Her shoulders slumped and she sniffed.
Now he had an upset little sister on his hands and his soul couldn’t take it.

With his decision made he lifted the bag back up and sighed “If you’re good and you promise not to tell anybody about what I'm about to show you, I will ask Mikken to make you a sword that is just right for you hmm? I know there's no point in me trying to hide the contents of this bag from you, you’d find a way of getting into it and probably cause more trouble for me.” He said as he sat on his bed and placed the bag down on his lap.

Jon got nothing from this deal except from making his sister happy which in hindsight, was definitely worth it.

Her face lit up and she sprang towards the bed before hugging him tight around the neck “Thank you thank you thank you!” She happily declared whilst crushing his windpipe. He tapped on her back and she let go, a sheepish grin on her face.

Oh, she knew what she’d done. She’d well and truly played him, and he couldn’t for the life of him be mad at her for it. He was almost proud in some twisted way.

“Right, I’m serious, what I’m about to show you cannot, I repeat, cannot be mentioned to anyone about, nobody, not even Bran and Rickon. Do you understand?” He said as he worked on the straps of the bag.

She nodded her head furiously as she stared at the bag in awe.

He slowly untied each of the straps as slow as he possibly could “C’mon, hurry up!” She said as she almost with excitement from where she sat.

With a flourish, he grabbed the two scabbards inside the bag and lifted them out. He manoeuvred the bag to the floor and placed the two swords on his lap, Arya was just in awe as she stared at the hilts and pommels of each of the swords. She reached out a hand to touch them but he grabbed her wrist before she could.

“You have to be careful touching these, they are extremely precious and not to mention, extremely sharp.” He said as he let go of her wrist and slowly unsheathed Blackfyre on his lap. Her eyes lit up even more when she saw the swirling patterns that adorned the blade.
“Like father’s...” She muttered out as she stuck a single finger out and touched the steel.

“Aye, like father’s.” He said, successfully keeping out the anger from his tone at the mention of that man. She slowly rubbed her finger down the steel.

“Is the other one the same?” She asked.

He grabbed the hilt and stood up, seemingly shocking Arya out of her daze. The rest of the scabbard was pulled from the blade and placed on the furs of his bed next to Arya, along with Blackfyre itself. She was so preoccupied with staring at the old Targaryen heirloom on his bed to notice him unsheathing Brightroar as well.

“Wow...” Was all she could say as he placed the second blade onto the bed, her eyes didn’t know what to stare at as she looked back and forth between the two blades.

He smirked when thinking about what her reaction would be with what he was about ask.

“Would you like to hold them?” He asked as her head and eyes snapped towards him and her mouth just fell open.

“Can I?!” She asked excitedly, almost whispered in fact. The look on her face was the look of somebody who’d just been offered the world.

He nodded as he smiled “See if you can pick one of them up on your own first, if not then I’ll have to help you.” He said as she gripped both hands around Blackfyre and attempted to lift it. She managed to lift it somewhat but he didn’t trust her arms that were already starting to wobble so he gripped over each of her hands with his and helped her lift it all the way so it was pointing towards the ceiling.

“Wow...it’s beautiful.” She said as she attempted to swing the sword left and right with her hands from underneath his grip. He rolled his eyes and smiled as he humoured her and helped her swing the blade left and right very carefully, if any accidents occurred and Arya got hurt, he’d never forgive himself.

After they’d finished wielding Blackfyre together, which was a mad thought in and of itself, he sheathed both of the swords and placed them back in their bag.
He turned around and noticed Arya had her hands on her hips and a quirked eyebrow “And where did you get two valyrian swords from Jon?” She asked. He had to chuckle, it felt like she was trying to tell him off.

“Not just any valyrian swords Arya, those are the ancestral swords of House Targaryen and House Lannister. *Blackfyre* and *Brightroar.*” He announced as Arya’s hands fell from her hips and her eyes went even wider than before.

“...How?!” She exclaimed, a look of disbelief on her face. He just walked up to her and placed his arm across her shoulders.

“That’s a story for another time. I think it’s about time we go and break our fast, I could eat a small horse.” He said as he led them out of his room. “And then after, we’ll have to have a little trip to see Mikken.” He finished.

All her heard was a ‘Yes’ as his little sister darted down the hallway, he shook his head and smiled as he closed his door behind him.

He started following her but noticed that she’d stopped at the door to the outside “If I get to the great hall first, you have to spar with me later!” She shouted towards him, leaving him high and dry as she bolted out of the door.

He just smiled as he sped up his walk.

He’d missed this.

______________________________________

Catelyn

No.

This wasn’t happening.
She refused to believe that this was happening.

Her family had just gotten over the loss, they were moving on with their lives, moving on from the ordeal that boy had bestowed upon them. She just couldn’t understand the sheer audacity of him to just turn up out of the blue and disrupt her family to the core.

He’d made his intentions clear, that he was leaving to live his own life, to discover himself, he’d said so in his letter to her husband. So she couldn’t for the life of her understand why he’d decided to turn up again like nothing had happened.

She huffed as she made her way to Ned’s solar, he’d rebuffed any sort of conversation about the bastard yesterday but she wouldn’t be denied the right today.

She didn’t even bother knocking as she got to the door, Jory looked like he wanted to announce her but she wasn’t interested, she’d come here for answers.

Ned looked up from whatever it was that he was looking at from behind his desk “Cat! What’s the mean...”

“We need to talk.” She said as she closed the door behind her, catching a glimpse of an uncomfortable looking Jory before it closed.

He sighed as she walked towards his desk and took a seat “If this is about J...”

She cut him off yet again “Of course this is about the bastard...”

“Catelyn...” He said in a low tone “I’ve warned you before about referring him like that...”

“I don’t care anymore Ned. He’s not staying here so I don’t see how that is even important right now. What is important is what we are to do with this situation.” She said with determination. She was getting a result from this conversation, she had to.

She could practically hear him grinding his teeth “What do you mean he’s not staying here?” He asked.
“Exactly what I said, he’s not staying here, end of conversation. The real conversation is what we could do to help him on his way, it's clear that he’s been struggling out there these past few years and has obviously returned behind the safe walls of Winterfell because it's become too much for him.” She said.

Ned looked at her like she’d grown a second head “...what?” He said.

She just shook her head “Don't be silly Ned, even you must see how obvious it is that he’s made a huge miscalculation of his own worth and has reluctantly turned back to you for help. We owe it to him to at least help him find his feet.” She said.

It was Ned’s turn to shake his head as he looked at her oddly “We owe it to him? You don’t owe him anything, you’ve made that quite clear in the past. What's with the change of heart?” He asked.

She looked down at her skirts and brushed her hands across them “Answer me this my lord, would you consider me a religious woman?” She asked.

Now he really looked confused “I’m not sure what this ha...”

“Just answer the question please.” She interrupted.

He sighed “I suppose I could consider you a religious person yes, but I still don’t see how this has anything to do with the current topic of conversation we are having.” he replied.

It was her turn to sigh as she looked up at him “I pray to the seven on a daily basis my lord, I pray for many reasons, for the safety of you and our children mostly. And the gods have answered my prayers on many occasion, so I deemed it necessary, in the name of the seven, to forgive a motherless child, forgive him for his sins and to lead him onto a path of redemption.” She answered.

Ned scoffed and shook his head “I knew it was too good to be true, you just can't help yourself, can you?” He said annoyingly.

She shook her head and pleaded with him “You wound me Ned, I’m trying to be the bigger person
in this situation. I'm trying to help the boy not hurt him, why can't you see that?” She pleaded with him.

He just looked at her “Okay, I’ll bite, how do we ‘help’ Jon out hmm? Not that he seems to need the help but still.” He asked as he folded his arms.

This was it, she just needed to sell it right “We give him something to be proud of, a duty that he could take pride in. We can't give him a purpose, he made that clear when he left Winterfell all those years ago, no, we have to point him in the right direction, give him the ability to make something of himself, the ability to be his own man. He’ll love you even more for coming up with this idea for him, trust me.” She said, she almost convinced herself of her own plan.

Almost.

She didn’t care if the bastard found the light or made use of his life for once, she just wanted him gone, never to return.

Her husband was sceptical before but now, leaning back in his chair and stroking his stubble, he looked almost convinced.

“It is an interesting idea I suppose, give him the tools to achieve what he wanted to achieve when he decided to leave home. That way, he’ll realise that I have been listening to him and I do respect his wishes and choices.” He said to himself. She didn’t know what he was really talking about but at this point she didn’t really care, she just wanted his blessing. “It might also keep him busy for the foreseeable future, keep him distracted.” He finished, he looked like he was in his own world as he stared off into nothingness.

She managed a smile and nodded at him “I think he’ll really appreciate what you're trying to do for him, instead of giving him a life, your letting him earn it himself, like he wanted to in the first place. He’ll respect you for giving him that.” She said. She could feel the tide turning, he was actually going along with it.

He started nodding to himself “Okay.”

She blinked, he agreed with her? Was it really going to be this easy to get rid of that boy?
She nodded herself and smiled “It's the right thing to do Ned, for all of us, you’ll see.” She said.

“I hope so.” He replied.

He clapped his hands, making her jump “Right, since it was your idea, have you got any suggestions on how we proceed?” He asked. He seemed determined which was good for her since the next words to come out of her mouth would be the final step to her plan.

“I have had one idea but I’m not sure how you'll receive it. You might not like it but it would be the best for Jon and ultimately, that’s what all this is for, remember.” She said.

He took a deep breath “Okay, hit me with it.” He said, preparing himself for her next words.

“Let him join the Night’s Watch with his Uncle Benjen.” She said. Mentioning his brother in an attempt to ease the impact of her sentence.

It didn’t work.

His eyes closed and his head dropped, she was losing momentum.

“The Night's Watch is an esteemed order, a place where any nobody can become somebody, something Jon has clearly been trying to achieve. Plus, his uncle is there as well, it's not like it's going to be some lonely life living up there. He can still visit Winterfell whenever he’s allowed, I’m sure the children will appreciate those visits.” She pleaded. She left the last part in begrudgingly, she wanted him gone forever but if the promise of sparse visits here and there was the price for him to be gone, well, we all had to make sacrifices at some point in life.

“...get out.” He said, almost growling at her.

She shook her head “What?” She said.

He looked at her with such disgust that she had to straighten her spine as to not cower under his gaze “I said, Get. Out.” He said.
She raised her chin at him, she was so close to getting her way that she wouldn’t be giving up that easily “And why would I do that? We are finally getting somewher...”

He stood up from his chair and pointed at the door “I SAID GET OUT!” He shouted.

She wasn’t gonna get anywhere with him being like this, she’d made good progress today but had obviously gotten too greedy in her attempts at finalise her plan. It had taken a hit but it would recover, and when he’d calmed down, she’d be having this chat with him again.

She cut her losses as she stood up and curtsied “As you wish my lord.” She managed to get out.

Jory gave her a worried look when she exited the room, she barely gave him a second glance as she made her way down the hall. The sound of glass shattering coming from her husband’s solar was the last thing she heard as she made her way to break her fast with her children.

Let’s hope the bastard is still in bed.

Elia

The afternoon sun beamed down on her and her little friend as they sat on a bench in the royal gardens. She always felt at peace whenever she was sat in the warmth of it, made sense with her being a Martell and all. It would seem her guest enjoyed the sunshine as well.

Ser Oswell and Ser Barristan were on duty, currently protecting the Queen and her little Princess.

“Bab!”

She smiled as she looked down at her lap where she held her granddaughter, little Alysanne had a small white sundress on with a little matching hat, and she was currently pointing at all the different flowers on display in front of them.

“What's that sweetie?” She asked her precious.
Alysanne looked up at her whilst still pointing towards the flower bed “Bab!” She said.

Elia smiled at her, she was an intrigued little girl, even at such a young age. She was also gonna be trouble when she was a little older, she was still young but already had a vocabulary of two entire words. One being ‘Bab’, which she said whenever she pointed at anything and the other being ‘No’, which was slowly becoming a problem for her mother.

She had to laugh when she offered to look after Alysanne for a few hours, poor Margaery looked like she’d been offered the world when she’d been asked. It’s not that Alysanne was a difficult child, it’s the fact that Margaery was new to the whole motherhood aspect of being a wife and was clearly in need of a little break, a break Elia was all too happy to give her. Especially if it meant spending time with her favourite little person in the whole wide world.

Had nothing to do with wanting to hold a little baby girl in her arms again.

She was broken from her sad thoughts as Alysanne gripped her forearm and pointed at Ser Barristan, who was currently walking towards her with a smile on his old friendly face.

“Bab!” Alysanne chirped as she pointed at Ser Barristan.

The veteran Kingsguard chuckled as he approached them “My Queen, princess.” He said as he knelled in front of them.

“No.” Alysanne said before she could even open her mouth. She smiled at him and shrugged her shoulders “Apparently not Ser Barristan, the Princess has spoken.” She said amusingly. She held out a hand and motioned for him to stand.

He laughed as he stood back up “It would seem I have been misunderstood all along.” He said. She looked down at Alysanne who was currently blowing raspberries with her mouth and fiddling with one of the rings on her finger, the one with the ruby that Rhaegar had gifted to her for one of her past name days.

She looked back up at the knight “What can I do for you Ser Barristan?” She asked, bobbing one of her legs as Alysanne started to become a little restless. She’d been trying to climb down and crawl in the flower bed ever since they’d sat down.
He cleared his throat as he looked down at the little Princess “Your nephew, Prince Quentyn requests an audience with you, your grace. He’s just at the entrance to the gardens.” He said.

Interesting.

She nodded “If you would Ser Barristan, tell my nephew I would be delighted if he joined me and the little Princess here on this fine afternoon.” She said as the old Ser nodded in affirmation and went to go and get her nephew.

“I wonder what he wants.” She said, mainly to herself.

“Bab!” Alysanne replied.

She looked into the distance where Ser Barristan had just rounded a corner out of view “Bab indeed, little one.” She replied. Alysanne’s answer was to just bounce up and down where she sat.

She huffed as she readjusted her grip on the little rascal “Slow down sweetie, I’m not a pony.” She said. Alysanne just looked up at her and gave her a gummy smile, carrying on with pretending her lap was a horse.

“Your grace.” She heard as she turned her head, her nephew was stood looking at the two of them with a bemused look on his face.

She patted the space next to her on the bench “Quentyn, please sit.” She said as he took a seat next to her. Alysanne had stopped bouncing on her lap, thank the gods, and was currently staring at Quentyn like she didn’t know what to make of him.

Quentyn gave Alysanne one of the most forced smiles she’d ever seen and went to shake her little hand. Unfortunately for her nephew, Alysanne had other ideas and snatched her hand away before he could even reach it.

“No!” She exclaimed.
Quentyn looked up at her like he didn’t know what to do “Don't worry about her, she’s in one of those moods. Think she might be getting hungry that’s all.” She lied. Alysanne had only just recently been fed, just before Margaery handed her over but she didn’t want Quentyn to feel bad.

“Oh, that’s alright.” He said. "I love babies and all their little charms." He finished as he smiled down at the little girl.

She narrowed her eyes “Since when?” She asked. She could smell a fish and wasn’t best pleased that it was a family member trying to play games with her.

He wasn’t fooling anybody.

His smile faltered when he looked at her “What do you mean? I've always adored babies.” He said.

She just hummed as she started rocking Alysanne on her lap again.

“Ser Barristan said you wanted to see me for something...” She said as she looked at him.

Her nephew seemed to prepare himself before saying whatever it was he was about to say, he cleared his throat and looked her dead in the eyes “I was hoping you could help me?” He said before he looked down at his lap.

Now she was really suspicious, Quentyn had never asked her for help involving anything, it was always her two brothers or even his sister that were asked before her.

She humoured him by nodding, she was still a little bit intrigued as to what he wanted help with in the first place “Go on.” She said as Alysanne finally calmed down on her lap.

He sat up and looked at her “I came to the capital with Prince Viserys not only to see you and my cousins, but to give you a warning.” He said ominously.

She looked at him in confusion, now she was really lost. Her hold on Alysanne became more secure
as she checked to see where her two Kingsguard were in her peripheral vision.

Quentyn won't hurt us, he’s not that stupid. And Doran would disown him in a second.

“A warning? And what prey tell is this warning, dear nephew.” She said a little shortly.

He sighed “Its father, he’s beyond upset, he’s angry and he’s losing his patience.” Quentyn said.

She scoffed “I find that hard to believe. Your father is one of the tamest men I’ve ever known. Are you sure you’ve not gotten him mixed up with your uncle Oberyn?” She asked.

He looked a little annoyed by her reply “No, I haven’t. Uncle Oberyn isn't the one getting it in the neck by the residents of Sunspear, my father is.” He said.

She arched an eyebrow at him “I fail to see how this has anything to do with me and this so called warning. Your father is a capable man, any problems or gripes his people have will be resolved in time.” She replied.

He shook his head and got closer to her as he lowered his voice “Arianne has been complaining to him as well, it's about Prince Viserys.” He said in a nonspiritual tone.

She rolled her eyes, of course it had something to do with that man child. She felt so sorry for her niece, having to put up with that for the rest of her days. Her and Rhaegar had had a little falling out when that betrothal was announced.

“And what has he done now?” She asked, her nephew looking a little uncomfortable.

“He’s out of control. He’s been harassing anybody and everybody in Sunspear without a single ounce of remorse. He walks around like he owns the place even though my sister is technically the one in charge whilst father is at the Water Gardens. The people want blood but my father has to protect him from them. If anything were to happen to Viserys, it could kickstart a war between Dorne and the Crown. Father wants to avoid that.” He finished.

Her brow scrunched in confusion, the spider, Lord Varys wasn’t the only person in the capital with
their own personal line of spies, Rhaella had a few of them herself. A few of them she had planted in Sunspear with the sole purpose of keeping an eye on her son while she couldn’t. She got monthly reports on Viserys, to make sure he wasn’t going the way of his father.

If Viserys was causing trouble in Sunspear, his mother would know and do something about it. The only things those reports ever said were that he was rude to servants, cold to his wife and in general, miserable living there.

So somebody was trying to pull a fast one here.

She was beyond annoyed, but was rather interested in what he actually got out of all this so played along with him.

“What does my brother suggest?” She asked as Alysanne started to babble.

He cleared his throat “He thinks Viserys is being the way he is because he feels isolated, he misses his family.” He said as he attempted to look sad at that notion.

It took all of her willpower not to burst out laughing, Viserys couldn’t give a shit about his family. The only family member he showed an ounce of respect to was his mother and even that was very little.

She decided to play along though, she would have to send Doran a raven to see what in the world his son was playing at. “I suppose it makes sense then that he came to the capital, he just missed us all.” She said.

His eyes widened as he nodded his head “Exactly. Unfortunately, father thinks the visit will do very little to change his ways and that he needs a family member in Sunspear with him, someone to calm him down.” He said.

All the bits were fitting into place for her, another Targaryen in Sunspear. She couldn’t possibly guess who her unmarried nephew was about to suggest move there.

She decided to play with him some more.
“Somebody to calm him down.” She said as she tapped her chin “Ooo, I know. The Dowager Queen would be delighted with a little trip to Dorne, in fact, we’ll go see her now and you can ask her yourself.” She said.

Quentyn eyes widened, it was no secret to anybody how fearsome Rhaella had become after going through what she had all her life. The woman was like valyrian steel now, beautiful but incredibly dangerous.

“No no, I...father wasn’t suggesting Queen Rhaella, no, he’d come up with a solution to all of this whilst also strengthening Dorne’s ties with the Crown.” He said frantically.

So predictable.

Doran will definitely be getting a raven now.

“And what suggestion has my brother come up with dear nephew.” She said as Alysanne sat still on her lap again, a lap that was slowly getting warm.

You pick your times you little madam.

He took a deep breath and looked at her, she’d have found it amusing if he wasn’t lying to her face and she wasn’t currently being shat on by a baby “A betrothal, between Dorne and the Crown. He suggests a marriage between Princess Daenerys and me.” He said.

“Of course he does.” She said under her breath as she stood up, desperate to get out of here to change miss stinky who was currently giggling.

Quentyn stood with her “Are you alright aunt?” He asked.

She nodded her head but refused to look at the boy, she was too angry for that “Yes I’m fine, the little Princess here needs changing that’s all. You’ll have to excuse me.” She said as she started to walk away from him.

“So was that a yes?” He shouted at her as she reached Ser Barristan.
She rolled her eyes and turned around “I’m sorry?” She asked.

“To the betrothal. Father would be beyond pleased for this to be resolved so quickly.” He said. She ground her teeth at his shameless attempt at manipulating her.

“I’ll have a word with the King. See what I can do.” She said.

She had no plans to talk about this to anybody but Doran.

He seemed to relax as a smile crept on his face “Thank you, your Grace.” He said. She nodded her head and headed off back towards the keep.

Don’t thank me too early boy, this could very easily turn sour for you.

“Bad!” Alysanne said as they walked along. She looked down and smiled.

“Yes clever girl, he was bad, wasn’t he?” She cooed.

Alysanne just started laughing.

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Ned

He’d not seen Jon all day, well, apart from this afternoon when he spotted him, Rickon and Arya sparing in the godswood. He’d gone there to prey but changed his mind when he saw them. He’d told himself that he didn’t want to disturb them.

That was partially true, he’d not seen Arya and Rick smile like that in years. However, as much as he tried to deny it, he just couldn’t.

He was avoiding Jon. In the hopes of avoiding the talk he was dreading. And he’d managed to avoid
it all day.

It was currently the hour of the wolf, the black of the night sky cast the whole of Winterfell in
darkness. The air was cool and all that could be heard were his own footsteps.

Everybody was in bed, all the children had gone soon after supper along with Cat who was still sleeping in a separate room to him, the argument they’d had this morning had done nothing to help fix that.

Jon hadn’t been at supper which had shamefully made him thankful, he’d asked Robb where he was and was told that he’d headed out into the Wolfswood for some alone time.

Even when avoiding him he was still wary about him disappearing again. Arya had seen the worry on his face and affirmed to him that Jon would be back.

He wished he had his daughter's confidence right about now.

He cupped his hands and blew his hot breath into them, the night had took a chilly turn as he walked towards his solar. He nodded at the guard who was on watch at the time.

“Has anyone been to see me?” He asked.

The guard straightened as he answered “No mi Lord, it's been quiet. Think everyone's asleep mi Lord.” The guard said as Ned nodded and walked towards his solar door.

He shouldered the old wooden door to his private solar as he proceeded to unfasten his cloak. The room was in total darkness, completely pitch black. The servants had obviously forgotten to light any candles, he’d have to have a word with Vayon about that tomorrow.

He fumbled around the room, looking for the hook to hang his cloak on whilst squinting his eyes in concentration. He managed to find the hook and placed his furs on it before working on finding the flint and steel near the fireplace to light the candles himself.

He jumped out of his skin as the sound of steel striking flint resonated through the darkness. His eyes
jolted towards the direction the noise came from as he saw Jon sat at his desk, striking sparks into a char cloth tin and lighting a candle with it.

“Looking for this?” Jon said as he held the flint and steel in one hand and a candle in the other. He placed the candle in its holder and tossed the flint and steel across the desk, the noise of the impact making him jump.

His heart rate calmed down as he came to grips with the situation he’d found himself in “Seven hells Jon! Are you tryin to kill me?” He asked as he grabbed the candle from the holder and worked it around the room, lighting all the candles he could see.

Not at all stalling what he deemed inevitable at this point.

He returned to the desk and placed the candle back where it came from, Jon was currently sat in his chair and seemed to make no effort in moving from his spot “What are you doing sneaking around at this ungodly hour?” He asked as he moved towards the side cabinet to pour himself some ale. “In fact, how did you get in? The guards said nobody had been.” He finished, confused.

He turned and looked at Jon, catching the shrug of his shoulders “Not important.” He said as he leaned back in his chair and folded his arms. He was already in defence mode.

He shook his head and sighed as he leant against the cabinet “I wish you wouldn’t do that.” He said as he took a sip of his ale.

“Do what?” Jon replied. Closing his eyes and slowly rolling his neck in a circle.

“Playing my questions off as not being important.” He said.

Jon’s eyes opened at that as he stopped with his neck rolling “Compared to the reason why I’m here, it really isn't that important.” He replied.

“I beg to differ, I think yo...”

“Go on then.” Jon interrupted.
His brow scrunched up in confusion “What? Go on then?” He asked.

“Go on...” He said as he nodded to the ground “...beg.” Jon finished.

His nostrils flared in anger, he could hear the air leave it as he took in his words.

“I'm not going to do that.” He almost growled out. Jon just sat there with a passive face, he looked so uninterested in his response.

He was shocked out of his thoughts as Jon slammed both of his hands on the desk “Right, I think it's time we had that little chat, don’t you?” He said as he rubbed his hands together. He was enjoying this.

He sighed as he sat in the chair opposite him, he was trying to delay but it seemed that his actions were for nought “Aye, let's have a chat.” He said.

Jon leant forward in his chair “I think we should start with the big question, don’t you?” He said as his glare intensified. The walls felt like they were closing in as he realised there was only one way out of his current situation.

He placed his mug of ale on the desk and looked at Jon, really looked at him. His sister’s eyes stared back at Ned as Jon waited for him to speak. He wasn’t proud of what he was about to do but it was necessary for the safety of his family.

He just hoped one day he would be forgiven.

He cleared his throat “I’ll start from the beginning if that would please you?” He asked. Jon just nodded as he leant back in his chair.

“It all started at Harrenhal, more specifically, the tourney of Harrenhal. That’s where I met her, your mother.” He said. Something flashed across Jon’s eyes but it was gone as quick as it came.
“When I first saw her, she took my breath away. Everything about her was otherworldly, from her hair to her eyes, beauty personified. Unfortunately for me, I wasn’t the only person whose head she had turned.” He said.

“What’s her name?” Jon said. He couldn’t tell him just yet, he had to sell the lie the best he could.

“Please Jon, I’ll get to it I promise, just...let me finish okay?” He said. Jon looked at him for a few seconds before nodding.

“She had so many admirers that all hope seemed lost for me, I was quiet, sullen and a second son. A bit like you used to be in a way.” He japed as he chuckled. By the look on Jon’s face, he didn’t find it very funny.

“Anyways, it seemed like a wasted endeavour, I’d resigned myself to just looking at her from a distance and just settling for that. That’s until your uncle Brandon caught me staring at her during a feast.” He chuckled “Your uncle Brandon was a loose cannon and when he had a plan, he always found a way of making it work.” He said.

“Not always.” Jon replied, striking him right in the heart in the process. Jon’s face hadn’t changed from the glare he’d been sending his way ever since he started his story.

He sighed as he looked down “No, not always.” He said, the rest of that incident going untold. It made him think, how would Brandon have dealt with Jon if he were still alive?

“...he caught you staring...then what?” Jon asked, breaking him from his sad thoughts.

He swallowed the lump in his throat as he continued “He thought it would be a good idea to go over to her and ask if she would dance with me, all without telling me what he was gonna say in the first place. When he returned to his seat and told me, I was mortified. What was even shocking was the fact that she said yes.” He exclaimed.

Jon’s eyes seemed to be growing softer as he went on, like he was losing himself in his story.

He took a swig of his ale “So, we ended up sharing a dance...and that’s when I was truly lost. I was nervous as hell as we moved around the room, I even stepped on her toes a few times but she didn’t seem to mind, it was hard to look into her eyes as it was so easy to get lost in them. At one point, I
was that mesmerised by them, she had to wave her hand in front of my face to bring me back to the real world. I was mortified but she just laughed it off, that’s what she was like, she was so considerate and understanding.” He said.

Jon looked towards the window “She sounds lovely.” He said.

He nodded “She was.” He replied. “Over the next few days, we spent every minute of spare time that we had with each other and I couldn’t have been any happier if I tried. I was living a dream, living a life that didn’t seem real at that moment, a life that I found out she wanted to share with me.” He said. It still genuinely hurt that he couldn’t live that life that he wanted.

Jon’s eyes shot up from where he was staring out the window “Share with you...as in marry?” He said. There was an edge to his tone that he couldn’t decipher.

He nodded “If the rebellion hadn't happened, she would have been my wife. We planned to marry soon after we...we...”

“You what?” Jon asked. Eyes devoid of softness they carried only a few moments ago.

He sighed “We consummated our love and agreed to marry, we just needed permission. Before we could even ask, Rhaegar was crowning the wrong person after winning the joust and we were being separated, I was returning to the Vale and she was returning south.” He said.

The mug in Jon’s hand creaked, he’d not realised that he’d taken it from his side of the desk “So what you are saying is that all of this is Rhaegar Targaryen’s fault?” He growled out. In a twisted way, he felt relieved that he wasn’t taking the brunt of the blame. He would later find out that Jon’s anger wasn’t aimed at the King of the Seven Kingdoms.

He fiddled with his thumb and forefinger, a nervous twitch some might call it “Yes and no, it's not all hi...”

“What's her name Lord Stark?” Jon interrupted. He was disturbed by what he was seeing, Jon was almost vibrating from where he sat.

“If you let me finish my st...”
“What. Is. My. Mother’s. Name?” Jon growled out, his tone sending shivers through his spine as he looked into his eyes. Molten silver swimming with emotion, clawing for a release.

He gulped, there was no going back with what he said next.

“Ashara. Your mother’s name is Ashara.” He breathed out.

There was silence for at least half a minute as the grip on the mug in Jon’s hand creaked with added pressure.

Jon cleared his throat as he looked towards the window again “Dayne? Ashara Dayne?” He asked.

He just nodded but realised Jon wasn’t looking at him so replied “Yes.”

Jon sat there and slowly nodded, his face was a picture of emotion, he couldn’t tell if it was grief or relief from what he’d been told.

They sat there for a whole minute in silence, Jon was obviously trying to take in the information he’d jus...

The mug in Jon’s hand was launched across the room, narrowly missing his head, specks of ale flying from it and spraying his face as the mug impacted with the wall behind him, cracking into numerous pieces as it landed on the floor.

He turned back around towards Jon when he heard the sound of a chair being pushed back, he didn’t realise what was happening until Jon had him hauled out of his chair and pressed against the wood cabinet on the left side of the room. The pressure on his chest was immense as Jon held him there, he could practically feel the heat off of him as a crazed look took over his face, a look he would pay to never see again.

“Why are you lying?!?” He spat out as the grip on his gambeson became tighter, Jon’s hands were awfully close to his throat that genuine worry for his own wellbeing slowly leaked into is system.
He shook his head as he gasped out “I’m not lying, I loved your mo...”

“LIAR!!” Jon screamed into his face, he closed his eyes in fear as Jon’s right hand released from its grip on him and morphed into a fist. The impact of it hitting the cabinet behind him making all the colour in his face drain out when he hears a crack and the rattling of the contents inside the piece of furniture.

He slowly opened his eyes and looked to his left where Jon’s fist had just been, a broken crater of splinters and shards of wood left in the door to his cabinet.

The grip of his right hand returned to his gambeson as Jon hunched over and looked down at the floor, his raven curls covering his face from his view.

_This had gone so wrong, how had it gone so wrong?_

“How? Why do you keep lying to me?” Jon said, barely audible. It sounded like he was asking himself that question.

He was released from Jon’s tight grip as his son moved around the room, wandered he would describe it. Not once did he look at Ned as he muttered to himself.

“Jon...Its not a lie...I still love your mothe...”

The chair in front of Jon was picked up and hurled across the room, breaking against the wall behind his desk and sending papers flying. Jon walked to the window and gripped the windowsill, still refusing to look at him.

He had to gain some sort of control back from the situation, he was the warden of the North not some child being told off “Can we just sit and talk about this...maybe leave out you breaking all this furniture?” He asked as he made his way towards his desk.

“I either break the furniture or a I break you. Your choice.” Jon growled out, still staring out the window.
He gulped at that.

Minutes passed with nothing said, the only noises that could be heard were Ned’s attempts at cleaning up the wooden shrapnel scattered behind his desk.

“I know you're lying, you know that right?” Jon said as he still refused to look at him.

He shook his head, he couldn’t know that...right? Unless...oh gods...

His fears were confirmed when Jon spoke again “I've met Ashara Dayne. I've met this woman you claim to be my mother.” He said as he finally turned around. He looked angry and tired as he glared at him.

“Funny story, she has no recollection of me. She doesn’t even remember birthing me. Might have something to do with her not actually being my mother!” He said, looking like he wanted to break something again. “So I'll ask you again...who is my mother?” He finished.

He couldn’t, he just couldn’t tell him. It was too dangerous and unfortunately for him, he was shit out of luck and excuses.

So he just stood there, silent. As the rage and anger built and built in Jon’s face.

“WELL!?!” He bellowed out as he walked towards him. He mentally prepared himself for what was about to happen because deep down, he knew it was about to happen. And in the end, he definitely deserved it.

He shook his head as Jon advanced “I can't, I'm sorry.” He said, ready and waiting.

“So am I.” His son said as he swung.

The Darkness a welcome respite from his problems.
A week had passed, a week since he’d blackened Lord Stark’s eye. Regret had been the last thing he felt when he woke up the next morning and entered the great hall to break his fast and saw what he’d done to his face.

Everybody had asked him what had happened, everyone except from him of course, he’d just sat there and ate his bacon in relative peace. His father had every right to say it was him but claimed he’d walked into the cabinet in his solar and that somebody had forgotten to light candles in there. Vayon Poole, the steward of Winterfell looked chastised as he stood at the side of the room.

It had been a week since then and it had been a week since he’d told everybody he was going to go and see his uncle. It wasn’t a lie that he truly missed his uncle Benjen, he’d not seen him in years and with access to a speed demon in the form of Kireina, he couldn’t pass up the opportunity to go and see him.

He’d had an earful from everyone, including Lord Stark which was a bit of a surprise, he thought he’d be glad to see the back of him for a while. He’d told Arya, who was predictably the most vocal, that he would be back and this wasn’t goodbye, just a see you later. She’d begrudgingly accepted that answer but didn’t cease in her sulking until the moment he was saying his farewells a few days ago.

Everybody else had accepted that he was eventually coming back, all except from Lord Stark and his wife. His father had accused him of running away from his problems again, he was partially right but
he didn’t want to give the man the satisfaction of being right, so he just warned him that this wasn’t the end of their conversation.

That had closed his mouth.

Lady Stark’s reaction was odd but quite obvious after a few seconds to think about it. She clearly thought he was going to Castle Black to take his vows and not to see a family member. He’d just nodded his head at her as she wished him good luck but nearly bawled out in laughter when he caught Arya giving her mother the dirtiest look he’d ever seen.

And now he was here, high above the clouds and what looked like a few minutes away from the wall, a structure that took his breath away the first time he saw it. It was truly one of the great wonders of the known world, something you had to see with your own eyes to appreciate.

*Kireina*’s landing was quick and elegant within the cover of a forest just a mile away from what he assumed was Castle Black, she’d clearly been practising since that mess in Hornwood Forest.

He grabbed his bag from her back and looped it over his shoulder, he’d only brought the one bag with a change of clothes, the other one with the two valyrian swords had been left in Winterfell, more specifically, hidden in the crypts of Winterfell. He would’ve left them in his own room but was too scared of somebody finding them...or Arya messing around with them whilst he wasn’t there.

The snow from the leaves on the tree was disrupted as *Kireina* sprang back into the air and out of sight. He’d suggested to her that she could have a roam around beyond the wall, something she was very against for some reason. She’d set off without another word so he never found out why she was so apprehensive.

This was the furthest north he’d ever been and it was true what they said about it being colder the more north you went. He wasn’t at the point of shivering but he was getting there as he trudged through the snow before finally finding a beaten path to walk along.

After twenty minutes of walking, Castle Black was in view, and so was the wall. From this perspective it made him feel a little queasy looking straight up, almost like he expected it to just fall on him at any moment.

“HALT!” A man said from above the front gate of the ancient castle. He stopped in his tracks as he looked at the man.
“STATE YOUR BUSINESS!” The man yelled across to him.

“I’M HERE TO SEE BENJEN STARK! IS HE IN OR HAS THIS BEEN A WASTE OF TIME?!” He yelled back.

The man seemed to look at him for a few seconds before turning around and talking to somebody.

He must have been stood there for a few minutes before the gate was slowly opened up, the man who had been speaking to him calling him over.

“What’s your name?” The man asked as they walked towards the now open gate and into the courtyard. Everybody seemingly dropping everything they were doing to stare at him.

“Jon, Jon Snow.” He said as the man nodded and just left him there in the courtyard. He had to readjust his shoulders, mainly to make sure his swords were still in place, he had to remember that he was alone in a courtyard full of criminals.

*Lord Stark had genuinely tip toed around the idea of sending him here.* He thought as he took in his surroundings.

Heavy running footsteps could be heard as he turned to his left, on a balcony above him stood awe-stricken uncle. He smiled as he saw the look on his face.

He’d never seen his uncle move so fast as he rushed down the stairs from the balcony to the courtyard and half walked half jogged towards him.

He was momentarily shocked by the smack across the back of his head before being engulfed in a bear hug.

“You fucking idiot, I thought you were dead.” His uncle said as he finally let go of him. He held him on the shoulders at arm’s length and seemed to drink him in.
“Let's get a good look at ya.” He said as he seemed to hone in on his face more than anything.

“What's this?” He said as he grabbed his face with one hand and rubbed his beard.

He chuckled “Robb’s worst nightmare.” He answered as uncle Benjen just about managed to rest his arm across his shoulder.

His uncle chuckled himself as he walked them towards what he guessed was the main keep “He still trying with all that?” He asked as he smiled and shook his head. His uncle squeezed his shoulder “Gods, what you been eating? You remind me of your uncle Brandon every time I see ya.” He laughed.

The warmth of the hall hit him in an instant as they walked in, thankfully the room was quiet.

“The right things.” He replied as he took his bag off of his shoulder and dropped it on a bench, the jug of what he guessed was ale on the table looking very appetising right now.

His uncle chuckled again as they both took a seat, he grabbed two horns and filled them both with whatever contents lurked inside the jug.

“So...” Uncle Benjen said as he slid the mug across to him “Where in the world have you been Jon?” His uncle finished.

He sighed as he looked down into his ale “I've been very far from home uncle. West mainly.” He said as he took a sip from his mug, pulling a face when he actually tasted it.

His uncle looked at him in confusion “West? As in the Westerlands?” He asked as he took a sip from his own horn.

He shook his head “Even further, across the Sunset Sea.” He said as he soldiered on with his drink.

Benjen’s eyes grew wide as his mug halted its journey towards his mouth “You're shitting me?” He said.
He shook his head “Nope, sailed across the whole bloody thing. Pretty sure I had the old gods and every other god looking down on me on the way there though.” He said as he smiled at his uncles gobsmacked face.

“You're not lying, are you?” Benjen said as he shook his head. “Unbelievable.” He finished.

“Believe it.” He said as he necked the rest of his ale with a grimace “I scarcely believe it happened myself.”

“How long have you been back like?” His uncle asked as he unfortunately started pouring him another mug of ale.

He shook his head “Not long.”

“You been back home?” He asked.

He grimaced at that but nodded “Yeah, everyone seemed pleased to see me again, well, nearly everyone.” He said. His uncle seemed to understand who he was referring to as he nodded.

“And what about your father? I bet he was made up to see you again. I know he’d sent a few ravens out asking about you, even one here. I think he thought you might have taken the black.”

He sighed at the mention of his father.

Benjen noticed this as well “Oh dear, what's he done now?” He asked.

“He’s done a few things lately but it's not what he’s done, it's what I did.” He said.

“Out with it then.” Benjen said as he waved off someone who had just popped his head through the door.
“Thumped him didn’t I. Left him with a shiner and I don’t know how to feel about it. It's one of the reasons I came up to see you, a second opinion...and to see my favourite uncle of course.” He said, rushing the last part out.

His uncle shook his head as he took a gulp of his ale “That bloody wolfs blood for ya that, your uncle Brandon and your aunt Lya were exactly the same, act now think later. Sometimes wonder if it’s a blessing or a curse on our family.” He said.

“Well? What should I do?” He asked as he leaned his arms on the table.

“Well for starters, did you apologise after?”

He scoffed “Did I fuck, he had it coming.”

“What happened?” Benjen asked.

“I asked about my mother and he flat out refused to tell me.”

“Ah.” His uncle said as he placed his mug on the table.

“It wasn’t like it was something out of the blue me hitting him, it's been building for a long time and I just snapped.” He said.

“Well you're what, 17 now? You're old enough to know by now and If I knew who it was, I would tell ya myself.” Benjen said.

“You have no idea who it could be? Did he not tell you anything?” He asked.

“Trust me, I asked him quite a few questions when he turned up with you but the identity of your mother was never revealed, sorry lad.” His uncle said as his head dropped.

“The only person I could think of would have been Lady Ashara but he denied it when I asked him.” Benjen expanded.
He shook his head “It's not her, did a bit of digging and found that out myself, from the woman herself.” He said.

His uncle’s eyebrow quirked at that “You’ve met her?” He asked as he nodded “You really have been busy haven't ya?”

“You have no idea.”

“Oh, by the way, you have another niece.” He said nonchalantly, his uncle’s eyes going wide like saucers.

“What!?"

He nodded “Lady Ashara had a child, a daughter, kept it from father because I existed. She thought Lord Stark was honourable to a fault but felt betrayed when he married Catelyn and even more so when I came into the picture.”

Benjen rubbed his face and huffed “What is this family coming to?” He said to himself before looking back at him. “What’s her name? What’s she like?” He asked.

He smiled while remembering about her “Her names Clarissa and she’s brilliant. Bit of a mixture of Arya and Sansa to be honest, has a bit of an interest in swordplay but also the more feminine interests as well, she’d given me a braid when I let her mess with my hair when I was there.” He said with a smile as he shook his head.

His uncle chuckled himself “She reminds me of someone going by your description.” He said wistfully.

“Who?”

“Your aunt Lyanna.” Benjen said “She tolerated the feminine arts as you like to say but she was more passionate about her horses and smacking me and your uncles black and blue with sticks.” He said as he smiled, a sad smile obvious to anyone who saw it.
He smiled along with him as he started scratching the wooden table with his nail “I wish I knew more about her, father never really talks about her.” He said.

“Understandable, bit a touchy subject talking about her with all things considered.” His uncle said.

“He sometimes talks about our uncle Brandon with all things considered, I don’t see the difference really.” He replied as he looked down at the little groves he’d made in the table with his nail.

His uncle went quiet for a for a minute until he looked back up from the table at him, seemingly catching his uncle starring at him with an odd look on his face.

“What?” He asked.

His uncle visibly swallowed and shook his head “Nothing, I hope.” He said as he took a sip from his horn.

They sat there in comfortable silence after that, him looking into the fireplace and his uncle seemingly staring at him intently. He could see it in his peripheral vision but decided not to call him out on it, he probably just missed him that’s all.

They were disrupted from their comfortable silence as the door to the hall swung open, revealing two men. One of them was a broad-shouldered man, a head of grey hair and a grey-white beard. Jon held his stern gaze before looking at the lad next to him, he was smaller than the old man, had black curly hair not too different to his own and an almost feminine looking face.

“What's this then?” The burly man said as he looked at his uncle. He turned to look at Benjen and once again caught him staring.

“Well!” The man asked, seemingly breaking his uncle from his thoughts.

“Hmm? Oh...forgive me Lord Commander.” Benjen said “Jon, this is Jeor Mormont, the Lord Commander of the Nights watch. Jeor, this is my...nephew, Jon.” He said as he stood from the table, him following his uncles lead.
He clasped hands with the older man and shared a hard handshake “Strong grip you got there lad, I imagine you put that to good use while using them.” Jeor said as he nodded at the swords on his back.

He laughed as he released the man’s hand “Aye, you could say that.” He said as he looked to his left and notice the other man looking at him intently. He held out his hand towards him.

“Jon.” He said as the other man held his hand and shook it.

“Satin.” He replied, as he seemed to reluctantly let go of his hand.

The Lord Commander clapped his gloved hands together “Right, with introductions out of the way, what can we do for you Jon? Come to take the black? Could use some stronger lads like yourself around here.” He said as he chuckled.

He laughed with him “I appreciate the offer but no, it’s just a visit, been years since I’ve seen this one.” He said as he nodded towards his uncle.

“That’s a shame, we’re always appreciative of extra men.” Jeor replied as he looked back at his uncle. “Well, if you plan on staying then we’ll sort you a room out for your stay. Satin...” The old bear said as the other man seemed to already know what was asked of him as he headed back outside.

The Lord Commander turned back to them “I’ll leave you two to it then. Feel free to help out at all while you’re here Jon, it was nice to meet ya.” Jeor said as he clapped him on the shoulder before exiting the room as well.

He turned back to his uncle “He seems nice.” He said.

“Hmmm.” Was all Benjen said. He seemed to be in his own world at the moment.

He chuckled “’C’mon then, you gonna give me a tour or what?” He said as he grabbed his bag.
Benjen nodded “Course I will, but before that there’s somebody I would like you to meet.” He said, a weird look on his face as he said it.

He nodded himself “Okay, somebody important I’m guessing since I’ve already talked with you and the Lord Commander?” He half guessed half asked.

“You could say that.” His uncle replied as they made their way outside and towards a stout wooden keep across the balcony.

“Who is it I'm supposed to be meeting?” He asked as they approached a door.

Benjen turned and looked at him “Aemon Targaryen, he’s the maester here at Castle Black and probably the wisest man in the seven kingdoms.” He said, shocking Jon in the process.

A Targaryen, he’d never met someone of royal blood before, it seemed odd for one of them to be this far north.

Before his uncle knocked, he looked at him “Just a word of warning, the man is that old he’s lost his sight so his form of greeting might seem a bit weird but just go with it.” He said as he finally knocked.

*Weird but okay.*

A man who looked nowhere near as old as Benjen had described answered the door and looked at the pair of them, eyeing him a bit more suspiciously.

“Brother Benjen and...” The man said.

“Jon. His nephew.” He answered as he nodded towards his uncle stood next to him.

“What can I do for you?” He asked.

“Just a quiet word with maester Aemon that’s all, you can take a break if you
like.” Benjen answered, the man nodding as he opened the door wider for them and walked towards the hall they just came from.

The room they entered was quiet dark apart from the few candles that littered around the place, shelves stacked full of books wrapped all around the room.

Sat in the middle of the room was quite obviously the man his uncle had just described to him, bald, wrinkled and quite clearly blind if his milky eyes were anything to go by.

“Maester Aemon? It's me Benjen.” His uncle revealed to the ancient looking man.

“Ah, Brother Benjen, what can I do for you and your friend?” He replied.

He looked at his uncle in confusion “Thought you said he was blind?” He whispered.

“While that may be true, my hearing is just fine.” Aemon replied.

That thoroughly chastised him “Sorry...your grace?” He said as he looked at Benjen and shrugged his shoulders.

“Ha, I can't remember the last time I was called that, regardless, the moment I joined the watch my titles disappeared. Aemon or maester will suffice.” He replied. “And who would you be?” he asked.

“Jon, Jon Snow.” He replied.

“Ah, Lord Stark's son. Nice to meet you young one.” Aemon said, confusing Jon.

“You know who I am?” He asked.

“Not personally, but I know Lord Stark has a son of the same name and you accompanied brother Benjen here so I worked it out myself, I’m apparently wise like that.” Aemon said as he chuckled, Jon joined in.
“What can I do for the pair of you?” The old maester said.

His uncle cleared his throat “Just showing my nephew around and decided he should meet you, maybe you can greet him like you greeted me all those years ago?” His uncle seemed to suggest.

*It almost sounds forced.*

He didn't know what to expect but as soon as the man held his old wrinkled out in front of him, he knew what he wanted.

“May I?” Aemon asked as Jon nodded and instantly felt like an idiot. “Yeah.” he answered.

“What's your colouring?” Aemon asked as he roamed his face with his hands.

“Dark brown hair, grey eyes.” He replied as the old man focused his touch around his nose and cheekbone, intently moving them back and forth. The man's hands seemed to shake more the longer he felt up his face.

The hands finally left his face as they returned to the old maester’s lap “What’s your mother's name, if you don’t mind me asking?” He asked as his eyes seemed to start to water.

He looked at his uncle in shock and confusion but never got a response from him, he was too busy shaking his head at the ground with his eyes closed.

He looked gutted.

He looked back at the old maester, completely confused now “Erm, I'm...I don’t know.” He answered, he was too uneasy to feel sad about that reply.

Aemon closed his eyes and took a deep breath, seemingly recovering from whatever incident that had just occurred “It's a cruel world we live in child, it would seem that man is the worst culprit.” He said ominously.
His uncle seemed to recover as well as he cleared his throat “Erm...I...I'll come and see you later maester Aemon, I've got to show Jon here around the rest of the castle, maybe even take him up to the top of the wall.” He said as he placed his hand on his back and ushered him to stand “You’ll love it, it’ll be the closest thing to being in the clouds that you’ll ever know.” He finished.

Wanna bet? He amusingly thought as they slowly made their way out the room.

He turned around before they left the room and saw the old maester was clearly crying “It was nice to meet you Aemon.” He said as he looked at Benjen again in confusion, his uncle just shook his head.

“You too child. Visit again soon, will you?” He sniffed.

“Sure thing.” He replied as he finally left the stuffy room, the cold air refreshing him to the core.

His uncle put his hand on his back and ushered him forward “Let's go to the top of the wall first, shall we?” He said as they walked along the balcony towards a crazy looking contraption, presumably the lift to the top.

He felt a childish giddiness as they entered the cage before slowly ascending up the side of the wall.

He nodded towards the maester’s room that they’d just come from “That was a bit odd wasn’t it, is that normal for him?” He asked, he really couldn’t understand what had even happened in that room.

He looked at his uncle who seemed to be in a world of his own at the moment. He waved his hand in front of his face “Hello? You awake in there?” He asked.

Benjen blinked at him in confusion “Sorry, what did you say?”

He sighed “I said, is what happened in there normal? It all seemed a little odd if you ask me. I mean, why was he crying? was it something I said?” he asked.
His uncle shook his head “No no, you didn't say anything wrong. You have to remember Aemon is like a hundred years old, none of us know what struggles he could be going through at his age, I think meeting a new face may have just overwhelmed him today that’s all.” He answered.

His reasoning seemed a little off but he dropped it nonetheless.

They ascended the rest of the way to the top in silence, the wind slowly crept as the cage they were in seemed to sway. The moment they reached the top his uncle opened the gate and the pair of them made their way out.

“This way Jon.” Benjen said as they made their way through the dugout trenches atop the wall. A small wooden platform almost hanging of the edge of the wall was where they ended up, the view overlooking the vast lands north of the wall as the sun slowly disappeared beyond the horizon.

They stood there just staring out into the distance for a minute or two, both of them in a deep in thought.

After another minute, his uncle broke the silence “Not bad eh?” He said as he nodded into the distance.

He just hummed in agreement.

They sat up there for at least an hour, him and Benjen shared stories with each other. One of the stories he was very wary of telling him about but with them literally being at the end of the world and away from any prying eyes, he decided to just go for it. He trusted his uncle to keep this a secret for now.

He cleared his throat “I'm gonna tell you something insane uncle and you have to promise me you won't go around yelling this from the rooftops. I've not told this to anybody because I'm afraid someone would overhear and make my life a lot more complicated. I feel comfortable telling you because I trust you and we happened to be in the most secluded place in westeros where there's no chance of it being overheard.” He said.

Benjen looked at him with a furrowed brow “Bit ominous ain’t it? What's got ya so paranoid?” He asked.
He took a deep breath and took the plunge,

“I have a dragon.”

Silence.

He looked at his uncle and noticed he was trying so hard not to laugh “You what?” He chuckled.

He closed his eyes to calm himself, while doing so he sensed that Kireina was actually quite close to where they were.

She must be above us.

He opened his eyes and looked at Benjen, he was still grinning like a fool.

“Look up.” He told him.

“What?” Benjen replied, still grinning.

“Go on, look up.” He replied.

His uncle smiled and carried on smiling as he looked up.

He shook his head and shrugged his shoulders “What am I supposed to be looking at?” He asked.

“Look into the clouds, what do you see?” He said.

His uncle was still smiling as he shook his head and looked up into the clouds, he probably thought he was taking the piss.
“I see...oh my god! I...see...I see... a cloud.” He answered whilst laughing at his own jape.

He smiled and shook his head, he loved his uncle “Look closer ya clever prick, like really look.” He replied.

“Okay, I’ll look closer at the clouds like an idiot.” Benjen replied.

His uncle looked up and squinted, he must have looked for about half a minute and while he was doing that, Jon just stared at his face just waiting for it.

*And there it is.* He thought amusingly as he saw the smile drop from Benjen’s face, “Fuck off!” He said as his eyes grew wide.

He smiled and looked down at his lap, giving his uncle time to recover.

He looked back up and saw his uncle leaning the back of his head against the icy wall he was sitting against, staring at him completely gobsmacked.

“Yes.” Was all he said to him as Benjen shook his head, speechless.

He eventually cleared his throat, still shaking his head in disbelief “I have so many questions.” He said.

And he answered them to the best of his ability. When they were done, his uncle groaned and rubbed his face with his hands “It all makes too much sense, I can't believe him.” He seemed to say to himself.

He shook his head “Eh? Him? Who’s him?” He asked.

“Your...father. FUCK!” His uncle yelled as he smashed his fist into the icy snow they were sat on.

“What the fuck was he thinking?” He said, again seemingly asking himself.

Jon was annoyed. He didn’t like it when people were vague around him, it made him feel like an
idiot and that just pissed him off.

“Are you gonna tell me what it is he’s apparently done or should I just leave?” He asked annoyedly.

His uncle nodded “You're a very dangerous man, Jon. In more ways than one.” He said. “It all makes sense why he wouldn't tell you who your mother was.” he finished.

“Enlighten me, this conversation is starting to grate on my nerves uncle.” He said as he stared rolling balls of snow into his palm and crushing them.

He sighed “I understand why your father has kept this information from you.” His uncle said.

He’d had enough.

He rose to his feet in a flash “I'm leaving. I've had enough of it from him, I don’t need it from you as well. The secrecy is beyond infuriating at this point.” He growled out.

“Jon wait!” Benjen said as he reached for his arm “Sit back down and let me speak.” He said.

“Will this conversation lead to answers? I’m sick to the back teeth with people playing with my life like some sick form of entertainment.” He said.

“I hope so.” His uncle answered. He huffed, begrudgingly nodded and slowly sat back down, folding his arms and staring at Benjen emotionless.

His uncle sighed “I'm not one hundred percent confident because for that I’d need to hear it from Ned myself, but with everything that has been said, it makes too much sense.” He said.

“You said that dragon of yours seems to think that you’ve got some valyrian blood in your system, that she can sense it?” He said. Jon just nodded.

“And you...you can ride this dragon as well? Which is still mad to think about on
its own.” Benjen asked. Again, Jon nodded. He didn’t want to speak, hopefully it would get him somewhere.

Benjen sighed “When I suggested meeting with Aemon, it was partly to meet him but mainly to test something. I needed to see if he could recognise any of your features, and if his reaction was anything to go by, he did.” He said.

He looked at his uncle in confusion “That doesn’t make any sense, I’ve never met the man before.” He said.

“He’s no secret that you’re easy on the eyes lad, some of those features you didn’t get from your Stark blood.” He said “Aemon seemed to recognise those features instantly.”

He shook his head “Wait, what are you tryin to say? That I’m somehow related to the old maester? That he recognised some of my features cos I share them with somebody from his family?” he asked.

He shook his head as waited for an answer “It doesn’t make sense, it doesn’t add up at all.” He finished.

His uncle sighed “That wasn’t even when I suspected, it was before in the hall when we were talking about your uncle Brandon and your...aunt Lyanna.” He said.

_Why did he pause before mentioning aunt Lyanna?

Jon now was looking at him intently, he felt like he was on the cusp of something...he also felt dread for some reason.

“You said Ned had no problem talking about your uncle Brandon didn’t you?” He just nodded.

Benjen nodded as well “…but he seems to avoid talking about your aunt Lya?”

He nodded again “Practically refuses, I once saw him snap at Arya when she asked about her.” He replied.
His uncle nodded then looked down “...and who else does he avoid talking about? Refuses to speak about?” He asked as he looked up at Jon with such anguish, he nearly didn't recognise him.

He thought for a moment, unaware of the connection when he finally answered “My mother.”

His uncle just looked at him, clearly waiting for him to come to some sort of conclusion.

He was so lost.

He shook his head as he frowned “It doesn’t make sense if you're saying my mother and aunt Lyanna are the same person, Kireina knows I’ve got valyrian blood, neither of them have valyrian blood.” He said.

Benjen looked confused at that “Neither of them?” He asked.

“Ned and aunt Lyanna.” He replied.

His uncle shook his head “I don’t know how to tell you this without hurting you lad but it needs to be said since he won’t tell you…” He said as he looked at him.

He just nodded for him to continue.

“I don’t think Ned’s your biological father.”

He just blinked at him repeatedly.

What?

He shook his head in a daze “I don’t under...wha...”
“And I think my sister is your biological mother.” His uncle finished.

His jaw set as he refused to believe what he was saying “You need to stop, that’s beyond mad what you’ve just fuckin said.” He said as he refused to look at his uncle.

What kind of sick fucking game was attempting to play here?

He buried his head in his hands and shut his eyes, he hated that it wasn’t as farfetched as he wished it was. Everything his uncle was saying sort of made sense but he just couldn’t believe it, the magnitude of the situation was becoming too much for him.

Was his aunt Lyanna in actual fact, his mother? If that was true then who was his fath ....

“Rhaegar...” He whispered out, mainly to himself.

“There it is." His un...yeah uncle, his uncle said as he let Jon come to the realisation himself.

His head was fucking spinning, it was too much, it all made too much sense now. He sniffed, not realising he’d started crying, his tears freezing on his face as they made their way down his cheeks, seeking refuge in the warmth of his beard.

He wishes he could find refuge somewhere warm, and alone. A place where he could break down without being watched. He was being watched right now by his uncle, a look of concern on the older man’s face.

“Come here.” His uncle said as he moved over to him and brought him into an embrace. He gripped his uncle tight as he buried his face in his furs and that’s where he just lost his fight against his emotions as he sobbed into his uncle’s shoulder, his body shook as he released all his anguish and pain. A truth bomb that had been brewing for 17 years dropped into his life, destroying what he thought was the truth and leaving behind an immeasurable mess for him.

It went through his mind, any question he’d asked his f...Lord Stark or himself could be answered when Lyanna and Rhaegar were his actual parents.
All except for one.

Why? Why did he do it? Why did he take him from his actual father? Why did he take his actual life away from him just to make him slum it as some stain on his name?

Now *that* was the only thing that didn't make sense...and it made him angry that there was no obvious answer to it.

“I'm gonna kill him.” He whispered into his uncle’s shoulder.

“Shush, don’t say things like that. This needs sorting and you becoming a kinslayer won't fix anything.” His uncle replied.

He broke away from the embrace and rubbed the moisture from his face with his sleeve before glaring at his uncle “Kin? That man is no kin of mine anymore.” He growled.

His uncle grabbed him by the shoulders “Hey, who am I?” He asked.

He frowned “Benjen...”

“And what am I to you?” He furthered.

“My uncle.” He replied.

“And Ned is my brother, my stupid brother who has monumentally fucked up, but still my brother, my kin...and yours as well whether you like it or not. The gods won't care about your excuses when they curse you for life.” Benjen explained.

If he wasn’t too careful, he’d be hitting him as well for being so fucking annoying.

“You have to play this smart Jon, keep a level head. I can't imagine what is going through your head at the moment, probably all the different ways you want to hurt Ned but the most important thing is not to lose your head. What you know now could start a war and kill thousands, you don’t want that,
none of us want that.”

He looked at his uncle “I just want to know why he did it. What possessed him to do such a thing?” He asked.

Benjen just shook his head “I don’t know Jon, I’ve been asking myself that the moment I suspected.”

He ran his hand through his hair ”How the fuck am I supposed to go back there and look that man in the eyes without wanting to rip them from his fucking head?” He asked.

He let out a humourless laugh “Hell, how am I supposed to look at my brothers and sisters who are actually my cousins the same ever again?” He said sadly. He’d just lost 5 siblings like a click of his fingers.

His uncle shook his head “They're still your siblings, that won't change, they won't let it, I'm certain.” He said with determination.

“Howe your right, I don't think I could handle losing them.” He said.

“You’ll be fine, trust me.” Benjen replied, he just nodded. He was too tired to argue anymore, he was well and truly spent, physically and emotionally.

They been up at the top of the wall for longer than they realised, the night had well and truly taken over and so too had the even colder air.

“Think I’d like to go to my room now, uncle.” Was all he said as Benjen just nodded.

“You sure you don’t want owt to eat?” He asked as they made their way back to the lift.

He shook his head “Nah, think I just want to be alone for now. I’ll probably fall asleep the minute my head hits the pillow.” He tried to jape.
There was no way that was gonna happen, his mind was going a mile a minute even now.

His uncle sighed as they entered the lift “Alright.” He said.

The entire journey down to the bottom was spent in silence, he could see Benjen eyeing him from the corner of his eye but he just didn’t care anymore, he just wanted his bed. He wanted the day to be over.

The lift came to an abrupt stop and his uncle opened up the gate, he saw the old Lord Commander waiting for them just up ahead.

“Thought you’d fallen off up there.” He japed, Jon gave a very forced smile.

“We were just catching up, it’s been a long time.” His uncle thankfully intervened, he really didn’t have the heart or the patience for a conversation with this man right now.

“I was just about to show Jon to his room, the travel was long and hard and I think he just wants to rest.” His uncle asked as he looked at Jeor.

“No supper? You look like a growing lad who hasn’t missed a meal your whole life.” Jeor japed again.

“You’d be surprised how much I’ve missed in life.” He answered back without a second thought. Jeor just looked at him oddly.

Benjen cleared his throat “Do you know what room Satin sorted out for him?” His uncle asked, diffusing the situation.

The old commander grunted “Aye, we’ve sorted him a room out in the King’s Tower, I’ll get Satin to escort him.” He said.

His uncle shook his head “No its fine, I’ll show him and make sure he’s settled for the night. Lord Commander.” He said as he nodded to the man and ushered him towards what he guessed was the King’s Tower.
“Thanks.” He said to Benjen as they made their way there “I really haven't got it in me to have a normal conversation with somebody right now.” He said. His uncle shook his head.

“Don't worry about it, a good night's sleep will do wonders for you tonight, then tomorrow we can talk some more. Maybe even have another little chat with maester Aemon hmm?” He said as they reached the tower and headed up the stairs to the rooms.

“This one’s yours.” His uncle pointed out as he opened the door to a room with a decent looking bed despite where he was and a roaring fire.

“Thanks again uncle.” He replied as he dropped all his stuff, including his swords on the chair at the side of the room.

“You're welcome.” He said as he pulled him into another hug, he sighed against the older man’s shoulder.

“We’re gonna sort this out Jon, you hear me?” His uncle said.

He didn’t reply, he wasn’t sure anything would be sorted out after today.

“Go on.” Benjen said as he pushed him away and towards the bed “Get out of those furs and get under these ones.” he said as he lifted the furs off the bed for him to get into.

“I'll see you in the morning lad.” His uncle said as he gave him a sad smile, he returned it as he nodded.

“Night uncle.” He said.

“Goodnight Jon.” He replied as he slowly closed the door behind him as he left the room.

He let out the deep sigh he’d been holding in for a while now and stripped down to his smallclothes, putting his clothes on the chair with the rest of belongings.
He let out another sigh as he laid down in the foreign bed, readjusting to find a comfortable spot.

He laid on his side and closed his eyes, attempting to empty his mind of any thoughts so he could get the rest he really needed right now.

“*Are you alright Jon?*” *Kireina* asked through their bond. It hadn't been long since he’d last seen her but he missed her dearly right now. He was touched at her concern.

“I *don’t know.*” He sniffed as he let the tears flow again.

He finally drifted off to sleep, first he dreamt of the mother he would never see, hear or touch.

And then he was dreaming of flying through the night sky, looking down at the north below him, realising that nothing would ever be the same again.

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Chapter End Notes

Next chapter, January 18th.
**Benjen**

He’d had a shitty night’s sleep and it wasn’t hard to figure out why. He’d spent most of the night trying to get to sleep but his mind just wouldn’t allow it, there was too much to think about, too much to worry about. The little sleep he did get was in increments, half an hour here half an hour there, just enough to get him through the day but not without making him feel shit for the majority of it.

He groaned as he sat up from his bed, best get up and see if Jon’s awake. He got ready for the day and left his sleeping quarters, stifling a yawn as he passed a few of his brothers.

*Not the brothers he’d like to be seeing right now.* He mused. He still couldn’t believe what Ned had done, what possessed him to do such a thing was beyond him. He wouldn’t believe it if it weren’t for all the mounting evidence that seemed to all but confirm what he’d done. The way he didn’t speak about their sister but talked about their brother had been the first red flag right away, Aemon’s evaluation and reaction had really blown air onto the embers and then the fucking dragon had all but lit that fucker up, a blazing inferno of truths and lies.

He couldn’t imagine how Jon’s night had been when he left him. The lad looked lost, betrayed, distraught and all in all, fed up with everything. When he’d broken down at the top of the wall, he’d become rightfully concerned, he’d never seen Jon cry, it was like he was letting out 17 years of pain.

*Jon wanted to hurt Ned and Benjen was inclined to join in with him.*

He shook his head as he headed for the common hall to break his fast, hopefully Jon was in there...
already. He’d have to check his room after he’d eaten if he wasn’t, he really didn’t want Jon to be alone right now. After last night, that wolfs blood of his, that he now knew he got from Lyanna, would probably get him or somebody else into trouble if the wrong thing was said.

He entered the common hall, it was full of boisterous talk and laughter but he ignored all that, he was looking for that head full of curls as he scanned the room.

“Lookin for someone eh?” Someone said to his left, Edd, one of his brothers he realised as approached the table he was sat at with a few other lads.

“Edd.” He nodded to dour man “Lads, hope you aren't talking nonsense again, I know what your like Grenn.” He said as one of the other brothers, Pypar, smiled and nudged Grenn in the arm. “Fuck off would ya.” Was Grenn’s reply to Pyp.

“You sitting?” Edd asked.

He waved his hand “Nah, just gonna grab something quick.” He said as he carried on scanning the room, Jon nowhere in sight.

“If you're looking for that lad you were with yesterday, he’s not here. We’ve been waiting to meet our new brother.” Edd said as he bit into some bread.

He looked back and shook his head “He’s not joining the watch, that’s my nephew. He’s just visiting his favourite uncle that’s all.” He explained.

Edd’s face scrunched up for a second then went straight back to his food “Shame, was hoping for somebody new and interesting to talk to instead of listening to these pair of pricks.” He said as Pyp stole a bit of Edd’s breakfast.

Before he could even open his mouth to reply the door to the common hall burst open, Satin entering the hall seemingly out of breath.

“Brother Benjen! Thank god.” He said as he caught his breath.
“Slow down son, too early to be running about like.” He said to the lad.

“Need your help, can't find the Lord Commander so you're the next best thing.” He said as his breathing finally evened out but the look of concern on his face was still there.

Now he was concerned.

“What's happened?” He asked as the table that had Edd, Grenn and Pyp all started to stand due to the commotion. Now everybody in the hall had gone quiet and was looking towards Satin.

“There's fighting in the yard...Jon’s there as well.” Satin said as a funny look took over the boy’s face.

He didn't even think, storming straight towards the door to make sure Jon wasn't in some sort of trouble. He wasn’t naïve, these were his brothers but most of them were here because they were criminals. Murderers and rapists shared these halls with him, men that had done unspeakable things, men who could be doing said things to his nephew right now.

The whole hall seemed to get up to their feet to follow him as he headed outside, the wall was a terribly boring place to live so any form of entertainment was like gold to these men.

He met the Lord Commander on the way to the yard, Satin had run off ahead and seemingly located the old bear.

“The fucks happening Stark? Satin said there was trouble in the yard.” He exclaimed as the pair of them walked through the hall to get outside, a lot of the brothers were already outside on the balconies watching whatever was going on when they arrived at the yard.

*Please don’t be involved Jon, please don’t be involved.* He thought.

He stopped dead and leant against the balcony railing.

Jon was involved...
...and he was in awe with what he was seeing.

*What the fuck?*

Karl and Rast, two of the biggest trouble makers in this entire castle were currently receiving a humbling experience from his nephew. The pair of them were attempting to strike Jon with the training swords in their hands and were failing miserably.

A man of Jon’s size and height did not have any right to be moving so quickly and fluidly, every movement was a correct prediction of the pair of twats attacks as Jon avoided a swing at his head and followed it up into a counter, gripping Rast’s arm, locking it behind his back and essentially using him as protection from Karl’s strikes.

*Wait?...Jon’s unarmed...they were attacking his unarmed nephew!* He had to stop this before something regrettable happened.

Before he could even say anything, Jeor opened his mouth “ENOUGH!” He bellowed out as Jon all but threw Rast into Karl, sending the pair of them into the dirt in a heap, spitting into the ground with a look of disgust on his face.

He followed Jeor down the stairs to the yard, “IT'S OVER, GET BACK TO YOUR DUTIES MEN!” The Lord Commander yelled out as the crowd dispersed in a cloud of chatter.

“And what the hell was all this in aid of?” He asked as they approached the three men. Jon looked Jeor right in his eyes with a cold look of indifference “Ask these cunts.” He said as he looked at the two idiots who were just collecting themselves off of the ground.

*So much for keeping that wolfs blood quiet.*

Jeor looked annoyed with the reply but still looked at the two brothers with a stern look “Well?” He asked.

Karl raised his chin with false confidence but it was Rast who opened his mouth “We were just sparring mi lord, wanted to see if he could fight for ourselves that’s all.” He said.
Jeor looked back at Jon “Is that true lad?” He asked as Jon glared at Karl and Rast.

_Fuck me, who taught him to glare at a man like that!?_ He thought.

Jon opened his mouth but the answer he wasn’t expecting came from it “Yeah, just sparring.” He said, still glaring at the pair. Karl looked affected but held his ground and Rast just straight up looked away.

“Just a word of advice for them though.” Jon said as he moved closer to them, looking down at Rast like he wanted to gut him. “The next time you try to intimidate me, I’ll use cold steel instead of my bare hands.” He finished as he walked away without another look back.

Jeor looked back at Karl and Rast “Put those swords away and get out of my sight, you’re on trench duty for the week.” He said as Rast looked stricken.

“Oh, what? That ain’t right.” He idiotically suggested.

The Lord Commander’s eyebrows rose at that “A month?” He asked.

Rast wisely shut up.

After they’d both put their swords away and fucked off, Jeor turned to him with a raised eyebrow.

“That was something wasn't it? Is he the son that went missing for a few years?” he asked as they both made their way out of the yard.

He nodded “Yeah that’s him. I’ve not gotten the entire story of where he’d been for so long but it's clear he wasn't wasting his time while he was there.” He said.

_He was unarmed and he looked dangerous, what the fuck is he like with a sword in his hand?_
“And your positive he’s not interested in joining us? A lad with his talents could really help get these wastes of space into shape. Probably give your old arse a run for your money.” Jeor japed as he nudged his shoulder.

He chuckled but quickly sobered “Nah, he doesn’t belong here, he’s got some things he needs to sort out before he makes any permanent life choices like joining the watch.” He said.

“Shame. The offer is there though, a young and clearly talented lad like him could be the revitalisation this place needs.” Jeor finished as he nodded to him before going his separate way.

Rotting away in this shit hole was the last thing that was on his nephew’s mind right now.

Speaking of Jon, he needed to find him and make sure he wasn’t getting into any more trouble.

Jon

The library of Castle Black was as dingy as he expected. Books, scrolls and thick leatherback tombs of ancient knowledge lined the walls of the room, the couple of candles he’d lit the only source of light and warmth as he sat on the rickety bench and read through one of the books he’d grabbed in haste.

A distraction to cool his temper.

His uncle had been right yesterday, the first thing he needed to do was keep a level head, and he was already failing at that.

He couldn’t have helped it though, those pair of idiots had brought it on themselves, a clear attempt at intimidating what they thought was the fresh new recruit at Castle Black.

The truth of it really was that he was in desperate need of a release and they’d just handed him an opportunity on a plate.

He shook his head as he attempted to immerse himself in the book in front of him, Etched in
Stone the spine read and it seemed to have something to do with axes.

This wasn’t working.

He sighed as he closed the book and moved it across the table away from him. He sat there in silence for a few minutes before resorting to just watching the flame on the candle slowly melt the wax. Looking into the flickering flame was surprisingly helpful at calming him, the random flicks of heat and the slow dripping candle a balm to his running mind.

Weren’t the Targaryens obsessed with this sort of stuff? He chuckled humourlessly.

Targaryen.

A foreign name to him even living in Winterfell all his life, a word not to be mentioned or at least not around him. Supposed it made sense with all things considered now.

Turned out he was one of them.

Or shared blood with them at least, he could be a Targaryen bastard for all he knew.

Did Lyanna and Rhaegar wed? He wondered.

He was broken from his thoughts as he heard footsteps and the rattle of chains coming from the stairs that lead into the library.

The man, who was clearly the old maester’s helper and Aemon himself came shuffling into the library, the servant whispering into Aemon’s ear as the old man’s face seemed to light up.

“Ah, young Jon, it’s such a delight to find you here.” Aemon said as he shuffled over to the table he was currently stood up at. He turned to his helper “You may leave me, I’d like a chat with Jon.” He said as the man bowed and left back up the stairs where they’d just come from.

He reached out and helped out Aemon, easing him into a chair “Thank you.” He said as Jon just
nodded “No problem.” He replied.

He returned to his seat and sat there for a few seconds in companionable silence before Aemon spoke up.

“I hear there was an incident in the yard earlier.” He said, a small smile on his aged face.

He sighed, he didn’t really want to get back into that “Nothing important, just a couple of idiots trying to start an argument, it's over now.” He replied.

“You never argue with an idiot, they’ll drag you down to their level and beat you through experience.” Aemon mused. He just chuckled, he might use that one himself.

“What had you worked up so much, son?” Aemon asked, incredibly perceptive for a man lacking sight.

He sighed, does he tell him? He might as well, the man probably hasn’t been with family for years and he already seems to suspect who he really was anyway.

“I got some news last night.” He said, resolved to the fact that he’d be talking about this again so soon. It was still raw to the touch and he hoped burying it for a few days would sort his fucked up head.

“I hope it was good news.” Aemon replied.

“I don’t know if it was or not.” He said “I had a little cry but they weren't tears of happiness.” He said as he cleared his throat.

“That's for you to decide.” Was all Aemon said.

He nodded to himself, he cried for the mother he’d never meet, he cried from relief of finding out her identity, he cried out of worry, of his siblings no longer seeing him as a brother anymore.
And he cried out in anger, of the lies and the betrayal of a man claiming to be his father.

“You have to take the positives and negatives out of this news, to decide for yourself if the overall changes are good or bad for you.” The old maester said.

He knew.

He swallowed the lump in his throat “You know don’t you maester?” He asked, already knowing the answer.

Aemon smiled softly “You may call me uncle.” He said. Jon dropped his head and looked at his lap to hold himself together.

“Uncle.” He rasped out as the old man’s smile became wobbly.

Aemon let out a joyous laugh as tears, of joy he hoped, slowly ran down his cheeks. “Can an old man like me get a hug from his blood.” he asked as Jon smiled and chuckled.

Maybe this won’t be as bad as he suspected, he’d just gained another uncle!

“Of course, uncle.” He replied as he got to his feet and walked over to Aemon. He helped him to his feet and brought him into a big hug. They must have hugged for what seemed like minutes.

That’s until there was a throat being cleared...

He turned towards the noise and saw his other uncle giving the pair of them a confused look, he was smiling however.

“What’s this then? I don’t get hugs like that Aemon and I’ve known you for years.” His uncle Benjen japed as he made his way to them.

“Ah brother Benjen, it’s not every day a dragon is spotted this far north.” Aemon said as he broke away from the embrace. It’s a good job as well or he’d have felt the shock go through his body,
being described as a dragon had well and truly caught him by surprise.

Benjen chuckled “I see you’ve told him about her then.” He said as all three took a seat. He looked at Benjen with wide eyes and shook his head.

“Her?” Aemon asked, brow furrowed.

He shook his head at Benjen who had the decency to wince and mouth ‘sorry’ at him “Erm yeah...” He chuckled “I would tell you sit down for this but you already are.” He said.

Aemon smiled at him “Have you wed Jon? Is that it?” He asked.

He snorted “No, not exactly. We’ve bonded though.” He said.

“Oh how lovely, what’s her name?” He asked, unaware of what he was walking into.

“Her name’s Kireina.” He answered. Uncle Benjen was smiling now.

Aemon smiled wistfully “Ah, a beautiful name, what is she like Jon?” he asked.

“Bloody massive.” He said as Benjen his snort with a cough and shook his head.

Aemon looked thoroughly confused “Massive? I’m...okay...” He drawled.

He decided to have mercy on him “Kireina isn't a person uncle Aemon, she’s...well she’s a dragon.” He finally answered, smile on his face as he waited for the man’s reaction.

A look of awe on the man’s face took over as he gasped, holding his chest as his breathing became heavier.

*Wait, shit.*
“Uncle Aemon! Are you okay!?” He asked as he got to his feet and crouched next to his uncle.

I hope I haven’t just killed my new uncle!

Thankfully, the man’s breathing evened out as he collected himself. Jon let out a sigh of relief as he looked over at Benjen, smile completely gone from before.

The smack around the head caught him completely of guard as Aemon clipped around the back of it.

“Are you trying to get rid of me so soon Jon?” He asked as Jon rubbed the back of his and sat back down.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to.” He said, genuinely remorseful for what he’d done.

“Did my ears deceive me or did you say, dragon?” Aemon asked.

“Yeah.”

“Hmm. I want to believe you Jon but...”

“He’s telling the truth Aemon, I saw her with my own eyes last night. I couldn’t believe it either until I saw her for myself.” His uncle Benjen intervened.

Aemon looked awe struck “Gods...” He seemed to say to himself as he leant back in his chair.

He needed to meet her, they both did. He had to make it happen somehow.

He cleared his throat “Erm...would you...would you like to meet her, both of you?” He asked as Benjen’s eyebrows shot up.
“I would be honoured.” Aemon breathed out.

“I...I don’t think...” Benjen murmured.

He shook his head to stop his uncle’s protests “It’ll be easy, a horse and carriage to get us a few miles out and a little white lie as to why uncle Aemon is with us will do the trick.” He said as he looked at Benjen. “We’ll say we’re helping him collect a specific plant or tree bark for research or something, it’ll be fine.” He explained.

“Do not deny this old man such a wonderful thing brother Benjen, we’ll go with or without but with you is preferable. We don’t want the brother’s thinking Jon here has stolen me.” Aemon chuckled as Benjen shook his head and smiled.

“Fine...” He said but pointed at him “...but if she eats me, I’ll haunt you forever.” He warned.

He shook his head “She’s a good girl, she won't do that, trust me.” He explained as he got to his feet.

Benjen looked shocked “What!? Now!? You want to go now!?” He said as Jon helped Aemon to his feet.

He chuckled “Of course...or are you too pussy uncle?” He asked as he gave Benjen a grin.

“Come along now brother Benjen, I’m not getting any younger and I want to meet a dragon before my time is over.” Aemon said as Jon helped him towards the stairs. “Stop being a big pussy and help an old man experience one of his dreams, chop chop.” Aemon finished as Jon just guffawed.

“Fine.” His uncle Benjen muttered under his breath as he got to his feet and helped him escort Aemon to the stables. Benjen shot away for a quick minute and came back with an armful of cloaks and furs.

“Don’t want you freezing to death before you get there, do we?” Benjen said as he helped Aemon into a big fur cloak and up onto the only carriage that seemed to be in the stables.
“Got yours out of your room as well, along with these.” He said as he handed his bear fur cloak and his swords to him “I let the Lord Commander know that we were heading out as well, he seemed to buy that white lie about bark you came up with.” He said.

Benjen nodded to katanas he was strapping to his back “Some fancy blades you got there, there’s a story behind them I’m sure.” Benjen fished.

He replied as he finished strapping them to his back “There is indeed, and I’ll tell you that story when we get back.” He answered.

Benjen looked at Aemon who was getting comfortable in his seat with a big grin on his face “Look at him...” He said to Jon as he nodded towards the old man “…like a pig in shit. Think you might be making his week doing this.” He said to Jon.

“More like the past 50 years brother Benjen.” Aemon responded from where he was sat. Benjen just shook his head and smiled.

“C’mon then, before we start losing light. Wanna be back before it gets dark.” Benjen said as they all got seated in the carriage and headed out of the castle.

The gate closed behind them as they made their way down the beaten path away from Castle Black, he looked behind them towards it and nudged Benjen in the arm “This’ll have em talking I bet.” He said as Benjen directed the horse on.

“Ah let em have their fun. Life as a brother can get terribly dull.” Benjen answered.

“Until you meet a dragon.” Uncle Aemon furthered as Jon chuckled at the child like glee on the old man’s face.

“You're really looking forward to this aren't ya?” He asked with a smile.

Aemon’s smile didn’t falter as he turned to him “You have no idea.” He replied.
They must have ridden for about half an hour before he sensed Kireina close.

“Could you land somewhere close Kireina, I’d like you to meet some of my family.” He asked her through their bond.

“Absolutely.” She replied. She sounded excited herself at the prospect.

“How much further do you want us to go?” His uncle Benjen asked.

“We can stop here, she’s close.” He replied as Benjen pulled on the reigns to halt the horse.

“You seem to have a deep connection with her.” Aemon said as they all disembarked from the carriage and slowly made their way off the road.

He held on to Aemon’s arm to keep him steady as they trudged through the snow and made their way towards a clearing where he knew Kireina was already waiting for them.

She seems very keen. He thought amusingly.

“Aye we do, at first I thought it was the old skinchanger blood from my Stark side but she explained to me through our bond that it was the valyrian blood as well. Blew my mind the first time I heard her in my head.” He explained.

“I can only imagine.” Aemon replied as Benjen chuckled.

He helped Aemon over a fallen trunk “We’re close.” He said to him as they climbed over what he hoped wasn’t something to do with Kireina.

“You insult me Jon, I've gotten a lot better since the forest.” She projected.

“I know you have, I apologise.” He replied.
“Seven hells...” His uncle whispered out from in front as he finally helped Aemon over the trunk. He turned around to see what had him cursing.

About a hundred feet away from them, Kireina was laid down with her tail curled around herself, wings tucked in and her eyes were eyeing his uncle Benjen with a burning intensity.

He ducked his head and smiled.

Benjen cleared his throat as he slowly stepped backwards “Jon?...” He whispered out. He chuckled at his uncle’s actions.

He completely understood his uncle’s trepidation, but it didn’t mean he didn't find it funny.

He looked at Aemon “We’re here uncle.” He said to him as the old man’s face lit up.

He escorted Aemon towards the bulk of impossible power, looking at Benjen’s frozen stance as he walked past him “It’s okay uncle Benjen, she won’t hurt you. She’s a good girl.” He said to his uncle who was in slack jawed awe.

He saw him visibly gulp but nod in response, moving closer to Jon than he really needed to be.

Kireina lifted her head into the air and seemed to nose the three of them from a distance.

“They smell like you.” She said to him.

“I imagine they do Kireina, their blood runs through me.” He replied.

“Yes, it does.” She answered with conviction as she lowered her head and looked at him intensely.

It would seem she’d made her mind up on the whole situation and he trusted her word over Lord Stark’s any day of the week now.
The meet and greet between her and his two uncles was brief but beautiful. Uncle Aemon had teared up as he stroked his hand down her snout and flank, whispering words of endearment and all round having the time of his life.

His uncle Benjen was a lot more skittish than Aemon to Jon’s amusement. He’d stroked her down her side and that was about it, he mainly stood awfully close to Jon and just stared at her.

Now they were heading back to Castle Black, Benjen had ripped off a piece of bark from the fallen trunk they’d climbed over to sell the fib he’d told Jeor. Aemon had climbed up into the carriage with the biggest smile he’d ever seen on him.

He was glad he could do that for him.

The journey back was swift and without incident, Aemon was talking about *Kireina* almost all the way back to his amusement.

“What about you uncle?” He said towards Benjen “What was your favourite part about meeting her?” He asked with a grin on his face.

“The part where I din’t piss me sen.” He replied, him and Aemon just chuckled at him.

They rolled into the courtyard of Castle Black with an hour or so of light left if the low hanging sun was anything to go by.

“Got what ya needed maester!?” The Lord Commander spoke as he made his way towards the three of them. He was currently helping Aemon out of the carriage.

“Most definitely, Lord Commander.” His uncle replied. Benjen joined them from retrieving the bark and handing the horse and carriage to the stable hand.

The old bear nodded as he looked at the three of them “Good.” Was all he said as he turned on his heel and made his way out of the yard.

Before he left however, he turned around “That reminds me...” He said as he walked back towards
them “A raven came, for you Jon.” He said as he pulled a small scroll from his sleeve. “From your brother Lord Robb, it would seem.” He finished as he handed him the scroll.

He looked at uncle Benjen in confusion as he opened it up, looking down at the note and scanning it answered his intrigue.

His brother was getting married very soon and he really wanted Jon to be there for it.

Apparently, Lord Karstark along with Lady Alys, Lord Harrion and a few other guests had turned up at Winterfell literally two days after Jon had left for Castle Black. Lady Stark was hell bent on having the wedding as soon as they came through the gates that very night but Robb wanted him there, Alys would also really appreciate his appearance as well after what he’d done for her and Harrion.

He handed the note to uncle Benjen as he furrowed his brow.

*Looks like I’ll be back in Winterfell a lot earlier than I wanted to be.* He mused.

Uncle Benjen looked back at him with an odd look, almost like he was asking if he’d be okay going back so soon.

He just shrugged his shoulders and gave him a sad grin.

Robb wanted him there at his wedding and nothing else mattered at the moment, he’d be damned if he ruined his brother’s wedding by making a scene with Lord Stark.

“Looks like a hot meal and an early night for me uncle, back on the road at the crack of dawn.” He said as they helped Aemon towards his quarters.

“You sure you’re gonna be alright?” He asked as they entered the maester’s quarter.

“He’s going to be fine. He’s going to be patient and level headed, and he’s going to come out of this an even better man than the one I met only yesterday.” Uncle Aemon said as he took his seat.
He felt infinite gratitude and respect for the man sat in front of him in that moment.

“Thank you, uncle.” He said as he squeezed the older man’s shoulder.

The rest of the night was spent chatting with Aemon and Benjen as they ate their supper and before he knew it, he was hugging the pair of them and heading for bed.

His night's sleep was a lot easier than the one he’d had the night before, regardless of the weird dream he had. A dream about blue eyed shadows following him through a forest as he tried to hunt his dinner.

He woke up before he got chance to encounter one of them so that was that.

He got washed and ready for his journey, packing his rations that he’d been given for it before heading out of his chamber and heading towards the common hall. A few brothers gave him a couple of looks but apart from that it was pretty uneventful as he grabbed a hard roll and a mug of ale.

He barely tasted his breakfast, thank god, and before he knew it, he was at the main gate to the castle, hugging both of his uncle’s goodbye.

He hugged Benjen first “Please don't do anything stupid Jon.” He said as he patted him on the back.

“I'll try uncle but I’m not promising anything. It'll depend on your brother won’t it?” He replied as he gave him a sad smile.

He hugged his uncle Aemon after that “I'll miss you. I've only just met you and I'm already saying goodbye.” He said as he broke from the embrace.

Aemon put his hands on his shoulders and looked at him “We’ll meet again sometime soon, whether it be in this life or the next.” He said. A sadness washed over him.

“Uncle...”
“She’ll be proud of you your mother, I know it. And so will your father, your real father when you meet him.” He whispered out as his eyes became hazy.

He sighed as he nodded, he looked down at the ground to avoid the looks from both his uncles.

_He was never comfortable in these types of situations._

Uncle Benjen patted him on the back “C’mon then, off with ya. You don’t want to be late to your brother's wedding, you’ll never hear the end of it.” He said as he smiled at him.

It still felt right Robb being referred to as his brother.

_Hope it’ll be mutual._

He nodded at them both as he headed out the main gate, the morning sun beaming over the snowy landscape in front of him looked stunning this far north.

The walk took him around an hour before he reunited with _Kireina_, he found her with blood around her mouth which he would later learn was due to her hunting whale off the eastern coast.

_Explained the smell as well._

“C’mon then, back to Winterfell we go.” He said to her before she took off with haste, southbound towards a place he both did and didn’t want to be heading to right now.

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**Robb**

*Two days later*...

Every passing hour that went by where his brother didn’t walk through those northern gates was
another pound of pressure added to him. He really wanted Jon to be here for his big day, the raven he’d sent to Castle Black nearly a week ago should’ve arrived there in only a few days.

And hopefully Jon had received it and was on his way back.

He sighed as he walked along the battlements that faced northbound, he’d been looking out for half an hour in the hopes of catching a glimpse of his brother.

He walked down stairs and headed across the yard towards the great hall. The guests that had arrived for the occasion were currently being feasted by his parents, in the hopes of keeping them distracted from the wait.

A wait his mother was pressuring him more and more to end.

He could understand why she wanted the wedding to happen now rather than later, the longer the guests waited, the more they ate into their reserves for the winter.

Winter is coming after all.

But he couldn’t help but be selfish, it wasn’t a crime for him to want Jon there and Alys really wanted him to be there as well.

The warmth and noise hit him as he opened the door to the great hall, Greatjon Umber’s bellowing laughter filling the room as he laughed at his son cough up his ale for whatever reason. The giant of a man and his son had turned up along with Lord Karstark’s retinue.

He reached the high table where his seat in between his father and his betrothed was currently stolen by Arya.

“Shift thee.” He said to her as she got to her feet and grumbled something.

He sat down in his seat and gave Alys’ hand a squeeze as she looked at him.
“Any sign of him son?” His father said to his right, the bruise around his eye had lost its black colour and currently had a sickly-looking yellow hue to it now.

*He knew there was more to it than him just walking into a cabinet, Jon’s abrupt departure just made him even more certain.* He thought.

He sighed as he shook his head “Nothing, starting to get dark out there as well.” He said.

“We can't wait forever for him Robb.” His mother said as she poked her head into the conversation.

“I know I know. Give him till tomorrow at the latest and if he’s not back then we’ll just have to proceed without him.” He said as he gave Alys a sad smile.

“By tomorrow lunch time at the latest, gives us enough time to prepare for the ceremony and feast later in the day.” His mother almost demanded as she returned back to her conversation with Sansa without a second look at him.

*C’mon Jon, don't let a brother down mate.*

The rest of the night went in a faze, the only thing he remembers was Arya throwing a spoon of mash at Smalljon’s face after he unwisely called her an ‘annoying little lady’ after she’d accidently knocked his drink out his hand.

Greatjon had laughed the loudest he had that night when all was said and done.

A few hours passed and he found himself tossing and turning in his bed in an attempt to get back to sleep, based on the little light that was coming through the window slats, it was way too early to be getting up.

*He’d be too tired to make it through the wedding night.*

He managed to get back to sleep as he thought of his future wife.
He woke up with a start a few hours later, the morning rays creating a glow around his window. His chamber door was currently being knocked on.

“C’mon Robb, it’s my son’s big day.” He heard his mother say from the other side of the door before she knocked again. He groaned as he rose from his bed.

The morning went in blur of movement and chatter around him, the whole castle seemed to be at work, servants heading in and out of the godswood where the ceremony would take place.

And before he knew it, it was lunch time.

And Jon was nowhere to be seen.

His disappointment was immeasurable.

He talked to no one as he ripped through his food, the only interaction being his father squeezing his shoulder in comfort.

“He’d have tried his best to get back in time son.” His father said. He didn’t say anything in return.

He needed to get out of this mood before tonight so he did what he always did when he was in a bad mood, he sparred.

With a dummy.

He must have hacked and slashed at that straw prick for nearly an hour, releasing all his pent-up anger and disappointment, leaving a fresh mind for when he said his vows and became a married man.

“That supposed to be me.” He heard a familiar voice say.

He turned around in a flash and saw Jon with a small grin on his face as he leant against a wall with his arms crossed.
“Bloody idiot...” He said as he chucked the blunt sword on the ground and pulled Jon into an embrace.

Jon chuckled “Not too late, am I?” He asked as they separated.

He shook his head “Just in the nick of time.” He replied. “When did you get back?” He asked with a smile on his face as he returned his training sword. They made their way back towards the main courtyard and away from the quiet corner he’d been stewing in.

“Just now, would have been earlier if it wasn’t for the mess at the gates.” Jon said.

He looked at him in confusion “Mess at the gates? Has something happened?” He asked.

Jon shook his head “Not really, guards wouldn’t open the gates for anybody. Not allowing anymore guests or something, I wasn’t listening properly. Ended up bored with the conversation and found a spot to scale up the wall to get in instead. Lord Stark will have to be warned that there’s cracks that can be used as footholds on the western wall, I could’ve been anybody.” He said.

“Don't tell Bran, he’ll have a field day climbing up and down that.” He japed, Jon smiled in return but it didn’t reach his eyes.

He furrowed his brow “You alright?” He asked.

Jon shook his head and smiled at him “Don't worry about me, I'm fine. You should be more worried about your wedding than my mug.” He answered as they walked towards his chambers.

He sighed “I’m not worried, I'm just nervous that’s all. I was rather upset when I found out you might not be here for the whole thing, hence the act you caught me in.” He replied.

Jon put his arm around his shoulder, he sometimes forgot who was the older brother between the two of them “Listen, you’ll be fine. You adore Alys, I've seen the way you look at her, and Alys tolerates you so your marriage won't be all that miserable...ahaha.” Jon said as Robb tried to get him in a headlock for that last comment.
He playfully shoved him away when he failed to get a hold of him, Jon turning around and walking backwards as he smiled towards him “C’mon, up your pace Robb. Gotta get you ready for your bride, wouldn’t want Alys marrying a stinky Stark...especially her second favourite of the Stark brothers.” He cheekily said.

*I'm gonna bollock him.* He thought amusingly as he caught up with Jon and thumped his arm.

He chuckled as he remembered something, something Sansa had told him “I think you’ll be too busy to be worrying about my wife, a little ginger birdie told me something the other day.” He said in a secretive tone.

Jon was still smiling but had a confused look on his face “Oh yeah, do tell.” He asked.

He gave Jon a wicked grin “Sansa told me that Jeyne likes you. Apparently, she thinks herself half in love with you and she’s already started coming up with ideas and designs for the dress.” He said, the last part about her being in love and designing a dress he lied about just to see his brother squirm.

Jon’s eyes went wide and his smile morphed into a cringe.

*Mission successful.*

“I've barely spoken two words to the girl!” Jon exclaimed as they finally made it to Robb’s room. He entered and Jon followed him inside.

He shrugged his shoulders at him “Don't shoot the messenger, probably those silky black curls on your bonce, or those thick eyelashes you like to bat at her.” He said. He was japing of course but he’d missed this type of thing with Jon.

Jon gave him a sly grin “Or maybe it has something to do with my looong, thiïck...”

“Don't finish that sentence.” He interrupted.
“...beard.” Jon finished as he smiled at him.

He shook his head as he grinned at him "Fuck off.” He muttered. Jon laughed at him before telling him he was gonna drop his stuff off in his chambers and get himself ready.

“I’ll see you later...brother.” Jon said before closing the door behind him.

That was hours ago, now he was stood in the godswood under the Winterfell’s heart tree. The cool evening breeze sending a refreshing chill up his back as he stood ramrod, waiting for his bride to enter the grove.

Everybody was in the grove to witness the ceremony, his father would be officiating the whole thing, his mother was stood with his siblings on one side with a smile on her face as she looked at him. Greatjon, his son Smalljon, Ser Rodrik, Jory, Theon and everybody else were stood on the other side, including Jon and Jeyne. The former rolling his eyes as he caught his gaze, Jeyne wasn’t being subtle with how close she was standing next to Jon.

Robb grinned and looked at the ground.

He heard someone clear their throat, he turned and saw that his mother didn’t look impressed at all as she sneaked a look at Jon.

*She couldn’t take a break from it for one day, even on his wedding day.*

Before anything could be said, his father cleared his throat and nodded towards the entrance to the godswood.

His breath caught as he saw his future wife.

She looked beautiful in her white gown, a light grey pelt laid across her shoulders and a marriage cloak in the colours of her house hanging across her back. Her father was escorting her towards them.

A smile bloomed on his face as he realised she would be his wife very soon.
In no time at all, the vows were taken and sealed with a kiss. The people in attendance cheered and congratulated the newlyweds as the whole procession made their way towards the great hall for the feast.

On the way there he caught a glance of his father trying to talk to Jon as they walked, surprisingly his brother completely blanked him as he took Jeyne’s arm and escorted her away from their father. A huge blush emerged on the girls face whilst his father looked troubled.

*At least there was no heated words between them, he wouldn’t forgive them for causing a scene.*

The feast went without a hitch, he spent the majority of it holding hands with his wife, chatting away blissfully whilst giving each other shy smiles. They both knew what was to happen later tonight and their nerves seemed to show within those smiles.

The dancing was interesting as well, he had the first dance with Alys and didn’t step on her toes once. Afterwards, he passed her off to her brother and went to sit down. He noticed Jon finishing his dance with Arya before being dragged into another dance by a rather tipsy looking Jeyne. The tight smile on Jon’s face was priceless as he danced with her, clear discomfort to anybody who knew him properly.

After all the dancing was done (Sansa must have danced the most by his accounts), the bedding ceremony was called for as Greatjon Umber bellowed out the request.

There were a few men trying to paw off his wife's dress off as she was lifted in the air. Thankfully, his brother was there to send a few elbows into their ribs to cease their bawdy actions.

He himself was escorted to their chambers, a few giggling girls pulling fabric and copping a feel as they moved through the castle.

He was pushed into the chambers by the women, Arya had managed to sneak into the group of girls and ended up kicking him up the arse, sending him barrelling into the room. He could hear her laughter as he closed the door behind him.

He turned around and looked at his wife, she was stood there at the end of the bed in her ivory shift and her white wool stockings. She blushed and looked down when she saw the heated look he was giving her.
He gulped as his breeches became tighter.

She turned around and crawled up the bed towards the head board, giving him a view that left little to the imagination.

His breeches were off in a flash.

She laid back against the pillows and looked at him, she looked excited but still a little nervous as she looked down at his tenting smallclothes and bit her bottom lip.

*She’s trying to kill him.*

She slowly looked back up to his face and locked eyes with him “Come to bed my love.” She whispered out.

Robb had never moved so fast in his life.

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter ~ January 25th
Ned

The sound of the arrow whistled through the air as it hit the straw target, an elated Bran cheered as he hit the bullseye of it. He watched from the balcony above as Robb and Theon gave the young boy a few tips for his next shot.

He blinked as the next shot came, the ache in his right eye had almost subsided from his fading black eye, this shot came from a different source this time. The boys turned around to see a grinning Arya with a bow in her hands, she bowed extravagantly when they saw her.

So she wasn’t with Jon then. He mused.

It’d been a week since Jon had returned from Castle Black and a week of silence from the lad whenever he tried to strike up a conversation with him.

He expected them to start off from where they left off but the silence and the ignoring somewhat baffled him.

It was odd, almost as if something had happened at Castle Black.

He didn’t like how unsettling it was.

Especially the glares from him. Whenever he caught Jon in the hall or in the yard looking at him it was honestly one of the most unnerving things he’d ever experienced.

He’d just stare at him, unblinking with an intensity that belonged on a battlefield and not in a home.

Ned always looked away first.
He sighed, sooner or later something would happen, it was like they were drifting down a river in separate boats, staring at each other, but sooner or later, the river would end and the waterfall would take them.

*It was an inevitability.*

Catelyn had also voiced her opinion once again when she realised her hope of him staying up at Castle Black were in vain.

She wanted him out, she’d had enough. She believed Jon had spent enough time visiting his family and it was now time for him to leave. She’d made the argument that he was just disrupting the household at this point, Arya had become even more stubborn and distracted in lessons and Cat believed it was Jon’s influence on her that was affecting her learning.

She’d also reminded him that Jon could clearly take care of himself and didn’t need babying anymore from him.

*He hated that nearly everything that she said had merit.*

All he told her was that he would think of something, and he had been. Jon ignoring him had been horrible but it had also given him the chance to think about the lad’s future.

Legitimising him so he could rule one of the many abandoned keeps in the north was out of the question, Catelyn and her side of the family would flat out refuse that idea and the less he had to deal with the crown the better.

Castle Black also seemed out of the picture as well. It was Cat’s preferable choice but at the end of the day it wasn’t her choice, it was Jon’s. Something the lad didn’t seem too bothered about.

He really didn’t have the heart to force him either. Though he doubted anybody could force Jon to do anything anymore.

*It unfortunately reminded him of someone.*
One of the better ideas was to ask one of his lords if they would take him on as a guard or something, maybe a master at arms somewhere. He’d not seen much of Jon’s skills since he’d returned since he seems to practice somewhere in the wolfswood but he believed he was still very capable.

His first choice would be White Harbour with Lord Manderly, he would have to suggest it to the man when all the lords met up and journeyed to this bloody tournament.

Another headache for him to get through.

He really couldn’t refuse the invitation when it came from the King himself but my god did he want to. It was more trouble than it was worth and brought back memories he wished he could bury and forget forever.

He only hopes that Jon has as little interest in tournaments than he did. The further away he was from that the better.

Everybody from the household was going, apart from Robb and his new wife. It was his own suggestion, apparently it would be good practice for when he eventually took his father’s spot. He was impressed with his son’s decision and told him that as well.

Theon was asked by Robb if he wanted to stay with him and Alys but had just scoffed and said he wouldn’t be missing this for the world. He also made a comment about meeting a dornish woman there for himself but he walked away from that conversation before he hit the lad.

Sansa, Arya, Bran and Rickon were also very excited for the tournament, Sansa had in fact, started packing her things weeks in advance. Arya wanted to enter the archery contest, Bran wanted to watch all the knights in the big melee that was planned and Rickon just seemed to feed off everybody else’s excitement, he wasn’t sure if the little lad knew what was even happening.

He wasn’t sure what Jon felt, he’d have to be talking to him to know that.

All of a sudden, Jory came running up the stairs of the balcony and addressed him “Lord Stark...” The man breathed out “...they’ve caught a deserter from the Night’s Watch, my lord.” He said, the rest going unsaid.
Duty calls. He thought grimly.

He turned to Jory “Round up the boys, that includes Theon and tell them to wait at the stables. Leave out Rickon, he’s too young at the moment to see this. I’ll get Ser Rodrik and let Lady Stark know there’s to be an execution.” He said as Jory nodded his head and shot off.

Before he went to carry out his tasks, he noticed Jon in the distance, emerge from the crypts with a weird look on his face.

*What the fuck is that?! Why does he look like that?!* He frantically thought.

He took a deep breath, there was no need to be panicking and there was no need to be paranoid.

*He didn’t know.*

And anyway, he could have been down there for the peace and quiet for all he knew.

He approached a quick moving Jon before he could disappear for the rest of the day.

“Jon!” He shouted. Jon stopped walking with his back to him and if the rise and fall of his shoulders was anything to go on, he’d just taken a deep breath.

*At least he’s staying calm and not swinging for him anymore.*

He turned around with raised eyebrows, nostrils flaring. He looked at him with that intensity again and seemed to ask him ‘what?’ with his gestures alone.

He cleared his throat “What er...what were you doing in there?” He asked as he nodded his head towards the entrance to the crypts.

Jon didn’t answer.
This was getting a little old “Will you at least answer me? This whole silent treatment is getting a little childish now, you’re a man grown for crying out loud.” He said.

He could literally see Jon grind his teeth before turning his back on him and walking off.

“Jon, listen.” He said as he grabbed hold of his arm to halt his escape. Jon looked at it like it was something he’d stepped in before locking eyes with him.

He restrained from gulping.

Jon shrugged his arm off but before he could leave, Ned told him about the deserter “Jory is rounding up all your brothers at the stables, they’ve caught a deserter of the Night’s Watch and we’re all going to the execution, you too please.” He said. He shouldn’t have to be asking please but it was just easier at this point.

He was putting his foot in it every time he tried to speak to him.

Jon looked at him and with one final look he said “Fine.” before walking off towards the stables without a single look back.

He released the breath he didn’t know he was holding.

He’d finally said something to him, that was progression in his eyes.

He quickly visited Catelyn to tell her about the execution, she was a little upset that Bran was going with them but he told her that he was old enough and that was the end of that.

Now he was walking towards the stables, he seemed to be the last one to arrive as everybody was sat mounted on horses waiting for him. Robb and Theon were talking with each other and Jon was having a conversation with Bran.

“They're waiting for us with the deserter at the hill Lord Stark.” Jory shouted out, he nodded his head at him and quickly mounted his horse. The hill was the same hill that all his executions were held at.
He looked around at everybody “C’mon then, the faster this is done the better.” He said as he led the way out of the castle and towards the location the execution would take place.

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**Arya**

*Gods* it was so unfair.

*Why couldn’t she go with her brothers? Being a girl was a silly excuse, she was older than Bran for crying out loud!*

She huffed as she pulled at her stitching, once again she’d messed it up and had to start again.

*Like always.*

She looked up at her stitching and noticed the septa commenting on somebody’s work. The old bat had practically dragged her into this lesson on her mother’s instruction and she hated every second of it.

*I will never do this outside this room.* She mused. In her eyes, this was a colossal waste of time, time that could have been spent with her brothers at the execution.

“Oh dear.” She heard septa Mordane say as she looked at what was in Arya’s hands.

*Here we go...*

“And what has happened here?” The septa asked as everybody looked in her direction.

She shrugged her shoulders as she attempted to fix her mess “I made a mistake so I had to start again.” She answered. The truth, what she should be saying because it was wrong to lie according to septa Mordane’s teachings.
It didn’t make a difference, it never did when she was involved.

“Well if you’d listened to my teachings you wouldn't be making so many mistakes would you Lady Arya.” Her septa said in that annoying, know it all tone.

She just rolled her eyes, she couldn’t be arsed to fight with her at the moment.

“...well if you talk to him you might find out.” She heard Sansa whisper across from her. Jeyne sat next to her had obviously said something.

“I would but I rarely see him anymore, he seems to disappear a lot.” Jeyne replied as she stitched what looked like a black wolf.

Sansa rolled her eyes “When did you last speak with him?” She asked her. Arya was confused with what they were talking about.

Jeyne looked down “The wedding.” She seemed to mutter.

Sansa looked surprised “That was a week ago, you’ve seen him in the great hall during mealtimes since then surely?” She asked.

“Yeah but he’s always got this look on his face when I see him, he looks at Lord Stark funny and I’m scared of talking to him.” She replied with a blush.

Sansa rolled her eyes yet again as she stitched a perfect little winter rose on the corner of a handkerchief “He’ll be just brooding, Jon’s always been like, even before he left.” She replied.

“Jon?!” She blurted out before thinking. Why was Jeyne talking about Jon? She never bothered before.

“Arya!” Septa Mordane shouted “Stop disrupting the lesson.” She said. She just scoffed in response and carried on speaking “Why are you talking about Jon?” She asked Jeyne.
She got no response out of Jeyne, she was rather interested in her stitching at that very moment, so she looked at Sansa with a quirked eyebrow.

Sansa shook her head but she could have sworn she saw a tiny grin on her face “Don't look at me Arya, you should ask her.” She said as she nudged Jeyne’s arm with her own.

She looked back at Jeyne “Well?” She asked.

Jeyne made a funny face as she shook her head “I have no idea what you're talking about Lady Arya.” She replied.

Sansa scoffed and looked up from her stitching and looked at her “Jeyne has a crush on Jon.” She said.

“Sansa!” Jeyne exclaimed, she looked betrayed which made Arya smile in victory until she realised what Sansa had just said.

*She has a crush on Jon?*

She guffawed at that “That's stupid, you're too boring, I doubt Jon is interested.” She said as she smiled and looked back down at the mess in her hands.

Sansa gasped “Arya! Don’t be rude to Jeyne.” She exclaimed. Arya looked up and saw Jeyne was looking down at her stitching again, she looked unbothered apart from her shiny eyes.

*Is she gonna bloody cry?!*

She shook her head “Seven hells...” She muttered to herself. Before anybody else could speak, septa Mordane intervened.

“Enough of this...” She looked at Arya “...you shouldn’t be trying to start arguments little lady, and you two...” She said as she looked at Sansa and Jeyne “...you two shouldn’t be gossiping about that...boy.” She finished as she huffed.
That boy. It was never Jon or her brother when septa Mordane was involved. All because he was a bastard, because she believed it made him less of a person.

He was worth at least ten septa Mordanes.

She gave her the stink eye for the remainder of the lesson and she’d resorted to making the biggest mess of her stitching, just to piss the old bag off.

She heard shouting coming from outside so she dropped her stitching on her chair and raced towards the window to see what was happening.

“Lady Arya, sit back down!” She vaguely heard the septa moan from behind her but she wasn’t taking any notice. Her father and her brothers were back from the execution.

“She’s back!” She said, mainly towards Sansa who looked at the septa for permission to leave. Arya didn’t find out her answer since she was out of the room before she answered.

She bolted down the hallway, narrowly avoiding a collision with a guard and entered the courtyard where everybody was dismounting from their horses.

“Arya look!” She heard Bran shout as he rushed towards her, holding a bundle of fur in his arms.

She looked at it in confusion until the fur yawned.

Her eyes went wide “Is that a wolf?” She asked, staring at the little grey and brown furred creature.

He shook his head but was still beaming “No, even better. It’s a direwolf.” He almost whispered.

A direwolf, wow.

She was officially jealous.
Bran must have seen a look on her face as he opened his mouth again. “There’s one for all of us, Arya, this one is mine.” He said as he hugged his direwolf.

Now she was smiling, her very own direwolf. She couldn’t wait to see it.

Bran looked behind him towards the rest of the group. “Robb has his and a boy one for Rickon with him and Jon has his and two girls with him, one each for you and Sansa.” Bran explained.

Now she was really smiling, they all had one, even Jon!

She rushed across to Jon and instantly saw the little white pup peeking out of a pocket on the side of his gambeson, it looked at her with piercing red eyes.

She looked away from the pup and noticed that Jon was smiling at her as he walked across to her. He held both of the girl pups in his hands and held out the light grey and white one in his right hand towards her.

“I think somebody wants to say hello.” He said with a smile as she carefully grabbed hold of the little wolf and immediately hugged her to her chest.

She was already in love with the little thing.

Her father walked up to the pair of them and looked at her. Jon moved away from the two of them and headed towards Sansa who had just entered the courtyard.

“I’ll tell you what I told the boys, you will train them yourselves, you will feed them yourselves, and if they die, you will bury them yourselves. Do you understand?” He said with his father voice. She just nodded and hugged her wolf a bit more.

He nodded “Good. I best go and tell your mother, I imagine that’ll go down well.” He japed as he smiled at her before moving towards the great keep.
She looked down at her new friend as the little wolf started squirming and yipping in her arms.

“You need a name.” She whispered to the wolf. Names running through her mind as she made her way to the kitchens.

A giant smile on her face.

Rhaegar

He sighed as he leant back in his high back chair, he looked over his council in consideration as they all waited for his answer.

He nodded “Finish the project.” He answered. “Put the funds for it to the side Lord Baelish.” He finished as his master of coin slowly bowed his head and penned the changes in his notes.

It was nearly finished, the stench of the city that had been a staple of the capital was almost non-existent at this point but with the extra drainage it would be reduced to nothing.

“Anything I should know my lords.” He said as he eyed the rest of his council.

Lord Varys bowed his head and spoke “Good tidings your grace, my little birds bring good news.” The master of whispers said. He nodded his head for the man to continue.

“It would seem the trouble that was widespread through the free cities has come to a close. The Golden Company have ceased their warpath and seemed to have gone quiet your grace.” He explained.

Rhaegar nodded, trade to and from the free cities had slowed down to almost a stand still ever since the mercenary group started their unexplained conquest of them. The cause of which was still a mystery.

“Has there been any word of what caused all of this? They’ve been at it for a long time with no explanation at all.” He asked.
Lord Varys shook his head “I’m afraid not your grace, some of my little birds sing that they were seeking something and some of them sing that they were merely under contract by an unknown benefactor.” Varys answered.

He sighed “Try and find out Lord Varys, the sooner we get to the bottom of it the better.” He said as the master of whispers bowed his head.

“Any more news Lord Varys or is that all?” He asked, looking out the corner of his left eye he could see Pycelle nodding off.

*A new grand maester should probably be on the agenda pretty soon.* He thought.

“As a matter of fact, there has been a small song that has reached my ears your grace, from the north of all places.” Varys said in his typical riddle talk.

He swallowed a little, he only ever associated the north with one thing and he really didn’t want to dwell on that in the middle of a council meeting.

“Go ahead Lord Varys.” He said as he gestured for the man to proceed.

“It would seem Lord Stark’s son, Lord Robb has wed Lady Alys Karstark, nothing terribly exciting your grace. It would also seem that Lord Stark’s bastard son has returned home as well.” He said.

“Oh, well that is good news I suppose. I imagine Lord Stark is relieved.” he answered. “If that is all I think we can bring this meeting to a close my lords, the grand maester looks like he might pass out if it goes on any longer.” He japed as the man himself seemed to sit up and bumble with his words.

He held his hand up before the old man could speak “Save it for another time grand maester, this meeting is over.” He declared as he stood, the rest of the council rising after him and bowing their heads as he made his way out of the room, Ser Gerold following him out.

He turned to Ser Gerold as they walked down the corridors of the Red Keep “The Queen is in her chambers yes?” He asked.
The knight nodded “Yes your grace, Ser Oswell and Ser Jonothor should be assisting her with the preparations.” He replied.

He nodded and carried on towards her chambers. He’d asked her if she would help prepare the family for the eventual journey to Harrenhal, new clothes were the main thing on the agenda.

All of the preparations at Harrenhal had been completed in time for the tournament in two weeks, it was agreed in advance that the Hand of the King, along with Lord Varys, Lord Baelish and Pycelle would stay behind in the capital to keep it running while the entire Royal family made a collective showing at this statement of a celebration.

A family united.

A united Royal family was a strong message to any would be usurpers.

He nodded to the guard at the Queen’s chamber door and entered.

Jon

He was laid on his bed, ready to get to sleep as he looked down at his chest at the small ball of fur yawning at him.

He reactively smiled at his little action.

He also realised that that was the first noise he’d heard from the white pup.

He moved one of his arms from behind his head where he’d been resting them and stroked his little friend, the pup falling on his side and attempting to nip his thumb playfully.

“I'm not playing with you ya little trouble maker, it's time for sleep.” He whispered to the pup as it stopped chewing on his thumb and stared at him with intelligent eyes.
Eyes like rubies he had.

He shook his head, he couldn’t keep referring to the wolf as ‘him’, he needed a name.

He moved the pup off of him and onto the bed next to him, the fluffball circled the furs under his little paws before curling up and shutting his eyes.

He himself blew out the last lit candle in the room and closed his eyes, a deep sleep grasping at his mind almost instantly.

He walked out of the great keep and into the courtyard, the night sky shrouded the whole place in darkness. The only source of light was the full moon beaming down, creating a morphed shadow in front of him.

He looked around in the hopes of catching sight of a familiar face but the yard was deserted, not a soul in sight. The silence was complete, even the breeze in his ear was devoid of sound.

All of a sudden, he heard the scrape of wood and the squeak of a door hinge, to his left he could see the door to the crypts slowly moving on its hinges as it swayed in the breeze.

Why he thought it was a good idea to approach it he didn’t know, but he was too intrigued to ignore the chill that went up his back when he glanced at it.

The door itself was cold to the touch as he pushed his palm against and entered inside, a dull glow lit up the staircase down but no torches that he could see were lit.

The lower he went as he descended the stone steps the colder it got, his warm breath plumed from his mouth like a winter flame.

The glow was explained as he reached the bottom of the stairs, a single lit torch lit at the other end of the tunnel, like a beacon. He walked towards it like a moth to a flame.
Down here he could hear his footsteps echo throughout the length of the tunnel, the echo was muffled however, like his ears were full of water.

The winter flame his warm breath produced thickened as he walked along, the further he went the thicker it got. His breathing became harder as the winter flame darkened, taking on the appearance of smoke.

It was more than an appearance, it was actually smoke. Thick, ashy smoke filled his lungs as he choked and coughed. He fell to his hands and knees as he wheezed, tears streaming from his eyes as he struggled to recover.

He froze as a hand slapped him on the back repeatedly, running it in soothing circles that cleared his lungs but set his heart racing.

His head snapped around to see who or what had equally helped and distressed his entire being.

Nothing.

Nothing but darkness.

...What?

He slowly turned his head back around and noticed the lit torch again. Rising to his feet, he walked on, approaching the fire, attempted to reach the light.

...But it wasn’t working.

The faster he walked, the further away the fire seemed. He picked up his feet and jogged, the light grew smaller. He set off sprinting and within a flash, the crypts were shrouded in darkness.

He spun around on the spot looking for the torch but saw nothing, it was like his eyes were closed. Not even the stairs he come from could be seen anymore.
“This is your fault...” He heard behind him. He spun around in the direction it came from.

Nothing.

“This is your fault...” A different voice whispered behind him. He turned and looked towards it.

Again, nothing.

“This is your fault...” A third voice spoke, a strong voice, it cracked the air around his ears.

The chill it sent down his spine burnt and seared all the way up to the back of his head.

He could hear his pulse in his ears.

“This is all your fault...” The first two voices spoke, they were close now. He spun around in their direction.

Two figures, two grey figures.

...Ghosts?

He opened his mouth “What...”

“This is all your fault...” The figures spoke again, two ghostly figures staring him down. One looked older than the other.

What was his fault?

Before he could ask, the two figures disappeared in front of his very eyes, a white mist left in their wake. The white mist didn’t disperse, it grew in quantity and thickness.
It circled him like a pack of hungry wolves, surrounding the crypts like a winter tomb.

A crackle and a hiss filled his ears, filling his mind with an unbearable pressure. He turned around to find a way out, he wanted out now.

He knew this was a dream, he knew this wasn’t real, but it still didn’t reassure him as he scrambled forward in the hopes of escaping this torment.

“This is all your fault...” The third and final voice whispered into his ear, a venomous creaking like a frozen pond cracking, its tone was obvious.

Pure hatred.

He slowly turned around to see what had uttered the words into his soul. He sucked in a hurried breath as he came nose to nose with something he could only describe as maleficent.

Unblinking sapphire eyes stared right back at him but there was nothing beautiful about them.

They looked almost demonic, the pupil a pit of darkness and fury, black tendrils broke away like an oozing poison, swimming and corrupting.

“This is all your fault...” The demon spoke again, repeating the same five words like a mantra. The protruding bone from its scalp circling its head like a crown of death.

“What is?” He replied, the belief that this wasn't real, that this was just a night terror fortified him, small drops of confidence trickled into his soul as he stood up straight and looked this...this thing right in the eye.

Its face was a blank as it replied “This is all your fault...” It repeated, this time it held its arm out to the side as a sharp length of mist and ice formed in its hand, the same type of ice that was slowly crawling up his back again.
He shrugged his shoulders in a false show of confidence, this wasn’t real, strike me all you want, it won’t do anything.

He cried out in pain as the spear of ice was thrust into his ribs, he could feel and even hear the bone creak and crack as the ice was twisted and deepened.

At this point he just wanted to wake up.

The ice crept ever so slowly, moving towards his chest and towards his heart. The pain was excruciating, his hand sizzled when he tried to grab hold of his adversaries’ arm, jolting his body and driving the spear closer to his heart.

He could feel the blood around it thickening, freezing in place.

WHY WASN’T HE WAKING UP?!

He shook his head at the demon as he felt the fight in him trickle away, the spear was now resting against his pumping heart. He felt it slow down as he stared death right in the eye with the little energy he had left.

“You...you’re...not...real...” He wheezed out, gritting his teeth when the spear applied pressure to his organ. “None...of...” He struggled to say the words “None...of this...real...” He shook his head “You’re...gho...you’re just...ghost.” He finished.

He screamed out as the spear was ripped from him, he dropped to his hands and knees as his blood pooled around him.

He lifted on to his knees as the spear lifted him up by his chin, pointing his face at his end.

“You’re...just...a ghost...” He said, mainly to himself “Your...ghost...” He whispered out. His eyes went wide as the demon lifted the spear in both hands and pointed it right at his heart.

“Ghost...” A sneer formed on the face of death “Ghost...” He repeated to himself, he was sure of it. The spear was pulled back from his chest as the demon thrusted it into his heart...
His eyes shot open, moisture escaped them and ran down his face. His breathing was erratic and his heart was thumping hard in his chest.

*At least it was thumping.*

His eyes caught the movement on his chest, the small wolf pup was staring at him intently, his scarlet eyes full of emotion.

He controlled his breathing the best as he could at the time as he placed a hand on the wolf's head and gave it a little rub.

His presence calmed him.

“I'm okay boy, just a bad dream.” He said. “…definitely a ghost.” He came to conclusion of, the last word he said making the pups ears twitch and his head angle in intrigue.

He looked back at wolf “What's that? Do ya like that word? Ghost.” He said as the pups head turned again in interest.

He chuckled “Should call you that from now on, you're as quiet as one and you have the colouring.” He said. The furball walking up his chest, pawing and licking his face subsequently bringing a smile to his face.

“Get off me you little idiot.” He laughed as he picked the pup, seemingly now named ‘Ghost’ off his face and to his side, wiping his face of the slobber that had been left there by the beast.

His breathing and heart rate had finally calmed down as he laid back down in his bed and sighed. He looked to his left and saw that Ghost was already curled up in a ball, lightly snoring. He shook his head and smiled.
He closed his eyes in the hopes of getting back to sleep and avoiding whatever the fuck that was before.

He slowly opened his eyes, the castle was up and awake, going on their way with their duties. He lifted his arms above his head and stretched, letting out a moan that morphed into god knows what when he yawned. He let his arms fall to his sides after.

He looked to his left when he felt his thumb being nibbled, Ghost seemingly awake as well. He let him have his fun for now but that was a habit he’d have to get out of him quick time.

He laid there and went over his agenda for the day, the castle was preparing for the departure of the Starks minus Robb and Aly. He’d almost forgot about the tourney that Clarissa had mentioned before, he had a lot on his mind right now so he had an excuse.

Robb had reminded him about it though and he would have taken the offer of staying behind with him to help out but he just couldn’t, not when he found out that the Royal family would be there, all of them in fact.

_His family._

Lord Stark had overheard him and Robb talking about the whole thing last night at supper and to nobody’s surprise agreed with Robb’s idea of him staying behind and helping out. It had nothing to do with him potentially coming face to face with the other half of his family.

_There was no potentially about it._

_It was going to happen and there was fuck all Eddard Stark could do about it._

He’d turned towards Lord Stark when he’d decided otherwise with Robb’s plan, plastered on a smile and said ‘I’ve always wanted to go to a tourney, should be fun.’ Whilst intently looking into the older man’s eyes. He noticed the twitches he’d missed when he didn’t know the man’s dirty little secret.

He thought about that secret now, the 17 year torment at the hands of that man. He’d already come to
the conclusion that Uncle Benjen and Uncle Aemon’s advice about keeping a level head was the best course of action.

*But they said nothing about him having a bit of fun with it.*

*See how he likes being tormented.*

He was gonna make Lord Stark sweat, drop hints and sentences here and there that to anybody else sounded normal, but froze the blood of Ned Stark.

It wasn’t a matter of if, it was a matter of when...

When would Lord Eddard Stark crack. He’d survived for 17 years but that was with the upper hand, the secret kept just that.

Uncle Benjen and Uncle Aemon had smashed that advantage to bits, leaving nothing left but a circling Jon.

He sat up and rose from his bed, Ghost rolling about in the mess of furs that were left in his wake and leaving little white hairs everywhere.

He looked across the room at his bags that he’d packed last night, they weren't leaving till tomorrow morning but it didn’t hurt to be prepared early, he was eager and who could blame him.

*He’s always wanted to go to a tourney.*

The other bag that was packed that contained the two swords was also going south with him as well. If all the important lords were gonna be at this thing then it was the best place to hand these heirlooms over to their respective owners.

He wasn’t gonna lie, he was kind of excited to meet the mighty Tywin Lannister. All around westeros the man had a reputation, a man it was unwise to get on the wrong side of. He had the advantage of hearing about him more personally, the Warden of the West’s brother more than
happy to divulge details on a man who had a face like a slapped arse, according to Gerion.

He smiled longingly, he wanted to see his friend again soon. The only thing that put him off about it was the journey, both him and Kireina had hated the whole thing.

*One day. He had a lot on his plate right now.*

He heard Ghost whine from behind him, he turned around and looked at the pup.

“C’mon then, let's get you outside so you can do your business.” He said as he quickly got dressed and picked up the pup.

The courtyard was hectic but nobody batted an eyelid in his direction as he headed for the godswood, the grove itself was quiet apart from one man running a whetstone down the length of his sword. The last person he wanted to see right now.

The man looked up from what he was doing as Jon placed Ghost on the ground, rustling some leaves in the progress. The small pup sniffed about before choosing a suitable place to piss before kicking the grass underneath him.

He smiled at Ghost when he looked back up at Jon with his tail wagging, his face screamed *‘I’m done, now feed me.’*

He turned back around to head out the godswood, absolutely no interest in talking to Lord Stark but he obviously didn’t share his feelings.

“Jon!” Lord Stark shouted.

He counted to 3 before turning around. He’d gotten bored of the silent treatment he’d been bestowing on him but it didn’t mean he’d stop making this hard for Lord Stark.

“Yes?” He replied.
He had the audacity to pat the space on log next to him where he was sat. Jon looked at him with a raised eyebrow.

“Do I look like a dog? If so, try whistling, it might help me remember my place.” He said.

Ned sighed “Just sit...”

He raised his eyebrow at that, Ned nodded his head “Can you sit down next to me, please?” He asked. Jon just nodded at him.

They both sat there for at least a minute before Lord Stark opened his mouth “He been much trouble?” He asked as he nodded towards Ghost who was staring at his reflection in the small pond next to them.

*He sat me down for small talk?*

He sighed but shook his head “He’s been good as gold, been a good boy haven't you?” He said, the last part aimed at Ghost who dipped his nose in the pool and bolted away from it like he’d been stung.

He chuckled at his little friend.

So did Lord Stark to his annoyance.

“Rickon’s has already gotten him in trouble with his mother, feeding him at the table during breakfast.” He chuckled.

“Hilarious.” He dryly replied, Ned just sighed.

He went quiet again until Jon caught him staring at him almost remorsefully. “What?” He asked him, curtly.

Ned shook his head and looked forward, he took a deep breath “Catelyn wants you gone.” He said
as he looked at the ground, completely avoiding eye contact with him.


“Jon...” He said, he would have been scared of that warning tone years ago but the effect of it had been well and truly pissed up the wall when he left all those years ago, even more so when he had the biggest piece of dirt on the man.

“I can respect that she is the Lady of Winterfell but I haven't done anything to her since I returned, I've barely batted an eyelid in her direction.” He said as Ghost slowly walked up to him and licked his hand. He stroked his hand through his fur in thanks.

Ned sighed again “She thinks that you're being an unnecessary distraction and influence on the little ones, mainly to Arya and her lessons.” He explained.

He carried on before Jon could even reply “Don't think we are chucking you out and expecting you to just fend for yourself, even though we know you can.” He attempted to jape, Jon hadn't found anything Lord Stark said funny in years.

When he saw Jon's face his smile disappeared, he cleared his throat “Obviously the Night’s Watch isn't an option, unless...” He said as he looked at Jon, fishing for a response.

He looked at Lord Stark with his eyebrows raised “Unless what? That one visit to see uncle Benjen made me want to get cosy with the murderers and rapists?” He shook his head and looked down at Ghost “It was one of the hardest decisions I've ever made, on one hand there was freedom with endless possibilities but in the other hand there was misery till the end of my days...bit like your marriage, eh.” He japed as he elbowed Lord Stark in the arm, he didn’t give the man chance to respond. “I decided on the freedom in the end, who knows what could happen...” He finished.

Lord Stark looked at him in annoyance with his answer probably more to do with the joke about his marriage than anything else.

He cleared his throat “As I was saying, the Night’s Watch isn't an option, so I had to think of something else for you.” He said.
“You could legitimise me and give me a castle or something to rule...” He blurted out. He didn’t want that either but he couldn’t help saying it to make him sweat.

Ned sighed “You know that’s not an option Jon.” He replied.

He shook his head and faked ignorance “Why not? You do trust me, don’t you? I am your son am I not?” He asked, mainly for the reaction.

Lord Stark looked down so he couldn’t see any facial giveaways.

*Coward.*

“Catelyn wouldn’t allow it, and neither would House Tully. They would see you as a risk to any of your brother’s inheritance. I'm sorry Jon.” He answered.

He scoffed “Inheritance, what do I inherit from you, father?” He growled out. He didn’t want anything from this man but a confession eventually.

“Jon...”

“Save it, we both know all I want from you is something your too cowardice to give me at the moment.” He said, mainly to himself.

Ned looked down in shame.

*Good.*

“I promised that I will take care of you and that means finding you a purpose when you leave Winterfell.” Ned said.

“Promised who? My mother?” He asked, he might be able to get some backstory here.
Unless he was lying like he always does.

Ned nodded “She asked me to take care of you when she handed you to me, to take you to your family. She...the birth was difficult for her and she wasn’t capable of looking after you.” He said, staring at the ground.

He didn’t know if this was the truth or not, Lord Stark look gutted after telling him that and it made sense if these things actually did happen to his sister. He also realised that this was the most he’d ever spoken about his mother, ever.

He cleared his throat “She’s dead, isn’t she?” He asked even though he knew the answer.

Lord Stark just nodded.

He looked down at the ground himself, Ghost was sat there being a good boy so he gave him a stroke under his chin. It calmed him and helped him think. He felt sympathy for the man somewhat, he couldn’t bear to think how he’d be if anything happened to Arya.

*It didn’t excuse his actions though, he wouldn’t give him an out for what he’d done.*

He looked back up at Ned “And her name?” He asked.

*Would he finally confess?*

Ned shook his head “Not now Jon.” He quietly said.

*Of course he wouldn’t.*

He took a deep breath and sighed “I think this conversation is over don’t you.” He said. He wasn’t asking, as far as he was concerned, this was over.

“Wait Jon, we need to work out what you will do when you leave.” Lord Stark rushed out.
The man had some fucking nerve.

He stood up from the log and straightened his gambeson, Ghost was already trotting away towards the entrance of the godswood. He turned and look at Lord Stark with indifference.

“Not now Lord Stark.” Was all he said before walking off without looking back.

‘We need to work out what you will do when you leave’.

I don't think Lord Stark would like what he did when he left.

End of Act 2

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter ~ 1st February

The next chapter is the first in Act 3 and will be mainly the journey down to Harrenhal, the chapter after is the beginning of the tournament and will span several chapters due to the amount of characters that will be involved.

Hope you've enjoyed reading so far :)
Jon

Walder Frey was a truly disgusting creature, he had to hold his face straight when in his presence with some of the things he did. He was glad in that moment to be known as a bastard, shoved at the back of the group out of the way. It hid the way his fists balled up and turned white.

“Fine, be on your way. You'll have to tell me if you change your mind about the betrothal.” The old lord of The Twins chuckled out as he leered at Sansa.

*Kireina would raze this shithole to the ground before you got as much as a sniff old man.*

Lord Stark looked rightfully awkward when he nodded and told the old Lord they’d cross the bridge as quick as they could, not to interrupt any of Lord Frey’s duties.

*And to get away from their truly disturbing surroundings no doubt.*

“He smelled funny.” Arya whispered to him as they made their way out of the great hall of The Twins. He chuckled at her and mused her hair.

“The bath water probably can't stand being in his presence. Bet it scarpers as soon as it smells him.” He japed. Arya chuckled as she hurried her steps to get out of this place.

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“Do you think father will agree to his betrothal request?” She asked, a thin layer of worry laced her words.

He grabbed her by the shoulders and squeezed as they walked back to camp “Not a chance in hell, I wouldn’t let him. Lord Wet Fart or any of his brood for that matter won’t be getting remotely close to you, Sansa, Bran or Rickon.” He reassured. He felt the tension and worry leave her shoulders.
Thanks.” She replied as she smiled up at him.

“What are brothers for eh?” He answered as he smiled back down at her.

A sly grin formed on Arya’s face “Teaching me how to use a sword and not much else.” She japed.

He held a hand to his chest feigning hurt “That cut deep, I might need time to recover. Sparring might have to wait now little wolf.” He said as he closed his eyes and sniffed. He chuckled when he felt Arya punch him in the leg. He opened his eyes and saw she was smiling.

“How about a quick spar before we get moving?” He asked her as they entered the camp that most of the northern lords had called home for the afternoon.

Her face seemed to drop when he asked this, a grimace taking over “I would love to but I can't. Mother says she wants to see how my lessons have been going since we left Winterfell.” She said “I mean, why did she have to bring that boring old septa with us, a moon or two without lessons won't turn any of us brain dead. Even Sansa seems distracted in lessons by the prospect of the tourney so I don’t know what she expects from me.” She moaned.

He knew why the septa was brought but didn’t want Arya getting in trouble by rebelling.

The bastard hellspawn is prowling the camp in search of its next victim to corrupt, only the faith can protect these children from the monster now. He thought amusingly. He just found the old woman amusing now.

“I suppose it's so you don't end up thick like him...” He said smiling as he nodded his head in the direction of Theon who just had a mug of ale poured over his head by Dacey Mormont.

Arya laughed heartily.

“Arya!” He heard her shout from behind them. Arya grimaced and looked at him in the hopes he would save her. He whispered the word ‘Sorry’ in reply. She gave him a sad smile in response and walked towards her mother.
He received the cold glare from her that he’d always had, one he didn’t even respond to as he turned and walked towards camp.

“Look who it isn’t?” The GreatJon bellowed out at him as he received a bear paw sized clap on the back. “Heard you sorted my son out in a sparring session this morning.” He said as he draped his arm over his shoulders.

“He said I was pretty like a lady, thought he should know what he was getting into before he tried to fuck me.” He replied without thinking. He hid his grimace well.

The Greatjon was a good person to get on the right side of but awful to get on the wrong side of.

*It had nothing to do with how big he was.* He liked to tell himself.

Thankfully the giant of a lord bellowed out in laughter, turning a few heads in the process. “You should give that advice to young Theon over here, Maege’s lass wasn’t having any of his posturing HA!” He chuckled out as he pointed at a soaked Theon sat on a log and then at Dacey who was grinning.

He chuckled himself as he sat down on the log that Dacey and a few others were sat on, GreatJon sat next to him and handed him a horn of ale.

“What was this I heard of SmallJon?” Dacey spoke up as they all sat around the fire. She looked over to Lord Umber before looking at him.

*Pretty.* He thought.

“Nothing.” He heard SmallJon shout over from the other side of the fire. He looked across at him and grinned, one eyebrow raised.

“Had nothing to do with the way you grimaced as you sat down earlier?” Harrion asked SmallJon who he was sat next to.
Harrion received a shove because of that, he just laughed it off.

“Fuck off.” He heard SmallJon mutter. That set everyone off.

A couple of whispers could be heard and he saw what had caused it, Ghost trotting into ring of people and sitting down in front of Jon.

They’d only been on the road for a week or so but in that week his little pup had shot up, he was the size of a small dog already. He couldn’t compare him to the size of his siblings because Lady Stark had forced her children to leave the pups at Winterfell while they were gone. None of them were happy but begrudgingly accepted when they were given the choice of going to the tourney without them or staying at home with them.

He was given no such decision.

She wasn’t and never would be his mother, she’d made damn sure of that herself.

“Still can’t believe there’s direwolves back in the north.” Dacey said as she ran her hand over Ghost’s head. The pup closed his eyes and pushed his head into her hand.

He nodded as he took a sip from his ale “Five more of them in Winterfell. Their mother didn’t make it and it didn’t seem right leaving them to fend for themselves.” He explained as Ghost opened his eyes and took a sniff of his mug.

He held it down so Ghost could take a proper sniff instead he shoved his entire snout into the mug and lapped at the contents. He pulled it away and tapped the pup on the nose but it was too late, Ghost was licking his chops and looking mighty pleased with himself.

The last thing they needed was a pissed up direwolf in camp.

GreatJon laughed at the scene in front of him “I think a drunk direwolf is the last thing this camp needs HA!” He said as he took a sip from his own mug.

He pulled Ghost in between his legs and held him there so he couldn’t cause any more trouble, the
last thing he needed was Lady Stark on his back about it.

“Lay down.” He whispered into Ghost’s ear as he kissed the pup on the top of his head. Ghost followed his instruction thankfully. “Good boy.” He said as he gave him one last ruffle of his white coat.

“I’ll have to have a spar with you when we set up camp later tonight if you’re up for it? Then I’ll get to see for myself what my lad has been crying about HA.” GreatJon said as he looked across to his son.

“Now THAT I would love to see.” Theon spoke up with a grin on his face. “Bring him down a peg or two while you're at it, Lord Umber.” He finished, laughing at nothing.

“Careful Theon, I'm not afraid to break your other nose as well prick.” He warned the young Greyjoy.

Theon looked at him bemused but still had a grin on his face “And what other nose would that be bastard? Did your time away turn you thicker than you already were?” He asked, again laughing at his own words. A few of the lords around them looked on with interest.

He stroked Ghost to keep his hands distracted, it wouldn’t help if he wrapped them around the pricks neck. “The one that’s up his arse you fuckin brownnose.” He answered, nodding his head towards GreatJon and taking a large sip from his mug.

Theon spluttered, denying everything before grumbling and walking off. SmallJon and Harrion chuckled, Dacey snorted into her ale and GreatJon spat his out of his mouth before guffawing.

“I see Halys wasn’t wrong about you lad, Lord Hornwood said you was bold as brass. He said you reminded him of your uncle Brandon the old gods rest his soul.” Lord Umber said, a quiet taking over the small group.

“Lord Hornwood likes to talk, ask his wife.” He replied. The man himself knew he could speak the ear off anybody.

“Ha, you're not wrong lad.” GreatJon replied. His eyes moved over Jon’s shoulder and
caught eye with something. “Speak of the devil...” He whispered to his, like they were conspiring or something.

He turned around and saw Lord Hornwood walking towards their group, unfortunately he wasn’t alone, Lord Stark looking at him and GreatJon with a quirked eyebrow.

“Lord Stark, Lord Hornwood. Fancy a mug?” GreatJon asked as he pointed his own to the two men.

His uncle shook his head, catching Jon’s eyes for a split second before responding “No thanks Jon, came to see if everybody was ready. I want us to make good time today, the meeting with Lord Frey didn’t help in that regard.” He said to Lord Umber but looked around to see if people were in fact ready to get moving.

Everyone seemed to get to their feet at that, Jon being the last as he necked the rest of his mug.

Lord Umber was the first to reply “Not to worry Ned, we’ll make up that time no problem. That old fart wont rain on our northern parade HA!” He replied as he walked away, to get his own men ready he assumed. “C’mon you!” He shouted over at SmallJon who necked his own ale before leaving.

“Maege is looking for you my lady.” Lord Hornwood said to Dacey, she nodded at him before waving at Jon and leaving the group.

“I best go and see if my father needs any help, probably needs me to round up his other two sons.” Harrion chuckled before nodding to everyone and leaving himself.

Now it was just him, Lord Stark and Lord Hornwood.

...and Ghost. Can't forget about him.

“I best go and get my men ready as well Lord Stark.” Lord Hornwood said seemingly noticing a tension between Jon and Lord Stark.

“Make sure everybody is ready to move in the next 20 minutes Halys.” Ned said as the other man
nodded before walking away.

Now it was just him, Ned and Ghost.

_You better not fucking leave as well Ghost._ He thought.

Ghost oddly huffed at that from where he was laid on the ground.

Lord Stark cleared his throat “You ready to get moving Jon?” He asked, awkwardness surrounding them. He’d tried to stay away from his uncle for the past week.

“Couldn't we have just gone down the Kingsroad? We would've been able to avoid all of this mess.” He said as he rose to his feet and pointed to the Twins.

Ned sighed as they walked on “Cat wanted to meet up with her side of the family and head to the tourney along with them. She also wanted the children to see their grandfather in Riverrun, her brother Edmure sent her a raven a few weeks ago saying that he’s rather ill and might not have long left.” He answered.

_Lovely, a castle full of Tullys. He would definitely be camping outside of the castle, less chance of a dagger in his heart while he sleeps._

“Well, best get a move on then. Won't get far flapping our gums will we.” He said as he started walking.

Ned grabbed him by the shoulder before he could go any further “Jon, we’re okay, aren't we? I’ve barely spoken to you all week, I hope that chat we had before we left Winterfell hasn’t bothered you.” He asked.

_The fucking cheek_

He shrugged his hand of his shoulder “We’ll never be okay ever again Lord Stark.” He said before walking off. He faintly heard ‘What?’ being muttered from his uncle but didn’t acknowledge him as he carried on walking, Ghost close at his heels.
Daenerys

She tapped her foot as she waited for Rhae, both Kingsguard assigned to the pair of them waiting with her.

“How much longer do you think she’s going to be your grace?” Ser Jaime asked as he looked towards Rhaenys’ chamber door.

Before she could open her mouth, her niece came rushing out of her chamber before closing the door behind her.

“All done.” Came the cheerful response from Rhaenys.

“About bloody time.” She muttered as they all made their way through the corridors of the Red Keep. She heard Ser Oswell snort but quickly cover it up with a cough.

They made good time as they approached the other wing of the Royal apartments, Princess Margaery along with her brother and assigned Kingsguard, Ser Loras waiting outside of her chambers for them.

She had to admit, and Rhae shared the same thoughts with her that they expected Margaery to be stuck up, scheming and an all-round a poor choice for Aegon’s bride. Turned out they were wrong to presume and had crafted an almost sisterly bond with the Rose of Highgarden.

She’d also brought Alysanne into the world so that was another point in her favour. The little girl was the apple of everybody’s eye lately.

Margaery waved at them as they approached, she seemed rather excited at the prospect of this tournament and to be honest, she couldn’t blame her. An event touted as being the biggest the realm would ever see had to build some excitement, even in the most miserable of people she thought. Her brother, along with the council had invested a lot of time and effort to make it a spectacle that would go down in history.
It would be a crime if nothing memorable happened.

“We all set?” Marge asked the two of them as Ser Loras bowed at the pair of approaching princesses.

“Finally.” She replied as she rolled her eyes and smiled. She looped her arm through Margaery’s arm and set off walking, all the while playfully glaring at Rhaenys.

Margaery grinned at the whole thing.

Rhaenys huffed “Stop complaining would you, it's not like they can go without us is it?” She said as they rounded a corner.

“I suppose not. Though I doubt they’d find it hard to leave if it was just you they were leaving behind.” She replied. Rhae just smiled and stuck her tongue out at her whilst everybody else, including their guards chuckled.

They all made their way through the double door opening to the courtyard where they were hit with a wall of chatter. She looked around and lost count of the amount of horses and carriages there were that held numerous chests of luggage. A few of the carriages were reserved for some of the lords and ladies that were already in Kings Landing that would be travelling with the Royal retinue.

Up near the front of the group was the Royal carriage, the one where all three of them along with the Queen, her mother and little Alysanne would be using to travel in. Stood next to it was the King and Queen, clearly having a discussion about something.

They approached the two of them and were noticed by Ser Arthur who cleared his throat whilst nodding in their direction, Rhaegar turned and looked at them.

“Finally. We thought you’d got lost or something.” Her brother japed as he seemed to sigh in relief.

She shook her head but before she could even say anything, Rhaenys was speaking “Where’s the little princess?” She asked, mainly to her mother.
Elia smiled and looked back into the carriage “She’s in there with your grandmother, Rhaella has just gotten her off to sleep.” She said as she smiled.

“Your grace.” Margaery said as she curtsied and entered the carriage to reunite with her daughter.

Her eyes widened when she saw Viserys and his little band of idiots approaching and with her decision swiftly made, she entered the carriage herself in haste.

The inside of the carriage was very spacious, plush sofas lined the sides of their new home for the next few days. On one of the sofas sat her mother along with Margaery, sat in front of the pair was a crib and a sleeping Alysanne. She cooed at the little snores the precious girl was making.

“Try not to wake her darling, I’ve just gotten her off.” Her mother said as she looked into the crib. She nodded as she stared at the little girl with a smile.

“You’ll be wanting one of your own someday, we have to find you someone to help you with that though I suppose.” Her mother said. She rolled her eyes and sat on the opposite sofa facing them.

“Don’t roll your eyes at me young lady.” Her mother said, although there was some amusement behind her own eyes.

“I don’t need it from you as well mother, I already get enough of it from Rhaegar.” She replied as she shuffled around on the sofa, eventually finding a comfortable spot to curl her legs beneath herself.

Before her mother could reply, Elia and Rhae entered the carriage, the latter with an annoyed look on her face.

Rhae settled down next to her on the sofa with a huff and Elia rolled her eyes at her daughter as she took a seat next to her.

“You alright?” She whispered to Rhaenys, she looked towards Elia but the older woman was currently striking up a conversation with her mother. Margaery was cooing over her daughter but was sneaking looks of intrigue in their direction.
“I would be if people got off my back.” Rhae whispered back in reply, side eyeing her mother in the process.

*Oh dear...*

She furrowed her brow in confusion, she looked across the carriage at Margaery who also seemed confused by Rhae’s attitude.

“What has something happened?” She asked, Rhae was currently rubbing one of the bracelets on her wrist between her finger and thumb.

*A nervous tick.* She mused, something Rhae had done for years.

“It would appear I am to be wed soon.” Came the shocking reply.

She looked over to Margaery who too had a look of shock on her face. Returning her gaze back at Rhae she replied “Wed? Who to?”

Rhae just shrugged her shoulders and crossed her arms “Ask my mother.” She replied.

She looked over towards the Queen “Your grace?” She said, Elia sighed in reply.

“You're over reacting Rhaenys, I said you should keep an eye out during the festivities, in the hopes of finding a suitable suitor that’s all.” She said as she reached for the fruit bowl on a small cabinet at the side of the carriage and plucked a grape from it.

“Yeah and then father said I should just marry Margaery’s brother and be done with it.” Rhae replied. Dany looked across at Marge to gauge her reaction, she looked torn on the situation.

Elia tutted “You know he was joking, he wouldn’t force anything upon you, you know that.” She said. Her mother was sat on the other sofa, silently absorbing the situation.

“Do I? He looked awfully serious when he said it and it would explain the fact that he had me host
Margaery’s family when they were here a few weeks ago, alone might I add.” Rhae replied. Elia just looked fed up with the whole conversation as she reached for another grape.

“Two unwed Princesses of the realm appearing at what will be the biggest tourney in history, I would say the pair of you will have every eligible man eating out of your hand. That doesn’t sound so terrible does it?” Her mother mentioned as she sipped on her wine.

“Don't involve me in this.” She said as she filled a goblet of arbour gold for herself.

*She’d probably need it with the route this conversation was going.*

She narrowed her eyes at Marge when she saw mirth dancing around her face.

“You were always going to be involved in this. Due to your reluctance to even look for an eligible suitor, you and Rhæ will be the top prize at this event, none of the winner’s purses would come close to marrying a Princess. You can hate that fact all you want but it won't change anything, you’ve placed a target on your own heads and you’ll have to deal with the consequences. You’ll be tripping over fawning men for most of the tourney.” Her mother finished, amusement in her eyes as she took a sip from her goblet.

“This isn't funny.” She huffed as she saw Marge chuckling.

“It is a little bit.” Elia spoke up. She turned in her direction and saw Rhæ necking a whole goblet of wine.

*Somebody definitely has the right idea.* She thought as she reached to refill her own goblet. As soon as it was refilled her mother moved the jug away from the pair of them.

She narrowed her eyes at her but huffed in resignation when her mother quirked an eyebrow at her.

*That isn't a fight I'm gonna win.*

Rhæ nudged her in the arm when both of their mothers carried on with their conversation. “My cousins will be meeting me there, Arianne even managed to get her father to return to Sunspear so
she could come as well. We’ll find our own fun while we’re at this tourney, mark my words.” She whispered to her.

“Should be interesting to see what happens with her and Viserys.” She replied, Rhae chuckled and took a sip from her goblet.

“I think he’ll be too busy with whatever scheme he’s got going at the moment.” She answered.

“Urgh, don’t remind me please. He’s got it into your cousin Quentyn’s head that if he were to win the joust and place that flowery crown on my head that I couldn’t possibly refuse his hand.” She said as she took a sip from her own wine.

Rhae shook her head “Quent is quite gullible but nobody seems to be able to stop your brother from whispering in his ear. He’s gonna get himself hurt, he’s not even a great rider to begin with.” She said.

“Don't speak about that cousin of yours around me at the moment.” Elia interrupted.

Her and Rhae just looked at the older woman “What's he done now?” Rhae asked.

“Let's just say he’s gonna be in for a rude awakening when he returns to Sunspear. I think brother dearest is gonna make an example of him.” Elia answered.

*Please please please be something that keeps him off my back for the foreseeable future.* She prayed.

“Is it that bad?” Rhae continued.

Elia chuckled “Let's just say this tournament might be the last time you see your cousin for a long time. Oberyn and Ellaria are meeting us there along with his brood, Ari and Trystane will be with them as well.” Elia replied.

Rhae smiled “I knew Ari, Trys and the girls were coming but I didn’t know uncle Oberyn and aunt Ellaria were coming with them.” She said.
“I’ve never met Prince Oberyn.” She said.

Rhae turned to her a smiled even more “Oh you’ll love him, he’s the fun uncle.” She said.

“Rhaenys!” Elia scolded.

“Oh come on mother you know it to be true. I love uncle Doran but even you have to admit uncle Oberyn is the wilder brother of yours.” She said with a smirk.

Elia just looked away with a soft smile and took a sip from her wine.

_Her silence answered that it would seem._ She thought.

Just as Rhae was about to speak again the carriage door opened up, Ser Arthur popped his head in “We’re about to set off your Graces, is everybody ready?” He said.

“Yes I think so Arthur.” Elia said as she looked around the carriage to see if anybody would object.

She turned back to the knight when nobody said anything “Will we be seeing your sister at the tourney, Ser Arthur? I know his grace left it to you to send her invitation.” She asked.

Ser Arthur smiled and nodded “You will your grace, along with Clarissa and Edric. Allyria will be joining them with her betrothed Lord Dondarrion as well.” He answered. Elia smiled and nodded at that, it was no secret that Lady Ashara was a good friend of the Queen.

“Thank you Ser Arthur, that will be all.” Elia said as the knight nodded and shut the carriage.

A few shouts were heard from outside and it wasn’t long before the carriage was moving.
Ned

It had been a few days since they’d crossed the Twins and they were making good time on their journey to Riverrun. Scouts claimed they might even make it there by the end of the day.

“Is everybody ready to get moving?” He asked Lord Karstark as they walked through their temporary camp.

“Pretty much, some of them are still sparring near the river.” Rickard replied.

Bloody hell.

Ever since Jon had humoured Greatjon in a spar the evening after they’d crossed the Twins, everybody had turned increasingly competitive in their daily training sessions.

He’d not actually seen what had happened at that sparring session but if he believed the word that’d got out, they might be seeing a northerner winning the big melee.

If Jon had made an impression on Lord Umber then it was safe to say that he’d done something impressive.

Him along with Rickard and two guards made their way towards the bank of the river they’d decided to rest near, he could already hear the booming voice of the Greatjon as they approached.

“Put ya back into it Greyjoy!” He heard Lord Umber bellow out.

Approaching the group, he noticed Theon currently sparring with Rickard’s son, Torrhen. Everybody else was stood and sat around the pair looking on.

He shouldered his way in between Smalljon and his father, Greatjon look like he was about to shout at whoever was jostling him until he saw who it was.

“Lord Stark, come to show the young’uns how it's done?” Lord Umber japed as he grinned.
He chuckled at the bigger man’s question, the Greatjon was always a joyous man to be around.

“Fortunately for them no, I’ve come to see if everybody is ready to get moving.” He said as he looked around at all the people there. He noticed Jon who was having a conversation with Maege’s daughter.

“Just about Lord Stark, just have to settle something that was said earlier today. Ser Wylis here reckons that son of yours isn’t as good with a blade as everybody else reckons he is. He hasn’t seen the lad fight but thinks he can take a green boy like him.” Greatjon said. He got closer to his ear and whispered “Think you might wanna see this if you’re looking for a laugh.”

He looked up at the grinning giant of a man, he was quite excited to see if Jon had improved in his years away from home and the small delay was worth it in his eyes.

Greatjon turned to the two men fighting “Right you two, you've had your fun.” He said as he declared the spar a draw “Someone here needs to put his money where his mouth is before we get going don’t you Wylis?” Greatjon grinned at the Manderly knight.

With the looks of confusion around the group, Greatjon was the only one privy to Ser Wylis’ claims.

Ser Wylis stood “Aye, let's get this over with. There’s bigger game to be had at this tourney and I don’t want to waste energy on green boys.” He said as he took the blunted blade that Theon was holding.

Greatjon clapped his hands and rubbed them together “Remember the bet Wylis, I want my gold dragons after this.” He said as he grabbed Torrhen’s blunted blade.

“HA, good luck with that one Jon.” Ser Wylis said as he twirled the blade, stretching his limbs to loosen up.

“Snow!” Greatjon bellowed as he walked towards Jon, he seemed confused at the older man. Once the blade was held out in front of him, he knew what was going down. “Don't let me down lad, got money riding on this.”

There were a few snorts and chuckles around the group, seemingly realising what was about to happen Ned could feel a little excitement building in him as well.
“First one to yield loses.” Greatjon said as both men moved into the middle.

Ser Wylis looked primed and ready for this spar but Jon, Jon looked disinterested, holding his blade low. “It’ll be all over soon lad, maybe I’ll take you on as a squire after, who knows.” Ser Wylis said. Jon quirked an eyebrow at the older man but didn’t reply, he just rolled his shoulders and nodded to Greatjon.

“Don't blink.” Smalljon said to him as the two of them looked on.

He turned to the young man “Excuse me?” He asked.

Smalljon folded his arms, still looking on at the two men “I found out the hard way how good that son of your is.” He said.

*How good was he?*

Very good it would turn out.

Jon had Ser Wylis on his back within ten seconds. The group around him were laughing along with Greatjon as Jon helped the large knight to his feet.

*What had he just seen?*

Claiming Jon was good with a sword in his hand would be an insult to the lad. Smalljon was right, blink and you’d miss it.

Everybody was up on their feet now, mulling around, preparing themselves for the continuation of their journey. Jon was receiving a few pats on the back as people passed him as he cleared up what was left of their makeshift sparring yard.

Greatjon Umber approached him and Rickard with a big smile “Think we might be in with a chance of winning the melee with your lad on board Lord Stark. He has a gift and I wish to exploit it HA!”
He said as the three of them watched Jon walk towards the river to relieve himself.

“Has he urrr...has he got any plans for his future?” Greatjon said as he nodded towards Jon.

He shook his head “Not currently, no. I think having him squire for someone so he can become a knight seems a bit of a step down for the him, don’t you?” He replied. He really did have to have a good think about what he could do for him now.

*He could walk into any keep in the north and become their new master at arms in an instant with his level of skill.*

*Maybe he was destined to take over from Ser Rodrik, maybe Catelyn would have to begrudgingly get used to having Jon around.*

His mind was running in circles, so many decisions had to be made and he was slowly running out of time to make them.

Rickard sniffed “He’s gonna catch a few eyes at this tourney I reckon. Who knows, the white bull’s getting old, this tournament is the perfect place to find a suitable replacement for Ser Gerold.” He said.

His blood froze.

Greatjon chuckled “Don’t let the white bull here you say that Karstark, he’s old but he’ll still whip you around HA.”

A white blur out the corner of his eye caught the three men’s attention, Jon’s direwolf, Ghost, bounding across to his master with his tail wagging and a rabbit gripped in his jaw.

“Fuckin’ scary how fast those things grow, nearly up to my bloody knees that wolf of his.” Greatjon muttered, Rickard hummed in agreement.

“Wonder how Alys and Robb are getting on with the other five.” Lord Karstark mused.
“Probably too busy doing other things eh Stark.” Greatjon said as he nudged him in the shoulder and wiggled his eyebrows.

“Knock it off Umber.” Rickard said in annoyance. Before any arguments could brew, Jon came walking up towards them with Ghost’s fresh rabbit in his hand.

“What you got there, Snow?” Greatjon said as the four of them headed back towards retinue.

He nodded down at Ghost “This one’s dinner. Spoilt little wolf wants me to skin it for him.” He said as the white pup walked along with his tongue lolled out.

“Careful, he might expect it every time he catches owt. Next thing you know, he’s dragging a buck carcass onto your lap HA.” Greatjon replied as they finally made it back to their readied horses for the day.

Before Ned could say anything to Jon, Bran and Rickon came running towards them “Jon!” They both shouted as they knelt down in front of Ghost and started fussing over him.

“C’mon boys, you can help me skin this before we get moving.” Jon said as he walked off with Bran and Rickon, Ghost playfully nipping at his leg.

---

Jon

4 days later...

Ser Edmure didn’t like him, it was blatantly obvious with the looks he was sending his way. Ser Brynden, or the Blackfish as he was more commonly known, didn’t like him either, but he was a lot better at hiding it than his nephew.

He wasn’t naïve enough to not know why they disliked him.

Their arrival at Riverrun a few days ago wasn’t very eventful, they arrived, they ate and settled down
for the night. By the next morning, they were back on the road and on their way towards Harrenhal.

Jon had spent most of the time in the camp instead of the castle, it wasn’t that he was afraid of how he would be received in the house of Lady Stark’s family, he just spent his time with Ghost instead. And when the tents went up for the night and the camp was shrouded in darkness, he was able to sneak off and meet up with Kireina for a little bit as well.

The meeting between Ghost and Kireina was beyond comical. He feared Ghost would be rather scared of the mountain of power and magic, but no, he just wanted to play. And when Kireina deemed herself above such foolery, Ghost hiked up a leg and attempted to pee on her.

*He’d never seen her move so fast.*

Thankfully, Jon was there to play peacemaker and to prevent the white pup from becoming a pile of furry dust.

That had been a few days ago, now they were about an hour away from the tournament grounds. He could feel the excitement in the air as they passed the odd merchant here and there, hoping to get a head start on plying their wares on travellers.

He was currently riding side by side with Greatjon Umber, a man he’d managed to strike up an easy friendship with.

“So, we’ve got you and me, obviously. I'm struggling with the last two though. Ned left it up to me to decide the group so I'm not sure if he’d be interested. That’s something you can ask I suppose.” Lord Umber continued with the conversation they’d been having.

This melee was turning out to be the talk of the realm according to some people, lords were becoming increasingly competitive with the whole thing. Four fighters from each one of the different kingdoms would be competing in one huge fight to determine the best in the realm. Not only would they be rewarded with such a claim, the winning group would also receive a purse to share between the four of them and more importantly, profit their kingdom as a whole as the crown had announced that the winning kingdom would be devoid of tax for a moon’s duration. That last prize was huge for all the lords.

The Crownland’s team was already touted as the ones to beat, since the Kingsguard was to be fielded by the Crown along with the Crown Prince. Three Kingsguard and a man who had been
trained by the sword in the morning himself was definitely nothing to take lightly.

The other kingdoms seemed to have kept their teams quiet however, even the Riverlands. Jon had overheard that Ser Edmure and the Blackfish would be part of their team but the other two members identities evaded him.

And now Lord Umber was trying to work out who would be joining both of them. He’d not even said he would like to compete, Greatjon hadn’t really given him a choice and most people agreed with him after seeing Jon spar.

He looked across towards the giant lord “What about Ser Rodrik?” He asked.

Greatjon hummed and stroked his beard “That could work, the man is still sharp despite his age. I was thinking more along the lines of Ser Jorah, I imagine he would be the most determined to win out of the lot of us, can’t be cheap having a wife with expensive tastes HA!” He said.

He shrugged “Why not both? Unless you can think of anybody else...” He replied. Ser Wylis might have been a choice if it wasn’t for the humbling he’d received a few days ago. Dacey was also another good shout but she’d already said she would rather watch instead.

Greatjon reached over from his horse and clapped him on the back “I think we might have our team my friend.”

“What's this?” He heard Lord Stark say as he trotted his horse next to Lord Umber’s. He mentally sighed.

Greatjon sat up in his saddle when he saw the Lord of Winterfell “Lord Stark, me and your lad here were just deciding who was gonna be on the melee team.” He said.

That seemed to perk the warden of the north up “Oh aye? Who’ve you decided on then?” He asked.

“Well, there's me obviously...” Lord Umber said as he grinned at his liege lord chuckled “...and then there’s our secret weapon here.” He said as he patted him on the back. He turned and smirked at the man but noticed behind him that Lord Stark’s smile dropped slightly.
“I didn’t think you’d be that interested Jon?” Lord Stark said as Greatjon turned around.

“Are you kidding Ned? Your lad’s our ticket to victory. There was no way I was letting him avoid this after seeing what he could do HA!” He said “Coupled with Ser Rodrik and Ser Jorah, I think we have a genuine shot. I’ve already spent my purse in my head HA!” Lord Umber finished as he clapped his uncle on the back, nearly knocking him off the horse in the process.

Lord Stark smiled back at Greatjon but it seemed a bit false in his eyes “Aren’t the Crown fielding the Kingsguard?” He asked.

“Ah piss on that! We’ll sort those tin pot knights out good and proper! They won't be able to deal with the northern storm coming their way HA!” Greatjon bellowed out. He looked at Jon with a smirk “Some might say a snowstorm is coming their way.” The giant lord japed.

He rolled his eyes but grinned at the older man’s jokes.

He turned his head when he heard the galloping of a horse, two horses in fact. Ser Edmure and Ser Brynden approached Lord Stark’s side, not without the younger of the two shooting a glare his way.

Carry on, little man. He thought to himself. He’d done nothing but glare at him ever since they’d joined the retinue. He would have no problem showing Ser Edmure up in the melee if the two of them ever met in it, and with how much of a hard on the man seemed to have for him, he reckoned the chances of that happening were rather high.

“Lord Stark.” Ser Bryden spoke up as they trotted side by side with him “This is where we go our separate ways my lord. The Riverlands camp has already been established and we must see to our own people.” The Blackfish explained.

Ned nodded to the two men “Of course my lord, I imagine we’ll see each other again soon. Edmure.” Lord Stark said as he clapped Ser Brynden on the back and nodded to his brother-in-law. With one last glare from the both of them, the two Tullys galloped off supposedly in the direction of their camp.
“They don’t keep their dislike of you very hidden do they lad HA!” Greatjon said when the two men were out of listening distance.

He shrugged his shoulders “Eh, its whatever. Take a bit more than two fishy little idiots to get to me.” He said. Greatjon laughed at that.

“Jon.” Lord Stark seemed to say in a warning tone.

“Hmm?” He replied as they trotted towards their designated area to set up camp, a lush green field just on the bank of the God’s Eye. In the distance he could see a large camp, a couple of Tully banners indicating that it was the Riverlands camp.

He turned in his saddle and noticed Lord Stark was just looking at him, he quirked his eyebrow and the man just shook his head and sighed.

Greatjon made him jump when he bellowed out after they finally stopped “RIGHT YOU SORRY LOT! LET'S GET THIS CAMP SET UP SO I CAN GET PISSED HAHA!”

Everyone seemed to move a little faster after that, moving to erect the tents that were needed for everyone, people laughing and japing whilst getting on with their jobs.

There was a feel good atmosphere within the northern camp.

He took one last look at Lord Stark before moving into the camp to set his own tent up, Ghost darting past everyone with his tongue hanging out, clearly in a playful mood again.

_This tourney had the potential to be very messy, in more ways than one._ He thought amusingly as he approached the spot that Ghost had clearly chosen for him to set his tent

Chapter End Notes

Unfortunately, I'm not sure when the next chapter will be as I've not even started it yet. I
can say that it will be sometime this month and I'm sorry that the time frame is so vague, the story has took a backseat due to real life constraints. Hopefully you understand.

Something I can leave you with though is the teams that I've come up with, obviously I'm open to ideas but this is what I've come up with so far:

NORTH
Jon Snow
Greatjon Umber
Ser Rodrik Cassel
Ser Jorah Mormont

RIVERLANDS
The Blackfish
Ser Edmure Tully
Jason Mallister
Tytos Blackwood

VALE
Ser Lyn Corbray
Bronze Yohan Royce
Ser Andar Royce
Ser Mandon Moore

IRON ISLANDS
Victarion Greyjoy
Asha Greyjoy
Ser Harras Harlaw
Andrik the Unsmiling

WESTERLANDS
Ser Gregor Clegane
Sandor Clegane
Ser Lyle Crackhall
Ser Preston Greenfield

CROWNLANDS
Prince Aegon Targaryen
Ser Arthur Dayne
Ser Loras Tyrell
Ser Jaime Lannister

STORMLANDS
Brienne Of Tarth
Ser Balon Swann
Ser Cortnay Penrose
Beric Dondarrion

REACH
Ser Garlan Tyrell
Ser Arys Oakheart
Ser Baelor Hightower
Ser Tanton Fossoway
DORNE
Prince Oberyn Martell
Ser Gerold Dayne
Ser Daemon Sand
Obara Sand

Again, ideas and suggestions are welcome :)}
Rhaella

She slid the curtain of their carriage away from the small window and peeped outside, Harrenhal loomed over them all. A place that held mixed memories for many people, hopefully the tournament would help bring some more happy memories to the people of Westeros. She looked across to her daughter who was looking through her own window, Rhaenys peeping over her shoulder.

“They really did do a good job didn’t they.” Daenerys said as she looked towards the newly renovated castle.

Her daughter was right with her evaluation, Rhaegar and his team of advisors had done a fine job restoring the castle. It had been downsized a little from its completely absurd size but still held a grandeur appearance from the outside at least. The black charred stone that made up the remains of the old castle had been replaced with white stone, the surrounding areas cleaned up to a degree, the grey smog that seemed to be a staple in the area around the castle all but gone.

“The perfect place to hold this celebration if you ask me. Held at Harrenhal, the renovated castle and the same castle that our ancestor burnt to cinders.” She mused.

Her granddaughter turned to her and smirked “Seems ironic doesn’t it.” Rhaenys japed. She hummed in response, ironic indeed.

“I wonder what it was like?” Daenerys seemed to say to herself as the carriage got closer and closer to the castle.

Elia turned to her “What what was like Dany?” The Queen asked as she held little Alysanne on her knee. The little princess seemed to be in a world of her own playing with the jewellery on her grandmother’s hand.

Dany shrugged “Just dragons in general.” She said.
It was no secret to anybody that her daughter always had a love for the symbol of their family, the stories of dragons were always her favourite when she was growing up, that love had followed her into her teens and could be seen in some of the jewellery she wore, even today.

The carriage was quiet as they made their way into the courtyard of the castle, due to the recent renovation everything seemed so clean. Their whole retinue stopped as they finally entered the yard. They were welcomed by Lady Shella Whent, Ser Oswell’s sister and her children and were quickly shown to their rooms to get settled in. They walked through the corridors of the new castle, taking in their surroundings, banners of house Whent and house Targaryen lined the walls of their new home for the next few weeks.

The King and her son, Rhaegar turned to her as they approached the wing of the castle they’d be staying in “Lady Whent informed me that the lords of the North, the Riverlands and the Crownlands are already here. The Vale retinue have been spotted a few miles away so they should be here very soon.”

She nodded as they entered the guest wing “And the rest?” She asked.

“Lord Tywin and the Westerland lords should be here by the end of the day. The Stormlands, The Reach and Dorne should be here by tomorrow or the day after at the latest if the scouts are accurate. Nobody knows when or even if the Iron Islands will be attending, we never received a reply from Lord Balon.” Her son explained.

“Is that something we should be worrying about?” She asked. Silence from the Iron Islands was always a concern.

“Lord Paxter has his fleet on standby just in case, Varys sent the raven to Lord Redwyne before we left the capital.” Rhaegar explained.

She nodded “Good.” She answered. The realm was at peace at the moment but you could never be too careful, especially with the ironborn involved.

Her son chuckled and smiled at her “See, I do listen when you tell me things mother.”

That he did. She remembers the day very vividly when her boy told her that she was his mother and his father, the only one who taught him how to rule, how to be good, how to be remembered for
better reasons than the last king. Everything she told him he seemed to absorb, his sister was exactly the same.

Viserys was unfortunately different in that aspect, there was no getting through to him however hard she tried and he would always think he knew best.

She looked across towards her youngest son, he always walked around with an air of superiority, his chin raised high. She didn't miss the side long glances he gave to his siblings, what to make of them she didn’t know.

Nobody knew what went through his mind sometimes.

They settled in rather quickly, all given the best rooms in the castle to call home for the next few weeks. Half an hour into settling in, Ser Arthur was knocking on her door and announcing that the Northern lords were here to meet with the Royal family. Meeting with all the lords that would be attending the tournament was a crucial duty for their family, good relations with their lords was paramount however tedious it was meeting them all.

The first of the lords they'd be meeting were the northern ones, Lord Eddard Stark, his family and the rest of his bannermen were being ushered into the great hall of Harrenhal at the moment. The northern lords, the same as her family, were impressed with the rebuild of the castle as they looked around, a short brunette girl at the front was especially impressed, even the word ‘wow’ was heard from where she was stood.

*She internally smiled at her youthful innocence.*

The girl was later revealed as Lord Stark’s youngest daughter, along with the rest of his children. His eldest was currently running Winterfell in his absence and his baseborn son was back at the northern camp and deemed inappropriate for this sort of thing according to Lady Stark.

*Charming.*

She couldn’t blame the woman for how she was like though, a bastard child could cause many problems, especially in marriage. If Lord Stark’s face was anything to go by, it had done just that. His bastard was clearly a sore point based on his reaction at the mention of the boy. The man almost
looked terrified at the mention of this, Jon Snow.

“Maybe we’ll see him in one of the events during the next few weeks.” Rhaegar replied, more in politeness than anything.

That reply was received with a snort from the giant of a man known as Lord Umber, he did a poor job at covering up his slip up with a cough.

“Something amusing Lord Umber?” Her son asked as he caught the slip up himself. Lord Stark looked particularly on edge now.

Lord Umber cleared his throat and grinned “Not at all your grace. We look forward to seeing how your white knights fare against us northern brutes HA!” He explained. It would seem that the man was a bit of a character.

Rhaegar smiled back but she could see it was to cover up her son’s intrigue “Oh? I wasn’t aware it would be much of a competition between the two.” Her son light heartedly replied with his own smirk.

Lord Umber laughed at that, a great bellowing thing that made a few of them jump, she even caught Ser Loras unsheathing steel in reaction until he realised what had happened and sheathed his sword back in its scabbard.

“Strong words your grace, but I wouldn't be overly confident just yet.” Lord Umber grinned.

Now her son looked very intrigued “Oh, and why is that Lord Umber? Do you plan on summoning a giant straight from the banners of house Umber itself to compete?” Rhaegar japed, a few people chuckled, mainly the members of the Kingsguard spread around the Royal family, especially the Kingsguard that would be competing in the melee.

Men and their pride.

Lord Umber and a few of the other northern lords seemed privy to something as they grinned in reply. Lord Umber himself shook his head “Oh no your grace, I think we’ll be just fine without one of them.” He said.
To her own annoyance, now she was intrigued what the big secret was.

*Wonder if it's got something to do with this Jon Snow?*

Just then, her grandson held his hands up in surrender “Fine, you got me. I'm their secret weapon father.” Aegon japed as he stood in front of Rhaegar and looked at him with a grin on his face.

The King smiled and shook his head “My own flesh and blood teaming up with the northerners to watch us fail, you wound me son.” He joked as he held a hand to his chest.

Ser Arthur spoke up after the chuckles faded “Are you sure that’s a good idea, your grace?” He asked with a quirked eyebrow aimed at the crown prince.

To everyone’s amusement, Aegon grimaced “Yeah, you probably right. Our spars are enough punishment for me, no need to publicly shame me is there Ser Arthur?” Aegon japed as he moved back to his spot. He caught the mirth between her son and grandson. She also caught Viserys rolling his eyes.

She heard Lord Stark clear his throat “With your leave your grace, I’d like to make sure our camp is fully set up and my people are settled.” He said. It was a believable excuse, they also had the other lords to meet before luncheon so Lord Stark’s wish to end this was beneficial to both of them.

She believed it was nothing but an excuse from the man though, ever since his bastard son was mentioned he looked like he’d rather be anywhere but here.

It felt like there was more to it though, she’d met people who were ashamed of their ‘mistake’ but that was all it was, shame. Lord Stark looked nervous, almost scared.

*Should she pry?*

Maybe she’d task one of the Kingsguard to take a subtle interest in this Jon Snow, see what all the fuss was about.
Sansa

“Thank you, father.” She said as she hugged him.

Her father hugged her back “No problem, sweetheart. Jory and a few guards will accompany you and your siblings just in case, can't be too careful.” He said as he looked over at her mother. She wasn’t too sure about letting them wander about the grounds on their own, especially with how young Rickon was but she’d managed to convince her father that they’d be fine. A few guards were okay with her if it meant they could explore what the stalls around Harrenhal had to offer.

“What’s this?” Her sister said as she entered their parent’s private tent that had been erected in the centre of the northern camp.

“Father said we can go explore.” Bran chirped up from the table that him and Rickon were sat at.

“Really?!” Arya asked as she looked at their father.

Her sister clapped her hands in excitement as their father nodded. “Yes, but you’ll be taking Jory and a few of his men to keep an eye on you. They’ll be making sure you stay out of trouble.” Her father explained, mainly looking at Arya than anyone else.

“Okay, I’ll go tell Jon. We’ll met you outside our tent Sansa.” Arya said as she darted out of the tent without a second look.

She gave her mother and father one last smile as Jory and a few of their guards escorted her, Jeyne, Bran and Rickon towards her tent. Her father gave Jory a bag of gold dragons for them to spend if they saw anything they wanted, Rickon already said he wanted sweets to nobody's surprise.

It turned out that Arya and Jon were waiting for them by the time they’d made it to her tent, she looked at Bran and Rickon and saw the disappointment on their face when they noticed Ghost was nowhere to be seen.
Rickon skipped towards him “Jon! Where’s Ghost?” He asked as the rest of them walked towards Arya and Jon.

Jon ruffled his hair in response “Hello to you too ya little monster. Ghost is out causing trouble in the woods near the edge of the Gods Eye, you’ll see him later.” He answered as he looked at Bran as well.

Jon looked at her “Sansa.” he said as he nodded his head, she smiled at him in response. “Jeyne.” Jon continued as her best friend gave him a bashful smile, a small blush blooming on her cheeks. It was a secret to absolutely nobody that Jeyne had a crush on her brother, unfortunately, she was sure that Jon didn’t share the same feelings. She’d tried to talk her best friend down, in the hopes that she wouldn’t get her feelings hurt and she hoped she’d taken some of the things she’d said into consideration.

“C’mon then!” Arya exclaimed as she walked off on her own, the rest of them huffing and eventually catching up with her. Jory already looked fed up with Arya’s antics as he cursed under his breath, Jon laughed and clapped the older man on the back.

“Never get used to her do ya?” Jon said to Jory as they slowly entered a group of stalls, merchants already grasping for customers attention.

“No you do not.” Jory replied with a huff, Arya turned to the two of them and stuck her tongue out at them.

Their group eventually made it into the heart of the market, the different sounds, the multitude of coloured stalls and banners, the variety of smells permeating the air from the food stalls, Sansa was in heaven.

“There’s a lot of people.” She heard Bran say as they stood there, trying to work out where to start.

Jory spoke up “More reason to stay close and not run off then.” He said as he mainly looked at Arya and Rickon.

Arya narrowed her eyes “Why are you looking at us?” She asked, Rickon nodded in agreement and crossed his arms.
Jory raised an eyebrow at that “You know why, septa Mordane and maester Lewin are always telling me to find ya when you run off from lessons.” He explained.

Arya rolled her eyes “Fine. We’ll be good.” She said as she looked up at Jory, glaring at him from underneath her eyelashes. Sansa for one didn’t believe a word her sister had just said, neither did Jon.

“How’s it going?” He said as he smirked down at her, Arya grinned in response.

“Right, where first?” She spoke up since they were just stood there ignoring everything around them.

With Bran’s suggestion of starting from the first stall and made their way around the market. They all ended up picking something up for themselves, she’d bought herself a small silver necklace in the shape of a snowflake. Jeyne bought herself a small roll of blue silk for embroidering. Arya for some reason, had bought a small leather belt with silver fittings, a belt was something she’d never seen her sister wear. She was a little bit suspect when Arya turned and winked at Jon with a grin on her face.

*I wonder what that is about?*

Bran bought a nice collar for his direwolf who he’d named Summer and Rickon had bought a little wooden wolf sculpture that was painted black so it looked a bit like his direwolf Shaggydog, he also got some sweets for himself which surprised nobody.

Jon had looked at the stalls but bought nothing for himself, he mainly kept an eye out along with Jory and their guards. By the time they were finished, it was just nearing lunch time and time for them to head back to camp to eat, the quicker they ate lunch the quicker they could return to see the rest of the grounds. Bran had already seen a few knights in the practice yard that he wanted to watch and the rest of them had agreed to watch with him when they returned.

“Lady Sansa!” She heard somebody shout as they made their way back to the northern camp. She frowned as she turned around, it wasn’t the voice of somebody she knew.

*How do they know my name?*

As she stopped and turned around, she noticed a man approaching them with a smile on his
handsome face, he was accompanied by what looked like a guard. She blushed when she replied “Yes?” She said as she looked at the mysterious man.

_He was rather handsome, not her two older brothers level of handsome but handsome nonetheless._

The man “Lady Sansa, it’s a pleasure to meet you.” The mysterious man said as he took her hand and kissed the back of it.

“I fear you have me at a disadvantage my lord, I am unaware of your name...” She said as she admired the man’s deep blue eyes and dimples as he grinned.

There was something off about his smile as he looked at the rest of her group, especially when he looked above her head and locked eyes with somebody behind her.

He looked back at her and cleared his throat “Lord Hardyng my lady, Harrold Hardyng, but you can call me Harry. That’s just for the special ladies like yourself.” He said as the smile on his face grew.

She could practically hear Arya’s eyes roll.

She heard Jon huff “Special lady? You’ve literally just met her.” He said in a rather unimpressed tone.

Harrold looked up at Jon with his smile still in place, this time though it seemed to have an edge to it “And you are my good man?” He asked.

Jon cleared his throat “Well, since your being so rude and didn’t even acknowledge anybody else, let me introduce to you Lord Bran Stark, this is Lord Rickon Stark and this,” he said as he touched their sister’s shoulder “this is Arya Stark, but you can call her Lady Arya. That’s only for the special men in her life.” Jon said. “And me, I’m Jon, Jon Snow. I’d shake your hand but I'd rather not.” He finished.

She heard Arya snort and Jory cough to cover up what she believed to be a chuckle.
The smile on Lord Hardyng’s face morphed into an ugly smirk “Snow? Interesting...” He seemed to say to himself.

“Not really.” Jon replied in a bored tone.

“Jon...” She said, this was slowly getting out of hand and the situation could turn ugly.

“You’re a brave bastard speaking to a Lord that way aren’t you. I could make life very difficult for you.” Lord Hardyng seemed to growl out.

The situation was lost and she wasn’t sure who to blame for it.

“Go for it, should be a lot more interesting than this conversation.” Jon answered in an amused tone, Arya was making a bad attempt at covering up her smile.

“Whatever bastard.” Lord Hardyng answered. That always seemed to be the only thing people used against Jon and since he’d returned, it had little to no effect on him. Jon’s answer to the snobby lord was a prime example of that.

“That all you got Harry? Very disappointing from somebody who claimed he’d make my life difficult.” He replied. He seemed to be toying with the man now.

Ever since Jon returned, he’d been sharper with his words, very quick on the reply. He’d also become cheekier as well, it was clear that somebody had been a bad influence on her brother.

She didn’t tell her mother or septa Mordane that she rather liked the new Jon, she found him amusing now, he seemed to have a certain charm to himself as well.

*No wonder Jeyne had taken a fancy.*

Lord Hardyng seemed to have had enough of them as he scoffed at Jon “I don’t have time for this.” He seemed to say to himself than anybody else “Maybe I'll see you later Lady Sansa.” He said as he put on a clear fake smile.
She put on her own smile as she replied “Maybe we will Lord Hardyng.”

Lord Hardyng smiled at that “Maybe without any unwanted guests as well.” He said as he looked at Jon.

“Maybe you will Harry, but just a little word of warning for you,” He said as he ushered the lord to come to him. Lord Hardyng gritted his teeth but moved towards Jon anyway.

Jon cupped his mouth, leant in and whispered in Lord Hardyng’s ear, just loud enough so that everyone could hear.

“If you hurt her in any way, you’ll regret it. Anything you do to her, I’ll do to you......anything.” He warned, the last word he dragged out for effect. His tone sent a shiver down her spine and clearly down the spine of the Lord as well. She even saw him visibly gulp.

“C’mon.” Lord Hardyng said to his guard as they turned around and walked off without a single look back.

She turned around and slapped Jon on the chest after Lord Hardyng was out of earshot. “You’re always causing trouble Jon.” She said but smiled at him to show him that she wasn’t really upset with him.

Jon smiled back at her and smiled “I try.” He replied, their group chuckled in response.

“C’mon guys, I’m hungry.” Rickon perked up as he dragged Jory by the arm towards camp.

“You’re always hungry, ya tubby wolf.” Jon replied as they walked on.

“Rich coming from you Jon.” Bran said, grinning at his older brother.

Jon shrugged “I have no idea what you’re talking about.” He answered as everybody chuckled.
“Thanks Jon.” She quietly said to him when they finally got back to camp.

He furrowed his brow as he looked at her “What for?” he asked.

She shrugged her shoulders “Just looking out for me back there.” She answered.

Her brother wrapped his arm around her shoulder, she sank into his embrace. She was never allowed to be like this with Jon whenever her mother or her septa were around.

“What kind of brother would I be if I wasn’t overly protective of my sister eh?” He said with a smirk. She chuckled in response.

She looked up at him “All the same, Thank you.” She said.

Jon looked down at her and squeezed her shoulder “You’re welcome.” He replied as they entered camp.

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**Jon**

After a quick lunch inside camp, him and his siblings made their way towards the practice yards to watch some of the knight's spar, Bran’s idea more than anybody else's. He knew his younger brother was all into that sort of thing so he humoured him, Arya and Rickon sounded interested in the idea and agreed with their brother that it would be fun. Sansa was the biggest surprise and even shocked Arya when she said she’d like to watch as well.

“Do you think we’ll see any knights of the Kingsguard there?” Bran asked to nobody in particular as he walked towards one of the many training yards scattered around the grounds, a clear bounce in his step.

“I hope so, we didn’t get to see any of them really spar when they visited those moons ago.” Arya answered as she swung Rickon’s arm back and forth as they held hands.

“Maybe Jon can spar with one of them.” Bran exclaimed like the idea had just this moment come to
him.

Arya gasped and smiled “Oh yes, that would be really fun to see.” She said as she looked at him hopefully.

He chuckled “Not a chance, I'm going there to watch not tire myself out.” He answered as the practice yard in question slowly came into view.

Arya scrunched her face up at him “Why!?” She said with an edge of anger, like the idea of him only wanting to watch was such a nonsensical idea.

“Cos I want to, that’s why.” He replied as he grinned at her.

“That's not an answer.” She replied back, a little scowl on her face that made it hard for him to keep a straight face.

“Well it’s the answer your getting, take it or leave it ya little brat.” He answered as he ruffled her hair. She scowled at him more as she fixed her hair.

Jory nudged him in the side as they got closer to the yard “Uncle Rodrik told me he’d be sparring in one of the yards earlier today, we might see him here.” He explained.

“I suppose he needs to wake those old bones up for the melee, he wouldn’t want to disappoint the Greatjon now would he?” He said as Jory grinned back at him.

He chuckled “I’ll tell him you said that shall I?” He replied.

“Make sure you speak up when you do, they say that’s one of the first things to go when you get to that age.” He answered back, Jory just shook his head and poorly suppressed the beaming smile on his face.

“Oh bloody hell.” Jory said all of a sudden as Bran, Arya and Rickon ran towards the edge of the yard, standing on one of the wooden beams of the fence that surrounded it to get a better view of the fighters. Jory jogged off and caught up to them leaving Jon with Sansa, Jeyne and a few of the house
guard.

“They say you're really good in the yard Jon, I would have liked to see for myself. It's okay if you
don't want to though.” Sansa spoke up from his side, he turned at her and saw Jeyne nodding in
agreement.

It really warmed his heart that she was at least trying to be nice to him ever since he returned, the
bastard label he walked around with didn’t seem to bother her as much anymore and their
relationship benefited from that.

He smirked at her “Maybe I’ll reconsider if we see our friend Harry there. That’s if he’d like a spar
at all, I’m not sure he likes me after our last catch up.” He said as they approached the edge of yard,
meeting back up with the rest of their group.

Sansa and Jeyne chuckled at his response. They reached the fence that Arya, Bran and Rickon were
leaning against and Jon whistled as he took in the sheer size of the yard, they hadn’t cut any corners.

Before he could really take in his surroundings, Bran pointed in the distance and caught his attention
“Look Jon! Ser Jaime of the Kingsguard. I hear he’s competing in the grand melee.” Bran
explained.

Ser Jaime Lannister of the Kingsguard, and Gerion’s nephew. He’d heard a few stories about the
man along with the rest of his family. A man with very little interest in politics, the complete opposite
of his brother Tyrion. Very close with his twin sister Cersei until a situation occurred in their
childhood which all but destroyed that relationship according to Gerion. Ser Jaime, according to their
uncle, refused to even speak with his sister anymore and kept that up till he left home to squire.

Gerion had a mouth on him when he was boozed up, he wasn’t sure he was meant to know any of
this.

He looked back at Bran and smiled “I reckon you could take him.” He said to the boy as he ruffled
his hair.

Bran looked up at him with a scrunched-up face and a smile “Don't be silly, that’s a member of
the Kingsguard, the best of the best, there’s nobody better.” He explained.
He huffed “Don't let Lord Umber hear you say that, he might actually eat ya.” He said as Rickon giggled, the rest of them following suit.

“What's got you lot tickled?” A woman’s voice spoke up from behind them, he turned around and instantly met the brown eyes of a short and rather buxom young woman, she was accompanied by a couple of guards. She smirked when she caught him looking at her chest for a second.

_Bloody hard to miss._

“Large tracts of land.” He replied without a second thought, Jory coughing and turning away.

The small woman quirked an eyebrow but smiled anyway “Oh yeah? And what would that mean Ser...” She said, fishing for a name.

He shook his head “No Ser, just Jon, Jon Snow. I was just talking about this large tract of land they’d used for the yard Lady...” He said, attempting to weasel himself out of a corner.

The woman seemed to know exactly what Jon was talking about but gave him respite as she slowly eyed him up and down “Lady Myranda, Myranda Royce. It’s very lovely to meet you Jon.” She replied, he nodded at her and smiled at her as he turned to the rest of the group, Sansa had her eyebrow raised up as she looked at him.

“I’ve actually come here to speak to Lady Sansa.” Lady Myranda said as she looked at his sister.

“Oh?” She replied, seemingly caught off guard.

“Yes, I came to apologise. I heard there was a small incident this morning involving Lord Hardyng or _Harry the Arse_ as we like to call him. Lord Arryn found out and asked me to apologise on that idiot's behalf.” She explained.

“Oh, that's okay, no harm was done. I think my brother scared him away anyway.” Sansa replied as she looked from Myranda to him and then back to Myranda with a smile.

Myranda looked back at him “Tall, dark, handsome and he protects the innocent. Is there anything
you can't do?” She asked him, the grin she gave him was borderline filthy.

He smirked back at the flirty woman “I’m positively awful at embroidery.” He replied.

She let out a light giggle as she looked up at him “Those are some lovely curls you’ve got there Jon.” She said as she licked her bottom lip.

He chuckled as he looked back at her “They're not for sale.” He answered as he winked at her.

“What the hell is happening?” Arya blurted out.

Bran looked on confused “I’m not sure...” He slowly said. Jon looked away from them all, leant on top of the fence with his arms folded and looked on towards the yard in the hopes of avoiding their looks.

What the hell is happening indeed. He blamed Gerion for half of the shit he came out with.

“Maybe I’ll see you all again soon, Lady Sansa.” He heard Myranda say, amusement lacing every word. He looked over his shoulder and saw her walking away, clearly exaggerating the sway in her hips. He looked back towards the yard before he got caught looking again.

Jory clapped him on the back as he looked towards the sparring men with him “If Robb was here, he’d be destroying you right now.” He said as he grinned at him.

He huffed “I think Robb would be too busy sucking his wife’s face off to be bothered about what I’m up to.” He replied as he made eye contact with Ser Jaime, the first glance from the man could have been a random occurrence but the second one definitely wasn’t.

I wonder what that’s about.

The Lannister knight looked away from him before Jon broke eye contact, he was always going to win that battle, and to be honest, he needed to if he was to compete with his father, the great Lord Tywin when they met.
Jory seemed to have noticed the Kingsguard knight looking at him as well “Looks like Lady Myranda has competition when it comes to garnering your attention.” He said as he nodded towards Ser Jaime who had decided to look their way for a third time.

“If he’s tryin’ to be subtle, he’s doing a shit job of it.” he replied as he winked at the white knight. Ser Jaime to his credit, smirked back at him and carried on drilling a few men who were with him.

“Why does Ser Jaime keep staring at you?” Arya asked him with a furrowed brow. As soon as the words came out of her mouth, everybody looked in the direction of the white knight.

He looked at Arya and shrugged his shoulders “Not a clue, maybe he wants to see if my hair is for sale as well.” He replied.

“I don’t think Ser Jaime needs to, he already has beautiful golden hair himself.” Sansa replied as she looked on. He looked at her with a smirk which fell from his face when he saw her eyes widen. He looked where Sansa was looking and noticed Ser Jaime approaching them.

*Here we go. Looks like he’ll be finding out what he wanted.*

“Lady Sansa, what a surprise to see such beauty blessing this yard.” Ser Jaime said as he made his approach. He sneaked a look and noticed a bloom of pink slowly appear on his sister’s cheek’s. He also caught the smirk from the Lannister knight in response.

A smirk he’d definitely seen before.

Ser Jaime held his hand out to Jory and the man shook it, a small grin on the northerner’s face.

“Ser Jaime, good to see you again.” He said.

Jaime nodded “Same to you.” He said as his eyes slowly drifted towards Jon.

He held his hand out towards Jon “And you must be this Jon Snow Lord Umber has been harping on
about.” He said with the same shit eating grin his uncle Gerion wore.

He grasped the man’s gloved hand in his own and gave him a strong shake “Ser Jaime, it’s a pleasure to meet you.” He replied. He looked to his left and caught Bran staring at the member of the Kingsguard in front of him.

Ser Jaime noticed the young lad looking at him and smiled back “Lord Bran, I imagine you’re still interested in being a knight?” He said as Bran nodded his head in excitement.

“Good, make sure to pay close attention then while me and your brother spar, you should pick up a thing or two.” He replied with smirk. He looked back at him and Jon just quirked an eyebrow at him.

“It won’t look good when your beaten by this one here will it now, Ser Jaime,” He said as he placed a hand on Rickon’s shoulder. He felt instantly regretful when he saw the fear in his little brother’s eye’s when he looked up at him. He squeezed his shoulder in assurance.

“Oh, I think we all know who I was talking about. Who knows, you might learn something yourself.” Ser Jaime replied, grinning like a fool.

*Does Ser Jaime genuinely underestimate him or is he playing a game?*

“Oh Jon, you have to!” Bran exclaimed.

He looked at Bran “Do I?” He replied.

“Oh Jon, you have to!” Bran exclaimed.

“He rolled his eyes and sighed, there was no point arguing with Arya, it’d be easier just sparring with the man and getting it over and done with.

“Fine.” He answered as Arya’s smile grew. “Lead the way Ser Jaime.” He said as he vaulted over the fence. He took his sword’s off his back and handed them to Jory to look after.
“Good luck.” Jory said as he clapped him on the back, he smiled at the man in response.

“I won't be long.” He answered as he turned around and walked towards the group of men Ser Jaime was stood with.

“Who’s this?” A man with shoulder length copper hair said to Ser Jaime as he nodded in Jon’s direction.

Ser Jaime looked over his shoulder at him as he approached “That’s my new sparring partner for the rest of this session. Jon, meet Ser Addam, Addam, this is Jon Snow, Lord Stark’s son.” He explained.

“Nice to meet you lad,” Ser Addam said as he shook his hand “though I'm not sure why he’s chosen to pick on you.” He japed as he smiled at Ser Jaime.

“I'm not picking on anyone, I just wanted to test my metal against some northern blood.” He explained as a young boy ran to them and handed a tourney blade to him and the white knight.

“Why not ask Lord Umber? I imagine he would have been well up for it.” He said as he tested the weight of the blade. He would have asked for another sword and used two but he didn't want to give too much away to the Lannister knight.

Ser Jaime snorted “No thanks, that mad fucker scares me sometimes. Plus he’s too busy singing your praises so I thought, why not go for you instead.” He explained.

It made sense but he felt like there was another reason he was singled out. He looked around and noticed a small crowd building around the yard, his eye’s narrowed when he saw *Harry the Arse* smirking in his direction.

*Was this that cunt's idea? Were him and Ser Jaime pally?*

“’C’mon then, let’s see what you’re made of.” Ser Jaime said as he clapped him on the back and walked past him into the middle of the yard. A few fighters stopped to witness them.
“YOU CAN DO IT JON!” He heard Arya shout from the other side of the yard, he noticed a few people turn and look at her. He smiled and waved at her.

“C’mon Jon, you can’t let you sister down.” Ser Jaime said as he got into a stance. Disappointing his sister wasn’t a possibility in his eyes.

_Humble him or destroy him?_ He thought to himself.

He knew Ser Jaime had to be the cream of the crop to be regarded as one of the best swords in the realm...

But this man hadn't been trained by that mad fucker, _Master M._

He looked into Jaime’s eye’s, in full focus mode now. He saw the smirk on the man’s face twitch but only slightly. If he blinked, he would have missed it.

“First to yield loses?” He said as the Lannister knight nodded.

They circled each other first, trying to work out each other’s movements, eyeing an opening to capitalise on. He wasn't gonna lunge in straight away, this wasn't some whale from White Harbour, this was Jaime Lannister of the Kingsguard.

“Interesting stance you’ve got there, who trained you?” Ser Jaime asked as he twirled his sword to readjust according to Jon’s movements.

He smirked, he’d just found his opening and Ser Jaime had just handed it to him on a silver platter.

“Your uncle’s friend trained me.” He said as he poised to strike.

Ser Jaime frowned in confusion “Uncle’s frien...” He tried to say but was cut off by Jon’s swift advancement.
The *White Lion* as some people liked to call him was fast, much faster than some of his sparring partners in the northern camp. His defence was good as Jon focused his strikes higher and higher, giving the knight no time to riposte Jon’s quick and if Ser Jaime’s frown was anything to go by, incredibly unorthodox striking pattern.

That’s probably because there wasn’t a pattern to begin with, *Master M* deemed them lazy and easily exploitable. As soon as the old man had shown how easy it was to put him on his back by knowing his patterns, he’d eradicated them from his style. It was incredibly jarring to forget what he knew but *Master M* had slugged him through it and he was a much better fighter come the end of it.

He backed off from his strikes as Ser Jaime regrouped. Jon grinned and held his sword loosely, lulling the man into a false sense of security before rushing him again, Ser Jaime getting his blade up just in time to block the swift overhanded strike but not quick enough to block heavy swinging kick to the outside of his left knee, right on the joint. The man’s greaves absorbed some of the hit, but it was clear by the way Ser Jaime favoured his right leg as he repositioned that he’d caused the man some grief.

“I thought we were sparring, not brawling.” Ser Jaime said as he swung low and attempted to strike out with his free hand, a steel gauntlet whooshing past Jon’s face as he easily avoided the man’s obvious attempt at getting one back on him.

“I thought you were teaching me some new things, not whining like a little bitch.” He said, grinning as the man shook his head and desperately fought the smile appearing on his own face.

They exchanged strikes back and forth, he allowed the knight to put him on the defensive, giving him the time to learn his patterns and habits. The strikes were easy to read and block, Ser Jaime’s offense was clearly affected by the kick to his knee, taking away the ability to plant his feet properly and thus, taking away a lot of the man’s power.

He saw Ser Jaime’s knee buckle under his weight when he kicked him but he didn’t realise he’d left lasting damage. *Master M* had taught him all manner of strikes, holds and throws to incorporate into his style and in case he was ever unarmed. He had him kick a thick pole of wood until it splintered and cracked to improve the power in his strikes and that had clearly worked, the evidence was eyeing him right now.

He thought it was in everyone’s best interest for this spar to end, Ser Jaime so he could rest his knee and Jon so he could get away from the slowly increasing crowd.

What he planned wasn’t very fair but so what, nothing was fair in love and war.
He gripped his sword in two hands and leaned back as Ser Jaime lunged, the knight over extended and became slightly off balanced, Jon riposted the strike and instantly put the knight back on the defensive.

He looked into Ser Jaime’s eyes as he fluidly struck left to right, he smirked as he remembered the story Gerion told him “Did your father ever find out who spilt all that wax in his desk drawer?” He asked as the man’s eyes widened in shock. It gave Jon the opening to plant a foot behind Jaime’s left leg and force the man against it, tripping him backwards and landing in the hard dirt of the yard with a rattle of his armour. He bolted towards him and placed a knee against the man’s plated chest, keeping him glued to the ground. He brought his sword down and let it rest against Ser Jaime’s neck as he smirked down at the man’s shocked face.

“Do you yield, Ser Jaime?” He asked as everyone started whispering.

“Ho...how do you know about the desk drawer? Only one person knew about that?” Ser Jaime asked, shock and confusion all over his face.

“Yield and I’ll tell you everything.” He replied.

“I yield.” Ser Jaime instantly answered, the spar clearly less important to him than the information Jon held. “Now tell me how you know that?” He asked again.

He got off the knight and held a hand out to help the man to his feet which he took instantly.

“Your uncle told me.” He said as he took Ser Jaime’s sword out of his hand and handed both of the tourney blades to the young lad from earlier. The boy looked at him in slight awe as he was handed the swords.

Ser Jaime frowned “Uncle Kevan doesn’t know about that story.” He said as they walked away from the centre of the yard, people still staring and whispering. Neither of them noticing a Kingsguard and his charge looking on in interest.

He shook his head “The other one, the only other person other than you and me who knows about you spilling your father’s wax whilst playing with his lion head letter stamp.” He replied, Ser Jaime grabbing him by the shoulder and turning him so Jon was looking at him.
“You're playing a dangerous game Snow.” The man said, his face a mix of anger and hope.

He decided to put the man out of his misery “Gerion is alive, I've met him, I've lived with him and I would consider him one of my closest friends.” He said, clearly stunning the Kingsguard speechless.

Ser Jaime started shaking his head in disbelief, holding a hand out to silence whatever his friend Ser Addam was trying to say to him as they returned to the sidelines of the yard.

“It's impossible, he’s been dead for years, lost to the smoking sea searching for our ancestral sword. I knew it was a stupid fucking idea when he first told us about it.” He said, mainly to himself as he looked into nothingness in disbelief.

He clapped the man on the shoulder, he knew from what Gerion had told him that he was Jaime’s and Tyrion’s favourite uncle. Jaime looked at him, he looked desperate for the truth.

“I have something to show you, specifically something from your uncle.” He said as the knight nodded. Desperate for that confirmation of his uncle’s survival.

“I think your father will want to see it as well.” He finished.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will be sometime this month :)


Jaime

When the Queen Mother pulled him aside and tasked him to look into Lord Stark’s bastard son, he was somewhat confused by the request. What would one of the most powerful individuals in the realm want with some northerner’s baseborn son?

He’d eyed the boy when he saw the Stark children approach the practice yard and found it very hard not to stare, there was a tall, rugged elegance about the lad that wasn’t very common amongst any of the Stark’s he’d seen in Winterfell. And he was clearly easy on the eye if the small, buxom woman that had clearly been flirting with him was anything to go by.

Those genes definitely weren’t from his father, the only thing he seemed to inherit from the chilly warden of the north was his colouring and his eyes, and even they were a lighter shade of grey compared to the Stark patriarch, eyes that flared with intensity when looking straight into them.

Whoever the mother was must have been some woman, not only had she passed on some of her beauty on to her son, she’d also managed to turn the head of the good and honourable Lord Stark.

He looked around as he followed Jon back to the northern camp, people eyeing them and whispering about the juicy gossip that he no doubt expected to spread like wildfire, Ser Jaime Lannister of the Kingsguard bested in the practice yard by Ned Stark’s bastard.

And Jaime couldn’t find it in his heart to dispute that fact, the boy was clinical with a blade, sharp and precise with his strikes, impenetrable and calculated with his defence and response.

Ser Arthur Dayne was the best man he’d ever come against in the practice yard, was being the important word in that sentence. He legitimately had doubts now after what had just occurred just a few moments ago. What was even more depressing was that he was almost sure that Jon had been holding back somewhat against him.

He felt humbled and that was a very rare occurrence for him.
Looks like the old white bull will be successful in finding new blood for the order for when he’s gone.

There was a childlike excitement at the thought of Jon going up against some of his brothers, mainly the Sword of the Morning, whether it be in a friendly spar or in the grand melee itself.

At this moment in time though, he was more interested in what Jon had to show him. If it was some sort of proof that his uncle was alive, that he was out there somewhere then Jon Snow would become his best friend, Addam would just have to deal with that change.

If it was some sort of trick then he would make the boy regret getting on the wrong side of house Lannister, either him or his father would see to that, no problem.

Jon went to get his swords back from Jory after their chat, the fact that he carried two swords raised some questions but he kept them to himself. Jon told the rest of his siblings that he was showing him something and to not wait around for him, to the little sister’s annoyance. He chuckled when he saw the glare Jon was shot by the little lady. Bran was speechless when they approached and hadn’t uttered a word even after they’d set off towards camp. The boy clearly couldn’t believe what had just happened and he wasn’t the only one with some of the looks he received on the way here.

He’d lost a spar, not grown a second head. He thought exasperatingly.

They reached Jon’s tent but not without receiving some comments, mainly from the biggest culprit in more ways than one.

“Haha, I see you’ve harpooned yourself a proper pretty one there eh Snow, HA!” Greatjon Umber bellowed out to the amusement of the rest of the camp “You have to be gentle with him, don’t want him walking funny during the melee HAHA!” Greatjon japed as the rest of the camp grew with laughter.

Before he could retort, Jon was replying to the giant of a man “Sod off ya daft cunt!” He shouted back at the man “I’ll make you walk funny if you don’t bugger off!” He finished as the Lord of Last Hearth chuckled in response. Clearly the two of them being friends due to the fact the Greatjon hadn’t come over and thumped him.

That’s If he could even do that. He mused. Jon seemed to bring up more questions than answers at
the moment. Queen Rhaella was definitely right to investigate.

Jon chuckled to himself as he opened the flap of his tent and held it open for him to walk in. It was big enough for a lad of Jon’s size, enough room for him to kip down and adequate space for his belongings. He instantly scanned the tent in the hopes of seeing this elusive evidence of his uncle’s survival, in the corner he spotted a pile of furs covered in little white hairs that seemed to have been fashioned into some sort of nest or bed for a dog.

*Probably one of those direwolves that had been whispered about.* He presumed.

In the other corner closer to what he assumed was Jon’s bed was a couple of bags, bags Jon was moving over to.

“He’s happy by the way. Doesn’t half make me want to hit him sometimes though.” Jon said.

“Who?” He replied, furrowed brow in confusion “Lord Umber?”

Jon shook his head “Gerion, your uncle.” He answered. Jon chuckled to himself “He took the piss out of me so much but I could always tell it was out of love, he’s a good man that uncle of yours.”

It sounds just like the man that had disappeared all those years ago, a man that him and Tyrion were so incredibly fond of, always the first person to tell them if they were being a dick, always japing about things he *really* shouldn’t have been japing about. The only man who has ever managed to get a chuckle out of their father.

He wanted to believe him so much but he couldn’t without proof.

He cleared his throat as he took a seat on the ground “Where is he?” He asked as Jon started fiddling with a strap that held one of his bags tightly shut.

“Oh an island called Shikoku, in a city called Kōchi.” Jon responded.

*And where the fuck was that?*
He asked what he was thinking and Jon answered, the answer turned out to be very unexpected.

“A few months out by boat, west of Westeros.” He answered nonchalantly like it was something completely sane to say.

He shook his head, he didn’t know what game he was playing “You’re lying. Nobody is stupid enough to sail west of Westeros, and even if they are, they don’t come back.” He said. Something came to him as well “In fact, my uncle Gerion didn’t even sail west, he sailed east, through the smoking sea of Valyria on his bat shit crazy quest.” he explained further.

Jon stopped messing with the strap on his bag and stroked his beard, looking thoughtful “I always did wonder how he ended up where he did. He told me he sailed through the Jade Sea, past the Manticore Isles and even past Asshai before passing out from hunger sailing up the Saffron Straits. Told me he’d rather die from starvation than to some freaky witch torture that they do in that area of the world. The blokes from Kōchi boarded his ship in the middle of the ocean and towed him back to shore, he woke up in a foreign land with foreign people who spoke a foreign language to him and he was scared shitless. Turned out they were decent people and nursed him back to health, he decided to stay, learn the culture and make a home for himself, the rest, as they say, is history.” Jon explained before going back to his bag and working on the straps.

He just sat there in amazement.

_The fuck had he just been told?_

Something didn't add up though “But you said you sailed west? He went east.” He questioned.

Jon chuckled as he finally pulled away one of the straps “Yeah I always wondered about that, even Gerion was stumped when I asked him about it,” he said as he shrugged his shoulders “Maybe it's something to investigate at some point, I wouldn't mind taking a little adventure.” Jon finished with a laugh.

_He’s mad, that’s the only explanation._ He thought and told him so.

“You’re mad, fucking insane! What made you think that I’d believe any of that what you’ve just said? None of what you’ve said proves anything you’ve said about my uncle!” He growled out as Jon finally got into his bag before hauling a black leather scabbard out of it, a sword within its
He grabbed the hilt of the blade, Jaime noticed the pommel of it was made of gold, in the shape of a lion’s head. His eye’s narrowed at that, his heartrate picking up. The slow unsheathing of the sword revealed the smoky patterns of that elusive and sort after treasure, a metal of such rarity. The solid gold lion’s head on the pommel, the polished *Valyrian steel*, his eye’s widened in realisation and excitement.

“Maybe this is enough evidence?” Jon questioned with a smirk on his face.

He couldn’t believe what he was seeing, the sword, his uncle’s survival, the mad as fuck stories, they were all...real!?

He looked at Jon with a look of disbelief, a smile blooming on his face as he eyed the sword up and down.

*It was exquisite.*

Jon handed it to him and he gripped it like it was made of glass, the balance was perfect, the steel was perfect, everything was perfect about it. He made Jon jump slightly when he sheathed it back in its scabbard in a flash.

He looked at this boy, no, that wasn't fair, this man, he looked at this man with determination. He could kiss Queen Rhaella for suggesting this if it wasn’t for the fact that it would probably cost him his head in the process.

Jon was looking back at him with a quirked eyebrow at the determined look Jaime was giving him.

He cleared his throat,

“I think you and me need to go and pay my father a visit.” He said.
“Leave me.” He said to the steward as he sat down at his table inside his tent, a cocoon of red and gold.

He sighed in annoyance at what the boy had just told him, trouble between the Clegane brothers was the last thing he needed, they’d only just arrived and set up camp around the grounds of Harrenhal. He thought sending Sandor to Storm’s End in service of his daughter and her brood would cool tension between the two, especially with how many years it had been.

But no, they were already butting heads and Tyrion’s warning about bringing the two of them together having the potential for trouble was coming to fruition. He shook his head and gritted his teeth at the thought of seeing that smug grin on his face the next time he saw him.

It also meant that if Sandor had been spotted then the Stormlands had made good time and arrived shortly after them. It also meant he’d be graced by his daughter and his insufferable grandson.

His steward returned to his tent and spoke up “Mi lord, your son is here to see you. He’s brought a guest.” The boy announced.

He gritted his teeth even harder as a whoosh of air escaped his nostrils in the attempt to calm his ire. This was all he needed, speak of the devil and he shall appear, it was like the gods were mocking him.

“Send Tyrion in, the quicker this is over the better.” He replied to his steward as he poured himself a goblet of Arbour.

“Mi lord, Ser Jaime wishes to see you, not Lord Tyrion. I apologise for the confusion.” His steward explained. The boy knew his place and apologised for his mistake.

Somebody was trying to please him.

He then realised what the boy had just said.

“Send him in.” He replied as the young steward bowed and left the tent to retrieve his son.
He’d not seen Jaime in nearly a year, the last time was when he visited the capital for business reasons. The boy was still in love with his Kingsguard vows enough to refuse his offer, to hand his resignation in to his King and return home where he belonged in preparation to take over when he passed. It was an empty wish he admitted, his idiotic son was dead set on wasting his life away guarding the King.

His eldest son and heir had chosen to be a glorified bodyguard over becoming warden of the west, and it was always a source of rage for him.

The steward returned with his son, decked out in his white and gold armour, and a pristine white cloak of his precious Kingsguard, a tool of protection and nothing more.

He felt his ire rise at the thought of that.

The second man who followed his son in was a different story, he’d never seen or met him before. Intrigue bubbled as he wondered why his son, a member of the Kingsguard was presenting this man to him.

His son nodded in his direction as he sternly looked at him, the man next to him however, decided to look around the tent with interest before locking eyes with him and nodding eventually.

*He already disliked this boy.*

Jaime cleared his throat “Father, good to see you again.” His son said to him as he carried on looking at the stranger in his tent. His colouring and clothing were obviously northern but a closer look showed something more. The boy had a couple of inches on his son to his petty annoyance, he had a powerful frame which screamed warrior, a neatly trimmed beard that covered his features but not enough to tell that there were more than northern roots to this boy. The eye’s though, the colour of liquid silver were staring right back at him, refusing to break contact with his emerald gaze first. He was both annoyed and impressed by his confidence.

Either confidence or stupidity, it was too early to say without him opening his mouth.

He broke eye contact and looked at his son but didn’t miss the slight upturn of the northerner’s mouth. “Jaime.” He nodded. “And who is your friend?” He asked as he looked back into those silver eyes.
“This is Jon, Jon Snow, Lord Starks son.” His son replied with a smile.

Ned Stark’s bastard. So this was the runaway son, he didn’t even know that he’d been found, the last he heard about him was in the raven he’d received from King’s Landing asking to keep a look out for the bastard of Winterfell. It was safe to say that piece of parchment had been thrown into the fireplace without a second thought.

But now the boy was approaching him as he stood from his chair, the years away from his home hadn’t been unkind to boy that was for certain. Snow held his hand out and Tywin grasped it as he looked him dead in the eyes. A strong grip and determined stare the boy had.

He didn’t know if he was trying to intimidate him or impress him but he refused to allow either of those things happen. Snow released his grip first and turned back to Jaime.

It was his turn to smirk. Two could play at that game, boy.

The smirk slowly fell from his face when he realised he’d been sucked into a childish battle of wits, and by the slight smirk Snow had on his face when he stood back next to Jaime, that was the plan all along.

He didn’t know whether to be impressed or annoyed. Again, he refused to even choose as Jaime looked back and forth between him and Snow.

“Out with it then. I know you’ve come here for business not pleasure so let me hear it.” He said to Jaime as he returned to his seat. Jaime sighed but nodded as he lifted a scabbard that had been hefted over his shoulder, in it was a sword with a very interesting pommel.

The sword was placed on the table in front of him and his eye’s narrowed as he took in its appearance. He looked up at Jaime, at Snow and then back at his son.

“And what is this?” He asked Jaime as his eyes dropped back down to the sword, the gold pommel in the shape of a lion was an interesting touch but a new sword wasn’t at the top of his priorities list, especially one the size of the greatsword laid in front of him.
It was Snow who spoke up before Jaime could and his words were shocking to say the least. “Compliments of your brother Gerion, he told me to say hello from him too, by the way.”

He looked back up the boy with fire in his eyes as his nostrils flared, it seemed to have zero effect on the bastard as he growled out his response.

“And what is that supposed to mean, hmm?” He said. The fact that Jaime hadn't looked shocked or angry after the boy had opened his mouth spelt out the obvious but he refused to accept that until he got to the bottom of it.

Snow grinned, a grin he really wanted to wipe off his face. Jaime was grinning as well as he nodded towards the sword “Unsheathe it, that’ll give you a good idea what he’s talking about.” His son explained.

He carried on looking at Jaime, waiting for a sign of anything but the grin stayed on his son’s face. Jaime nodded back at the sword and with one last look at Snow, he looked back at the sword.

Tywin Lannister was never excited, never impatient but he felt a drop of the two as he slowly unsheathed the sword. The more leather that slipped away from the steel of the blade, the more eager he grew to pull away the rest with zeal. The smoky ripples in the steel were presented to him more and more as the scabbard slowly pulled away from it.

Valyrian Steel.

The scabbard was fully separated from its blade and he looked up and down the treasure with a blank face void of emotion. It wouldn’t do him any favours if he lost his cool now even though inside his mind, he was purring like the creature on their house banners.

He wasn’t stupid, he was far from it in fact. He knew what this was, the valyrian steel, the solid gold lion pommel, the mention of his, until now, presumed dead brother. The links were there.

This was Brightroar, the long lost valyrian sword of House Lannister. And it was back in their hands.

*Now came the negotiation.* He thought. There was no way this sword was leaving his sight now that he was in possession of it. True to a famous old saying, a Lannister always pays their debts, and a
substantial one was sat on the table in front of him. The man stood a few feet away, waiting to collect his fee.

“I think this is one of the first times I’ve ever seen my father speechless.” Jaime spoke up into the silence of his tent. He looked up and saw his son nudging Snow in the arm in jest.

“How much?” He interrupted before Jaime got carried away with his incessant mockery.

He looked towards Snow and repeated the question “How much?” He said again. The quicker he could get this business over and done with, the quicker he could get rid of everyone from his tent so he could pour himself a large goblet of arbour gold and just stare at the majesty of their family heirloom, in the privacy of his tent where nobody could see him smiling.

Snow quirked his eyebrow and shook his head “I’m not here for your money, Gerion specifically asked me to deliver it back to house Lannister. It never belonged to me in the first place so you owe me nothing.” The boy said as he stroked his beard.

*Has to be a trick, nobody just gives away such a thing, selling it could have set him for life.*

Before the boy could change his mind though, he decided to not look a gift horse in the mouth.

“Fine. House Lannister would like to thank you for your service.” He replied as he gave the boy a nod, it was the least he deserved for delivering the sword.

His son seemed mortified by his response “Really? That’s it? He comes here and brings this back where it belongs and all he gets is a thanks?” Jaime said as he pointed at Brightroar and looked at him in annoyance.

He would have to have a word with his son after Snow left, speaking like that at him was bad enough behind closed doors but in front of company, totally unacceptable.

“You heard Lord Snow, it was a service to house Lannister. You should watch who you’re speaking to.” He replied to his insolent son with gritted teeth.
Snow cleared his throat as the two Lannisters butted heads “Not lord Snow, my lord, just Jon. And I didn’t do it for house Lannister, I did it for a friend of mine, one of my closest in fact. I couldn’t give a dusty fuck about any reward or owt, as far as I’m concerned, I kept the promise I gave him by returning the sword to its owners. We’re square, chief.” Snow explained.

He looked away from his son who was now grinning at the boy’s response and locked eyes with ‘Just Jon’. He glared at the boy, a glare that made many a man cower underneath it but to his surprise and annoyance, Snow sent him one of equal intensity back his way.

*Hard and unblinking silver pools of determination.*

This lad had balls, he was confident it wasn't stupidity anymore.

It still didn’t excuse the way he spoke in his presence.

“You’re an ill-mannered individual aren’t you.” He said, the boy grinned but kept his eyes locked with his own.

“I learnt from the best. Your brother is a master in the art of insolence.” Snow replied and for a split second, Tywin Lannister’s mask cracked as a tiny upturn at the corner of his mouth appeared.

It was gone in a flash.

“And what has this brother of mine been up to that is so important that he couldn’t return here with the sword himself?” He asked as he saw his son relax from the corner of his eye.

The grin on Snow’s face dropped and his eyes widened, a normal man would have missed it but Tywin Lannister wasn’t a normal man.

“Ser Jaime will tell you everything I told him on the way here. I have to leave, I’m needed somewhere else.” Snow explained as he nodded to them both and left the tent before he could even reply.

His son took the seat across from him and looked at the sword on the table with a smile.
“Still can't believe its back, and uncle Gerion is still alive.” Jaime seemed to say to himself as Tywin carried on looking at the tent entrance where Snow had just walked out.

Jaime seemed to notice “He’s an interesting one, isn't he?” His son said.

Very interesting. He thought to himself.

“He certainly knows how to make an impression, I'll give him that and only that.” He replied as he turned back towards the table and admired the sword once again.

He wouldn’t be forgetting the name Jon Snow in a hurry, that was for certain.

Rhaenys

“So you have no idea who that was?” She asked to Margaery’s brother as they made their way back towards the castle. She wasn’t supposed to be out at the moment but she couldn’t help her intrigue when she heard her grandmother’s conversation with Ser Jaime. She only heard the tail end of it but heard that somebody was of interest to her grandmother.

That led to her dragging Ser Loras out of the castle and following Ser Jaime to the practice yards. What she’d seen there was very interesting indeed, her grandmother was rightfully intrigued by this mysterious dark figure.

She needed a name so she could do her own investigation. An unknown having the ability to drop a Kingsguard, one of their best, so easily was definitely something worth looking into.

That’s all it was, planning for the future of their house. A man of such skill could be very useful to them, maybe even a future Kingsguard.

She wouldn't mind being assigned such a man to her services.

Had nothing to do with those raven curls that flowed with the same grace as his movements with a
blade, had nothing to do with his powerful form darting around with such precision and
determination, enough to display the power of his body as it pressed against the sleeves of his tunic.

Had nothing to do with the brief glimpse of those silver eyes that looked at Ser Jaime with
such intensity that even she felt something.

No, it had nothing to do with any of those things, nothing to do with her being a horny twenty year
old watching a beautiful man put on a clinic against one of the best fighters in the realm.

Who the fuck was she kidding?

Joffrey Baratheon, Ser Edmure and Harrold Hardyng had already approached her since they’d
arrived and she already knew that they couldn’t compare to the man she’d just seen. She’d not even
met the man and she could already tell he was better than the other three, any one of those would
have gloated and celebrated their victory over Ser Jaime but not this one, he acted with grace as he
helped the Kingsguard he’d just defeated to his feet, zero posturing in sight.

She was that lost in her thoughts, she didn’t hear Loras’ answer to her question.

She turned and looked at him as they got closer to the castle “I’m sorry, what did you say?”

He huffed, straightening his sword belt, hand on the hilt of his blade, primed and ready to protect her
if it was needed.

“Really, your grace? You were the one to ask me the question.” He replied.

She shook her head and looked ahead of them “Forgive me, my mind was wandering that’s all.” She
said.

Loras chuckled “Nothing to do with tall, dark and handsome your grace?” He japed as she shot him
a good-natured glare “And to answer your question, no, I have no idea who that was. Maybe ask her
grace, the Queen mother who he was.” He suggested with a smile on his face.

She smiled at a few people she walked past as they bowed for her before turning to him “And if I ask
her, she’ll know I was eavesdropping on one of her conversations. It’s clear that your sister got the brains I see.” She japed as she gave him a wink. She heard him mutter the word ‘charming’ as they reached the courtyard of the castle.

Stood at the main entrance to the castle was Dany and she didn’t look pleased at all.

“Where have you been?” She asked in a harsh voice, Loras looked at her like he was gonna enjoy this.

She shrugged as they entered the castle, Dany tagging along with an air of annoyance “I just went to have a look around that’s all, nothing special.” She explained.

“And you couldn't wait for me? Mother has sent Ser Jaime off on some task or whatever so I’ve been confided to the castle until he returns, I can't believe you went without me.” Dany huffed as they turned a corner.

“And you missed some of the lords who came to greet us, we had to make an excuse for you when they asked where you were.” She explained further, a smirk on her beautiful face as she looked at her “Rhaegar isn't happy.” She finished.

Brilliant, that’s all she needed.

“Her grace has been eyeing boys.” Ser Loras blurted out as they reached the wing of the castle that held their chambers.

Her mouth dropped open for a fraction of a second before turning on the Knight of Flowers staring daggers at the man.

“Loras!” She reprimanded. He bowed his head in apology but the smile on his face exposed his real feelings of the situation.

“Oh really?” Dany said, a tone with full intent to tease her, all traces of anger lost.

She shook her head as they reached the corridor that her room was in “No not really, don’t listen to
“Please don’t...

But her prayers were in vain as the pair of them decided the most interesting thing they could be doing right now was teasing her.

“And did any of them take your fancy Rhae? Did any of them make you swoon?” Dany said as she pretended to do such a thing herself, just to tease the living hell out of her.

Before she could reply and put a stop to her teasing, Loras spoke again.

“Tall, dark and handsome, that’s what he was like. Unfortunately for her, she never got his name.” Loras interrupted again. She’d have to have a word with Margaery, see if she could get any embarrassing stories about Loras out of her.

Dany sighed for added effect “It sounds like the start of one of those stories, doesn’t it, Ser Loras?” She said, Loras snorted but nodded anyway.

“And he beat Ser Jaime in a spar, quite convincingly might I add.” Loras explained a little further. Dany quirked an eyebrow at that as she looked back at him before looking at her.

“Really?” She asked, a tone that sounded like she didn’t believe him. A look of annoyance took over face after a few seconds. “Wait, is that where he was? Instead of escorting me around the stalls and what have you, he was out getting filthy in the practice yard?” She growled.

Ser Jaime was in trouble.

She looked at Loras and he looked a bit scared of Dany’s temper, instead of helping him out she shrugged her shoulders at him and grinned a little.

*Serves you right, you gobby cow.*
Dany huffed when she didn't get a response “Wait until I see that man. I need to go and speak with mother about this, sending him off to play in the dirt wasn't exactly fair on me." Dany said, mainly to herself than them two.

Her eyes widened at that, panic building up at a rapid pace.

“Wait, you can't Dany.” She said as she grabbed the top of her arm. Dany looked down at where she was being held and the looked back up into her eye’s. She could see the violet in her aunt’s eyes darken.

*That classic Targaryen temper was on full display.*

“And why is that?” She said as she shrugged her hand off her arm.

She sighed in resignation, there was no way of getting around this “Because if *she* knows that *you* know where Jaime was then she’d ask how you knew that.” She said.

“And that’s a problem, why?” Dany replied. They were stood just outside of her chamber so she entered and motioned for Dany to follow her in. She motioned for Ser Loras to keep guard at her door, he’d done enough damage with that massive trap of his. When she did, he nodded and mouthed the word ‘*sorry*’ to her.

At least he knew he was being a pain in the arse and she nodded at his apology, unfortunately for her, Loras’ apology was the least of her concerns as she closed the door and turned to her aunt.

Dany was stood in the middle of her room with her arms folded across her chest, enough the squeeze and push her breasts together, her cleavage was on full display because of that. Coupled with fierce look she was sending her way, the effect of it conjured up some interesting thoughts.

It was something to think about later however, since her aunt was waiting for an explanation.

She cleared her throat “The reason you can't tell grandmother it was me who told you about Ser Jaime is because she'll find out that I was eavesdropping.” She explained as she walked over to her table and poured both of them a goblet of dornish red each.
Dany’s ire seemed to slowly fade away as she accepted the drink “Why were you eavesdropping?” She asked before taking a sip of her wine. They both sat down at the table next to the window, a wide look of the festivities outside on full display.

*This tournament was going to be huge, Dorne and the Reach hadn’t even arrived yet and the amount of people was staggering.*

She took a sip of her own wine before answering “I wasn't eavesdropping on purpose, I just happened to catch the tail end of your mother’s conversation with Ser Jaime. I just thought it was weird grandma was sending a Kingsguard to spy on somebody that's all. That’s why I ended up leaving without you, less people meant less chance of being caught.” She explained to her aunt.

Dany seemed to accept her reason as she hummed before taking another sip of her wine “It does seem kind of odd, doesn't it? I wonder what is so special about this man that it warrants a Kingsguard spy?” Dany mused.

She shrugged since she didn’t have the answer herself “That's what I was trying to find out myself, all I did find out was that he was pretty good with a sword and that was of what I saw, me and Loras only got there when they were finishing up. We had to leave pretty much as soon as they finished before anybody spotted us.” She said.

Dany leaned over the table a little “Wait, so Loras was telling the truth? This mystery man managed to beat Ser Jaime?” She asked, a little bit of excitement playing in her eyes.

She huffed in amusement “He didn't just manage to Dany, it was pretty convincing. Even Ser Jaime looked shocked when he was forced to yield.” She explained as pictures of the beautiful sable haired man jumped around in her head.

Dany must have seen something on her face to give away what she was thinking about so she leant a little closer and spoke in hushed tones.

She smiled “Soooo, what did he look like?” She asked as she sipped from her goblet, amusement and interest behind those violet pools.

She sighed and ultimately lost the battle against the small blush that appeared on her face “Where do I begin?” She said.
Dany’s smile grew “Start from the best bit.” She said.

She quirked an eyebrow and smiled herself “Which is?” She asked.

“Arse.” Came Dany’s deadpan reply.

She gasped in faux offence “Daenerys Targaryen, you filthy woman.” She said before the pair of them broke out in laughter.

Jon

The moment he heard Kireina’s voice in the back of his mind while he was stood in Tywin Lannister’s tent, he had to leave to check up on her. If Tywin Lannister was offended by his abrupt exit then that was just something he would have to deal with some other time.

At this moment in time, he was wading his way through a forest, a forest that took him an hour to get to on foot. He would have taken a horse but a brisk walk in the afternoon breeze was just what he needed after the big lunch that he’d had, when Greatjon Umber offers you a whole roast chicken for dinner, you eat the whole roast chicken for dinner.

He huffed as he climbed over a log to get deeper into the forest, he was thankful that Kireina had the foresight to use forests and wooded areas to land in recent months. He knew at some point that the cat would be out of the bag and Kireina would be revealed to the world but right now, he needed to keep her a secret, a target on his and her back was the last thing they needed right now.

Especially with all the thoughts that had been going through his mind lately.

He was hoping to all the gods, old and new that he wasn’t making a grave mistake. Uncle Benjen, Aemon and even Kireina had made their beliefs known, and Jon had agreed with them at the time, even ready to fly back to Winterfell to confront the man himself, the man who was actually his uncle by blood.

But the thoughts he had just before he went to sleep each night wouldn’t go away.
He was 99% sure that he wasn’t, that he was Lyanna Stark’s son and not Eddard Stark’s. But that 1% existed, and madder things had happened in the world to completely ignore that sliver of a chance.

One of those mad things was looking at him now.

“What took you so long?” The great mountain of magic growled through their bond.

*Kireina* was currently laid out in an open area with the sunlight beaming down on her, the light bounced off of the crystals on her back and wings aggressively, casting rainbow prisms around them.

It was distractingly beautiful.

He sighed as he approached her, the subtle purr from her chest could be heard and felt through the ground as he got closer to her. He knew she had a certain affinity with light, sunlight specifically but that was as far as she explained. Apart from her claiming that she essentially feeds off of it, not much else was known about her love for the sun.

“I’m here now aren’t I? Now where is that little sod?” He asked as he looked around.

She huffed and craned her neck towards a tree where he spotted the white ball of fur curled up asleep, the bones of some unknown animal scattered all around him.

He approached Ghost, looking for an idea of where he could be hurt. When he got closer, the direwolf’s eyes slowly opened before he bolted up right and jumped him.

“Get off me ya little arsehole!” He exclaimed as Ghost slobbered all over his face. The wolf eventually got off of him, giving Jon a better chance to evaluate his injuries.

From first glance he couldn’t see much wrong with his boy, just stood there with his tongue lolling out, red eyes bouncing between him and *Kireina*. After a few minutes of trying to work out what
was wrong with him, he decided to ask the dragon instead.

“I thought you said Ghost was with you and he was hurt? From what I can see, there's nothing wrong with him.” He said as he carried on looking for something he might be missing.

“I didn’t say he was hurt, I said he was gonna get hurt. There’s a difference.” She explained.

He turned towards her as he ruffled Ghost’s fur, a quirked eyebrow shot her way “And why was he gonna get hurt? Are there poachers or something?” He asked as he looked around, a trickle of concern entered into his system.

Kireina blew smoke out of her nose, it was the closest thing to a snort he’d ever seen from her.

“I was the one who was gonna do the hurting!” She growled as she looked at the white wolf. Ghost to his credit didn’t even react and carried on panting in excitement as Jon carried on ruffling his fur.

“Why? Why would you hurt him? Just look at that face,” he said as he framed Ghost’s face between his two hands. “how could you hurt a face like that?” He asked.

“With great swiftness and destruction.” She replied as Ghost began licking one of his hands that was framing his face. He let go and wiped it on his surcoat.

What the fuck had he done to make her this angry?

She obviously heard his thoughts as she answered that question, the answer amusing and annoying him in equal measure.

“He snuck up on me and...and relieved himself all over me!” She said, he could feel her ire between their bond.

He sighed then released a humourless chuckle.
“This isn't funny! What would you do if I relieved myself all over you?” She asked, he could feel her getting more annoyed.

He had to end this.

“I would probably drown, but that’s beside the point. You had me come all the way out here because he peed on you. He’s only young, chances are he was marking his territory and went the wrong way about it. He just wants to make friends that’s all.” He said, trying to defend the pup’s actions. Ghost rubbed his head against his leg in response.

*Kireina* huffed but seemed calm down.

“Can we play nice now?” He asked as he looked between the two of them. He felt like a bloody father telling the kids off for being naughty.

*Kireina* blew smoke out her nose in response, Jon believed that was the best he was gonna get from her. Ghost just licked his hand in response.

He nodded “Good. And you,” He said as he pointed at Ghost “Stop peeing on her would ya? You've been warned.” He said as the wolf lowered his head and let out a pathetic whine.

“That won't work either, you need to learn.” He said as he walked towards *Kireina* and sat down next to her, leaning his back against her warm flank. Ghost timidly approached them and laid down next to him, lowering his head to his paws and giving Jon them bloody puppy eyes.

He folded his arms and closed his eyes, a deep breath in and out as he did so. A little nap felt just right at that moment.

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Chapter End Notes

The chapter may seem like it ended abruptly but that was done on purpose, I didn't want to leave it on a cliffhanger since the next chapter wont be out till early next month.
The rest of the houses will be arriving by the end of the next chapter, the chapter after will involve some more interest being built in Jon before the actual grand melee in chapter 23.

Just a little something to give you an idea of where we are going with the next few updates.

Thanks again for even taking the time to read this, I'm beyond amazed at the reception its received.

Until next time :)
The Dragon's Interest

Chapter Notes

Bit more focus on Jon and people's thoughts on him in this chapter. Needed for the story to progress.

Plus it is a Jon centric fic so I've kinda got an excuse ;)

Enough talk, enjoy the chapter.

Edit: If you're seeing this updated again its because ive gone through and fixed the spacing errors that somebody kindly pointed out in the comments. Something obviously went wrong during the copy and pasting from microsoft word. Sorry to get people's hopes up of a double upload :( 

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ned

“Where’ve you been?” He heard Arya say loudly as Jon walked into camp. She sounded annoyed even if it was muffled by the bread she’d just shoved into her mouth. Ned and the children were sat together as they ate their breakfast, Catelyn had taken Sansa to the Riverlands camp to meet with her brother and uncle, what she wanted to speak to them this early in the day for, he didn’t know.

He looked up at Jon and realised that Arya had a point, where had he been? From his attire, it looked like he’d been out all night. He nearly jumped when Ghost padded into view from behind him, tongue lolling out and panting liked he’d been running around. The wolf lifted its snout into the air, obviously detecting a whiff of sausages and bacon that were being served up for everyone around camp.

“Looks like a dirty stop out to me HA!” He heard Greatjon bellow out from across the camp, a few people chuckling and groaning with the volume of the man’s shout.

Jon just sat down next to Bran with a groan, he ruffled the boy’s hair as he reached for the jug of water on the table. He poured a generous amount into a mug and necked the whole thing before filling it back up again, he looked up at everyone as he finally finished pouring.
“I’ve just been out, that’s all. Been out in the woods with this one.” He said as he nodded towards Ghost, the wolf currently sat in between Bran and Rickon receiving ruffles of his fur from the two boys. Jon grabbed a sausage and tore it in half before giving a bit each to Bran and Rickon, he nodded towards the direwolf.

After the wolf practically inhaled the two halves of sausage, Jon filled his own plate and tucked in. He obviously thought he’d got away without giving Arya a suitable answer but the little she wolf had other ideas as she glared at her brother. Ned just kept quiet and watched on, Jon was more receptive when it was Arya poking, he just closed up whenever it was him.

_I suppose he had an excuse for that. I’m not the most open when it came to Jon poking around either._

Arya stabbed her fork into her food as she looked at her brother. By the looks of it, she didn’t look best pleased about something, something Jon had done.

“You never came back after you left with Ser Jaime, I thought we were gonna spar after dinner but nobody knew where you were.” She said. Jon winced in response as Ned’s blood froze.

_Ser Jaime!? Why was he with a member of the Kingsguard? Who did Ser Jaime take him to?_

So many questions running through his mind, so many possibilities to choose from. His inner turmoil must have been all over his face as Jon looked at him for a second, huffed, then looked back at his sister.

“Sorry little wolf, we’ll spar after breakfast to make up for it, is that fair?” He asked as he mopped up his runny egg with his bread. He turned and looked at his two brothers “You and Rickon can join us as well if you want?” He said to Bran as he winked at Rickon who was sneaking Ghost another sausage.

_What was he doing with Ser Jaime? He kept asking himself._

“Sorry Jon, uncle Blackfish is training us after breakfast.” Bran replied, looking genuinely disappointed that he couldn’t train with his brother. He thought the name he gave Ser Brynden was amusing, regardless of his mind being elsewhere right now.
“I get him all to myself then!” Arya exclaimed as Jon smiled at her in response “If he can teach Ser Jaime a couple of things then think what he can do for me.” She seemed to say to herself as she shoved another piece of bread into her mouth, eager to finish her meal and drag her brother off.

What?

He turned to Arya and patted her on the back as she started coughing with how quick she was eating “Slow down Arya, you’ll choke to death then they’ll definitely be no sparring at all, mmm?” He said, waiting for her to recover before asking her “What’s this about Ser Jaime?” He said to her, looking back and forth between her and Jon. Jon was too busy cleaning his plate with a piece of bread to acknowledge him.

“Jon beat him in a spar yesterday.” Arya answered, straight to the point as she reached for her cup of water.

Jon beat a Kingsguard!?

He looked at Jon with wide eyes “You beat a Kingsguard?” He asked. Jon just shrugged his shoulders as he put the last piece of bread in his mouth, brushing his hands together to clear them of crumbs as he chewed away.

How can he be so nonchalant about that?

Bran looked like a ball of energy as he bounced in his seat and nodded “You should have seen it father, Jon beat him fair and square! He’s really good, you should spar with him.” Bran suggested, he saw Rickon nodded in agreement as he reached for another sausage to feed to Ghost. He pulled the plate away from him after he grabbed one, a look of innocence on the boy’s face when he realised he’d been caught.

Jon placed his mug back on the table after he’d taken a sip “I don’t know about that Bran, can’t have him getting hurt now, can we?” He said as he looked directly into Ned’s eyes.

That felt like a threat.

He knew Jon was gifted with the blade but he didn't know he was that gifted. A seasoned knight from White Harbour was one thing, a member of the Kingsguard and one of the most revered
fighters in the realm was completely different.

*People will talk. That was the last thing he wanted concerning Jon. It would attract a large amount of attention if the wrong people found out.*

...and the *Royal family* were the last people he wanted to find out about this.

“Finished! I’ll go and get my sw....cloak.” Arya said as she pushed her plate away from herself. Jon smirked at her when her eyes went wide.

He was too distracted with his thoughts to even realise what she’d nearly just said, she took advantage of this and bolted off towards her tent, a guard following her as a precaution.

His eyes jolted forward when he noticed Jon getting up from his chair, lifting his arms in the air and stretching out his back. “I best go and keep an eye on her before she runs off without me.” Jon said as he ruffled both Rickon and Bran’s hair again. He nodded towards Ned but that was as much as he was gonna get, Ghost followed him out and towards where Arya had run off to.

He sat their lost in his thoughts as Bran and Rickon talked to each other. Jon defeated a *Kingsguard* in a spar, it was only a spar but he knew it would spread like wildfire when somebody found out. People don’t just beat the *Kingsguard*, whether it be a real battle or a training session. It took something pretty special to beat one of the sacred order and people always took an interest in special things.

He closed his eyes and sighed, by lunch it could be the talk of the tournament, the only thing he could appreciate was that Jon didn't seem that fussed, like it was just some common occurrence, the last thing he’d be doing was shouting it from the rooftops unlike a lot of men who would be basking in it right now.

“Lord Stark!” He heard somebody say as he opened his eyes. He looked to his left and saw Catelyn, Sansa, Jeyne and the person who had called out his name, the Blackfish. Bran and Rickon looked Ser Brynden’s way as well and he saw them both smiling.

He stood from his seat and held his hand out, the experienced knight grasped it and gave him a strong handshake as the girls sat down at the table. Catelyn was eyeing the plates that had been left by Jon and Arya with annoyance as she stacked them and moved them to the end of the table. Sansa and Jeyne seemed to be having a conversation all to themselves as they sat down at the other end.
“Ser Brynden, nice to see you again.” He replied to the man’s greeting.

“I won't keep you Lord Stark, just come to fetch these two. I’ll have a pair of worthy knights returned to you in no time.” The man japed as he winked at his two sons.

He nodded as he looked at Bran and Rickon “You best be good for your uncle, do you hear?” He said as the two boys nodded an affirmative before bouncing up from their seats.

“I would have also trained Arya as well, but my niece doesn’t approve. She’s gonna be a handful when she’s older Cat.” He said as he smirked towards his wife.

Catelyn pulled a face and glared at her uncle before looking around “That's a point, where is Arya? Ned?” She asked.

The last thing he wanted was a fight with his wife. He knew she would be far from happy with who she was with and what they were doing.

Rickon answered before he could open his mouth “She’s gone with Jon, he’s gonna teach her sword just like uncle Blackfish is with us.” He said as he bounced up and down with excitement, unaware of what he’d just started with the adults.

Bran seemed to lay it on even thicker as he spoke “He beat Ser Jaime in a spar and now he’s teaching Arya some of the moves he used on him.” He said as he looked at Ser Brynden. The veteran knight held a passive face in response but Ned could see the annoyance behind the man’s eyes. He didn't dare look to his right where Catelyn was sat, he could practically feel the heat of her ire coming off of her.

It really didn't help his situation out when Bran was telling everybody about Jon defeating a Kingsguard either.

“Good for him, now let's go you two, I wanna see you sweating like pigs by the end of our session.” Ser Brynden said to Bran and Rickon. The two boys started walking off as the Blackfish followed them out of the northern camp.
As soon as they were out of sight, Catelyn whispered in a harsh tone, probably so Sansa and Jeyne couldn't hear her “I can't believe you let Arya go with that boy without asking me! He’s getting his claws in, Arya is becoming more and more difficult the long she spends time with him!” She growled.

He sighed, he wasn’t having this conversation for the thousandth time “Calm down Cat, he’s helping her learn how to use a sword, its fine.” He said, unwilling to even entertain her when she was like this.

“Calm down!? I won't calm down, this boy is hell bent on ruining our daughter, how will we ever find her a husb...”

“I said enough!” He said in a harsh whisper, loud enough for Sansa and Jeyne to sneak a look at them.

*He needed to clear his head, and get away from her relentless hatred.*

“I’m going for a walk, I'll see you later.” He said as he stood up and walked off, his personal guard, Ser Rodrik in this case, following him out of the camp. He didn't see the death glare his wife burnt into his back, or the concerned look on his daughter's face.

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**Daenerys**

The sun was high and bright as it beat it’s rays down on them, the sky was clear and blue without a cloud in sight. It was the perfect weather for a picnic and Margaery completely agreed with her. At the *Rose of Highgarden’s* suggestion, they decided to invite a couple of ladies that were present at the tourney.

So, currently, it was her, Margaery, little Alysanne, Lady Sansa and her friend Lady Jeyne, Lady Myrcella and last but certainly not least, Lady Myranda. The seven of them were making their way down to the edge of the god’s eye where Margaery had already spotted just yesterday, a lush green field dotted with fully bloomed trees, perfect for sitting under to shade them from the sun.

With them were two Kingsguard that were assigned to the three princesses, Ser Loras and Ser Jaime were the chosen one’s for this outing, especially since Ser Jaime owed it to her. The rest of the ladies had their own men, each from their respected household guard, two of which were carrying the baskets full of everything they needed for their outing.
As they walked towards the field, she heard Lady Myranda talking to Lady Sansa, almost like she was sharing a secret.

“I hear that brother of yours is entering the grand melee, Lady Sansa.” She heard the buxom lady from the Vale say. She looked towards the two and noticed the smirk on the woman’s face.

Lady Sansa nodded and smiled at the woman “That’s correct, Lady Myranda. Jon didn’t seem all that bothered about competing but it would seem Lord Umber twisted his arm.” The young red head from the North replied. When she sent a message to the northern camp enquiring whether or not Lady Sansa wanted to join them, the message also included Lady Arya, or just Arya as the wild girl preferred to be called. Unfortunately, Arya wasn’t in camp at the time and was busy with her brother.

The same brother who had disappeared for a few years, only to return a few months ago.

She heard Lady Myranda huff in reply as they finally made it on to the grass, there were only a few people there and most of them seemed to have had the same idea as her, sprawled out on their own blankets, enjoying the weather they’d been gifted today. She saw both Ser Jaime and Ser Loras scan the area for any potential threats.

“Please, call me Randa, Lady Sansa.” Lady Myranda replied as she chuckled “And I imagine it didn’t take too much convincing for Lord Umber to get your brother to compete, he seemed in his own element yesterday from what I saw, isn’t that right Ser Jaime?” She said, the last part spoken louder and towards her knight.

She quirked an eyebrow and looked at Ser Jaime in confusion. The man had managed to escape any sort of questioning about yesterday’s little situation before leaving the castle earlier. Lady Myranda’s comment only struck up even more questions for her to ask later.

The Lannister knight coughed as he looked at her before looking towards Lady Myranda to reply “Lady Sansa’s brother is very gifted my Lady.” He said.

“In more ways than one.” Came her quiet reply but it seemed like she was saying it to herself more than anybody else.

She walked a little closer to Ser Jaime as they walked further along the field “What was she talking
about Ser Jaime? Have you met Lady Sansa’s brother?” She asked in hushed tones. She looked over
towards Lady Myranda who was now chatting with Margaery, Sansa was currently talking with
Lady Myrcella and Lady Jeyne.

Jaime nodded and if her mind wasn't playing tricks on her, she was sure she saw a small smirk on the
man’s lips. “I have your grace, we had a little spar yesterday." He replied. She heard Ser Loras
snort.

“If it's what I caught the tail end of, it was more than a little spar as he likes to put it. Although I'm
not surprised Ser Jaime would refer to a spar where he lost as ‘just a little spar’, the less it’s talked
about the better eh Ser Jaime?” Loras said as he smirked in his direction. The Lannister knight glared
back at his brother in arms.

“Wait, it was Lady Sansa’s brother you were sparring with?” She asked, she
heard Alysanne giggling as Lady Myranda tickled her.

Ser Jaime looked in the direction of Alysanne who was currently in her mother’s arms before looking
back at her “Yes, your grace. Jon Snow if you were wondering.” He answered.

Jon Snow.

...Snow.

Oh Rhae...

Her niece would swoon over a bastard, something her parents wouldn't even entertain the idea of.

She would have to talk to her about it later on. At the moment, Rhaenys, along with her mother and
brother were visiting the dornish camp that had arrived just an hour ago.

She heard Ser Loras chuckle, as she looked at him, she noticed him nodding his head towards
something in the distance before looking at Ser Jaime “Do you mean that Jon Snow?” He said as Ser
Jaime looked down the field where Loras was nodding.
Obviously, she looked down the field herself and noticed two figures in the distance at the edge of the lake, one was bigger than the other and they both had a sword each. As they got closer, she heard Lady Sansa say ‘oh no’ under her breath, Lady Myranda seemed to reply to that with an ‘oh yes’ of her own.

As they settled under a tree and laid their blankets down in the shade, she eyed the pair of figures, mainly the bigger one and couldn't help but agree with Lady Myranda’s reply to Sansa.

Oh yes indeed.

The two figures were obviously Arya and this brother of hers, this Jon Snow. From what she could see from under the shade of the tree, her niece had very good taste. He was exactly what Rhaenys had described him as, even all the way down to his arse, something she couldn't look away from as it strained against the black leather breaches he was currently sporting. The way he moved as he showcased his moves to his sister was almost sinful to watch from behind.

She was allowed to look, that wasn’t a crime.

“Is that your brother Sansa?” She heard Lady Myrcella say as they all looked on at the scene in front of them. Arya managed to slap her thin sword against her brother’s thigh as she laughed.

The girl was completely different to the one she’d met at Winterfell a few months ago. The angry scowls seemed to have been replaced with joyous laughter, all because of her brother it would seem.

She heard Sansa groan as she replied to Myrcella’s question “Yes, that's my brother and sister,” She said before looking towards her and Margaery “I'm so sorry your grace, I wasn't aware that this was what Arya was doing instead of joining us.” The Stark girl apologised.

She waved her hand in response “Oh that's absolutely fine Lady Sansa, to be quite honest with you, I'm not sure this would have been something your sister would’ve wanted to do in the first place, that's if she hasn’t changed since the last time I saw her.” She said as she sent Sansa a smile to show that she really wasn't offended in the slightest.

She saw Loras elbow Ser Jaime in the side of his breastplate “I’d be worried if I were you Ser Jaime, if he’s teaching Lady Sansa’s sister all he knows then we might be seeing you lose to a little girl soon.” Ser Loras japed. Unfortunately for him, nobody found it very funny, especially his sister.
“You say that like it’s a bad thing brother dearest.” Margaery said as she sent a perfectly groomed raised eyebrow his way. The smile on Ser Loras’ face slightly died as he saw the rest of their group weren’t impressed, well, except from Alysanne, she was too busy destroying a grape within her tiny fist and laughing manically.

*Maybe something to worry about at a later date.* She mused.

“If I was a betting woman, I would say that Ser Jaime could best you rather easily in the yard. And if that’s the case, then Sansa’s brother over there could probably do it with his eyes closed.” She added with a grin, Loras had gotten a little gobby yesterday with her and Rhæ so he deserved a little humbling.

“He can do me, preferably with his eyes open and on me during.” She heard Myranda utter to herself. Thankfully, it looked like she was the only one to hear her. Either that or everybody was pretending they didn't hear what she’d said. Gods, it was almost as if the woman was in heat with half of the things she was coming out with.

Ser Loras cleared his throat and looked at her “I very much doubt that your grace, I have a feeling Lady Sansa’s brother was quite fortunate yesterday, merely a fluke if you ask me.” He replied.

“Hang on, how would you know? You weren't there, you were assigned to Princess Rhaenys yesterday afternoon.” Ser Jaime said as he looked at Loras in annoyance.

*Well shit, well done Loras, way to sell Rhaenys out.*

Loras just looked at Ser Jaime and then looked at her like he realised what he’d just done.

“Go on then.” Margaery said to her brother as she nodded towards Sansa’s brother and sister. Thankfully, Margaery had diverted Ser Jaime’s question and possibly saved Rhaenys’ skin.

Loras looked at his sister, brow furrowed “Go on what?...your grace.” He replied, realising last second that he was talking to a princess and not just his sister.

“Go and see if Sansa’s brother will entertain the idea of a spar with you. You said so yourself, he only beat Ser Jaime because he was fortunate. Go and beat him in a spar yourself to prove it.” Margaery suggested with that little smirk she seemed to easily wear.
Now Loras was looking torn as he looked at her then back at his sister before looking at everybody else present. He finally settled his gaze in the direction of Sansa’s brother before looking back at Margaery.

“Okay, watch me. By your leave your grace.” He said as he nodded towards her and his sister before, to everybody’s amusement, taking a deep breath before striding towards his potential sparring partner.

From under the shade of the tree, they could just about see what was happening, it would also seem like the tree had given them enough cover to stay out of sight as Sansa’s brother turned abruptly when he heard Loras approaching.

She had to avert her eyes momentarily when she finally saw the face that had made an impression on her niece. He was everything Rhae had described and then some, it was the eyes though, his eyes were beautiful. Even from where they were sat, she could see his silver pools that anybody would drown in if they ever stared too long.

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, this man was trouble, the good kind of trouble, but she was a princess of the realm, the blood of old valyria, she wouldn’t be affected this much by a pretty boy with pretty eyes.

*Pull yourself together woman.*

She opened her eyes and sneaked a look at everybody else in the group, Marge had a look of interest, no doubt interested to see if her brother could actually beat the man who’d beaten Ser Jaime. She hoped that was what that look was.

Alysanne, who was sat in the middle of the blanket her and Marge were sat on, was in a world of her own as she played with her mother’s slipper she’d somehow managed to get off her foot. Completely oblivious of the effect Sansa’s brother had on some of them.

Ser Jaime had a straight face but she could see he was interested to see if Loras would be humbled or not, Sansa looked a little worried, Jeyne was smiling wistfully, Myrcella looked on with a smile playing on her face and Myranda, well, Myranda looked borderline predatory as she looked towards Jon and Loras who had just struck up a fighting stance each. Both of them clutching a wooden sword each.
Didn’t take much convincing from Loras it would seem.

Who was she kidding, he probably said something to antagonise the man if Arya’s scowl that was aimed at him was anything to go by.

As someone with very limited knowledge on the art of swordplay, even she furrowed her brow when she saw Jon’s stance and the way Sansa’s brother circled Ser Loras. Even Loras looked confused at the way he moved.

“I should’ve told him to watch his legs.” Ser Jaime seemed to say to nobody in particular. She looked at him as the first strike of wood on wood could be heard.

“Why’s that Ser Jaime?” She asked as a gasp was heard from her left, Margaery with a look of astonishment on her face.

She looked towards the scene in front of them and was amazed to see Loras on his back, Sansa’s brother with a knee pressed against his chest and his wooden sword pointed at Loras’ exposed neck.

She heard Jaime chuckle “Because of that.” He replied as he nodded towards the two sparring men. She saw the look of shock on Loras’ face as he was helped back to his feet by the man who’d just beaten him with shocking efficiency. She also saw the proud smile Arya had on her face as she looked on at her brother beating yet another Kingsguard.

She can’t believe she missed it, she turned her head away for barely five seconds.

“What happened?” She asked to nobody in particular.

“Jon didn’t even give Loras a chance to swing his sword a second time. He used his large frame and, quite frankly, frightening speed to force Loras on the back foot, a foot that was already being taken from underneath him. Again, I should have told him to watch his legs but I doubt it would’ve made a difference anyway. Jon is something special if you ask me, the spar was unfair before it even started.” Jaime answered. She saw the smirk on his face and something else as well, it looked like pride from the Lannister knight.
She saw Loras heading back towards them as Jon and Arya picked their stuff up and left. She was annoyed with herself that she felt disappointed that they’d left.

That he’d left. Her mind rectified.

Ser Loras had a look of shock and disbelief on his face as he finally arrived back under the shade of their tree. He quietly moved behind them and stood next Ser Jaime without saying a single word. He wasn't the only one who was quiet after what they’d just seen.

Ser Jaime planted a hand on the **Knight of Flowers** in reassurance “Don't let it get to you lad, it happens to the best of us.” He said as he gave Ser Loras a small smile. They both jumped as Margaery’s slipper was hurled at Loras’ legs. Alysanne the culprit, laughing like a manic.

“Boob!” She shouted in the direction of Marge’s brother.

Oh gods.

She picked up the giggling girl and sat her on her lap “I think you need to learn how to behave you little monster!” She said as she tickled the little princess. Margaery looked at the pair of them with a grin on her face before shaking her head and placing her slipper, that Jaime had handed back to her, back on her foot. The rest of the group looking at them with amusement on their faces, mainly aimed at the little girl in her arms.

It kept her mind occupied from the thoughts of a certain man, for now.

**Rhaella**

Jon Snow.

The boy made quite the impression on Ser Jaime when she finally heard what the Lannister knight had to say about him. It would also seem that he’d also made an impression on Lord Tywin, and that
in itself was some achievement based on the lord’s ruthless reputation.

The surprises kept coming and coming whenever Ser Jaime spoke, informing her on the boy’s prowess with the blade, on the unbelievable journey he’d made across the Sunset Sea, the revelation that he’d lived with Jaime’s uncle, Gerion Lannister for the past few years, the fact that Gerion was in fact alive and not dead as most people were led to believe.

She’d questioned Ser Jaime of course, on the validity of these claims. She was shocked yet again when he supported the boy’s stories, that he knew things that only his uncle Gerion ever knew. And the fact that he’d actually presented Brightroar to him and his father, even handed it back over to them on behalf of Gerion without asking for any fee or reward. These were some very convincing ways to prove the boy’s claims.

After all was said and done, she’d decided that she needed to meet Jon Snow, she just needed to come up with an appropriate way to do such a thing. Luckily for her, the current topic of conversation at the high table during the evening feast was exactly the boy she was intrigued by.

And by the way her daughter and granddaughter’s conversation was going, she wasn’t the only one with an interest in the boy.

“Did he say anything to you?” Rhaenys said as she tucked into her apple tart. Daenerys shook her head as she enjoyed her own dessert.

“We didn’t even meet. As soon as Loras made a show of himself, he left with his sister. To be honest, I don’t think either of them were best pleased when he disturbed them.” She replied.

“I can’t believe he’s done it to Jaime and now Loras as well. I wonder if he’s going for the whole lot of them,” Rhaenys japed.

Daenerys chuckled herself as she polished off her tart and dabbed the corners of her mouth with her napkin “It wouldn’t be the most farfetched thing to happen, Ser Jaime and now Ser Loras were child’s play for him, even Jaime would agree that it was way too easy the way he brushed past the two of them. Bear in mind that’s half of the crowns team for the melee.”

“That’s a point, who’s filling up the other two spots? I know uncle Oberyn and Obara are competing for Dorne, Ari said Daemon was as well.” Rhaenys asked before putting a spoonful of her tart in her mouth.
“Your brother is one and the other is Ser Arthur. Rhaegar managed to convince him, especially with the whispers about our northern friend slowly spreading. Apparently, Ser Jaime has already had a small word with Ser Arthur about him.” Daenerys explained before sipping from her goblet.

Now that was something interesting to Rhaella’s ears. She wasn't aware of Jaime and Arthur’s conversation, it would be very interesting to see what the famed knight of Starfall would do with this information.

Rhaenys sighed “Does it make me a bad person because I want to see Jon beat Arthur? Imagine the reaction.” She said as Daenerys shook her head.

“Not at all. I for one want to see just that, I think Egg would be fine with it as well, he’s always been annoyed with how good Arthur is, bringing him down a peg or two would do your brother just fine I predict.” Her daughter replied.

“Maybe Ser Gerold will see something in Jon, he could return to the Red Keep to train as a future Kingsguard, who knows.” Rhaenys suggested to Daenerys, but the way she was looking into the distance, she was mainly saying it to herself.

It would seem that her granddaughter already had a plan brewing in her head, a plan that had Jon Snow returning to the capital with them, something she wasn't sure how to feel about. She wasn't stupid, she knew why her granddaughter wanted the boy to return back with them if their current conversation was anything to go by.

“Careful Rhae, you’re playing a dangerous game.” Daenerys warned when she realised what Rhaenys was thinking about. And how couldn't she, it was written all over her granddaughter's face.

The girl was smitten.

Rhaenys turned to Dany and smirked “Aren't the dangerous ones always the most fun?” She replied. Dany smiled and shook her head as she looked out to the sea of people present in the great hall of the newly renovated castle.

“You’re wasting your time, he’s not here.” Rhae said.
Dany turned back and looked at Rhae. From the corner of her eye she caught her daughter looking over Rhaenys’ shoulder in her direction, almost like she’d only just realised that her mother was sat quite close to them.

Daenerys underestimated her mother’s good hearing, even the quieter voice she replied to Rhae with could be heard “Who’s not here?” Daenerys replied but she wasn't fooling anybody, especially Rhaenys who gave her an amused look.

“You know exactly who I speak of, don't play that game with me. He never entered the hall when the northern lords arrived from what I saw and I haven't seen him throughout dinner. Trust me, I've been looking.” Rhaenys said as she took a generous gulp from her goblet.

That would explain why she couldn't pinpoint the boy. She expected him to be sat with his family but the boys who were sat with them were clearly too young to be Jon Snow, they were more than likely the two youngest sons of Lord Stark and his wife.

She thought it was rather odd for the boy not to be present, it wasn't like his baseborn status kept him away from the feast, Prince Oberyn’s brood were prime evidence of that as she caught one of the older ones laughing at something her cousin, Princess Arianne had just said.

Her son’s wife, her daughter in law, something that had completely slipped her mind. It didn't help that her son was dead set on ignoring his wife for the whole duration of the feast, he was more interested in his brother in law, Prince Quentyn than her.

With the amount of time he seemed to spend with the dornish Prince, she wondered if there was more to it than friendship. Whatever it was, she would make sure to keep a close eye on it, although from what Elia had told her back in the capital before they departed, we’d be seeing a lot less of Prince Quentyn. What that meant, she wasn't sure.

She was taken from her musings by the sound of tables and chairs being dragged across the floor, the sound of musicians testing instruments making it obvious that it was now time for the dancing. She saw lords approaching ladies in the hopes of a partner, ladies playing the role of the shy maid as they fluttered eyelashes and nodded at their requests.

It was all just a game, it always had been. In her older age, she’d become tired of it all. She knew there was a bit of bitterness there, of a childhood crush being denied by her father in favour of marrying her brother.
Fuck it, there was a reason to bitter. She thought to herself as she rose from her chair. Rhaegar looked at her in confusion from where he sat.

“This is a surprise mother, I was led to believe you weren’t a fan of dancing?” Her son japed as he smiled her way. She didn't see him smile often but when he did, she remembered it to the finest detail.

She cleared her throat and smiled as she smoothed down her skirts, from the corner of her eye she caught a few brave young lords heading towards the high table towards the two unwed princesses, she didn't miss the small groan that her daughter made.

“I'm still not a fan of them my dear. I was hoping Ser Barristan here could escort me outside for a bit of fresh air, it's gotten awfully humid in here.” She explained to her son as she looked at the reliable knight.

“Of course, your grace.” Ser Barristan answered with a bow.

Rhaegar looked at her with slight concern “Are you okay mother?” He asked. Her son was always worrying about her.

She patted him on the shoulder as she walked past him “I'm fine, stop worrying. When you get to my age, you'll understand the need for a bit of respite from these sorts of events.” She explained to him. Her son nodded but the look of concern didn’t leave his face. She didn't give him a chance to fret over her as she made her way through the hall and towards the main doors to the courtyard, Ser Barristan by her side as lords and ladies bowed and curtsied for her as she passed.

There was a humid feel to the evening due to the warm weather they’d been lucky with throughout the day, the small breeze that accompanied the night sky was perfect to deem it comfortable. The lake was only a couple of minutes away from the castle and it seemed like the ideal place to clear her head.

“A lovely evening for a little walk wouldn't you say Ser Barristan?” She said to the bold knight.

Ser Barristan nodded his head “Most satisfactory your grace.” He replied as they headed towards the lake.
She side eyed the old knight and smiled at him “I have a feeling the fresh air will do the both of us some good, they don't realise that it’s a chore being old.” She japed as Ser Barristan chuckled in reply.

“Only one of us here is old your grace.” Ser Barristan replied with a smile.

She smiled back at him “You don't need to flatter me Ser Barristan, I’m well aware of my own age.” She replied back.

She saw the knight reply with a smile but noticed it completely drop as he looked in the distance. She looked down the field of grass along the side of the lake in the direction Ser Barristan was looking and noticed what had just wiped the smile of her knight’s face.

“Would you like me to get rid of them your grace?” Ser Barristan said as they slowly approached the culprits.

“That won't be necessary Ser Barristan, they were here first, it's only fair.” She replied as she eyed the man and beast laying down in the grass. It looked like the man was looking up at the night sky, at the numerous stars on display. The big white dog wasn't interested in the slightest however as it snoozed away, she could hear it loudly snoring even from where they were stood.

As they got closer, she noticed the dog slowly wake from its slumber and open its eyes, they were met with blood red orbs that were rather unnerving to say the least. Ser Barristan had his hand firmly on his sword as he subtly moved in front of her. The dog however, didn't budge from where it laid, just lifted its nose in the air before staring at them. The man laid next to the beast hadn't budged yet.

That's when she noticed it, something very odd indeed, something that had Ser Barristan on edge as he held his arm out in front of her to prevent her approach. She was too busy staring at the man's eyes to reprimand the knight for his action.

Milky white eyes devoid of anything.

*Was he blind or...*
It clicked like a finished puzzle, the white dog on closer inspection was clearly a wolf of some kind, the man was dressed in northern garb and the fur cloak he was using as a pillow for his head was also northern.

Stark colouring...

Stark...

This had to be the man the two girls were talking about, this had to be Jon Snow.

...and he's a warg? A skinchanger?

That was the only explanation. She eyed the wolf again, it hadn't stopped staring at them. *Was he warging into the wolf?* She didn't know, as a matter of fact, she knew very little of the ancient magic of the north, she was unaware of how to proceed from where they were.

*Should she wake him up? Was it dangerous to do so?* She didn't know.

Luckily for her, she didn't have to do anything as the boy rapidly blinked his eyes, turning back to their normal state, and she had to admit, they were a sight to behold, a lovely shade of grey, like pools of silver. It was then, the boy realised he wasn't alone as looked in their direction.

“No sudden movements there's a good lad.” Ser Barristan said as the young man slowly rose from where he was, a pair of sheathed swords left on the ground next to where he was laid. Jon made no attempt at grabbing them as he stood at his full height, taller than his father it would seem.

He bent down and grabbed his fur cloak and tossed it over his shoulders, making him look even bigger than he already was. The wolf seemed to know his master’s intentions as it too rose from where it was laid, it too was taller than expected. She could practically feel Ser Barristan stiffen as the boy bent down to retrieve his swords.

“I’m warning you.” Ser Barristan said in a stern voice as he slightly unsheathed his sword. This was answered with a deep grumbly growl from the wolf as it eyed the white knight. Jon, for his part, picked his sword belt up, along with the two swords and tied them to his back in an unorthodox fashion. He ruffled the wolf on the head to calm it down she guessed before replying to Ser Barristan.
“Calm down Ser, I was just leaving.” He replied with his deep northern burr. He looked at her and she saw the small change in his face, something like recognition on his admittedly, handsome face. She wasn't the biggest fan of facial hair but it seemed to work on the boy.

*Man, he was a man. Boys don't look like that.*

“Show some respect young man, you're in the presence of Queen Rhaella of House Targaryen. Its customary to bow to royalty.” Ser Barristan explained. He still hadn't taken his hand of his sword.

The sword was almost unsheathed as Jon delicately grabbed hold of her hand and kissed the back of it as he bowed at the same time. When he looked at her through his lashes as he rose back to his height, she understood the fuss the two girls made over him.

*Seven hells, you're old enough to be his grandmother, pull yourself together woman.* She chided herself.

“It's a pleasure to meet you, truly.” Jon said. The way his features soften to a more natural state showed that he was being sincere.

*What was that? What was that feeling?*

“The pleasure is all mine Lord...” She replied, making sure she didn't give away that she already knew who he was. That odd feeling didn't go away as she stared at his face, waiting for a reply.

“Just Jon your grace, Jon Snow.” He answered as he ran his hand through the fur of his wolf.

She looked down at said wolf and smiled “And who is this handsome one?” She asked. She saw the tail of the wolf slightly sway after her compliment.

*Intelligent creature.*

Jon patted the wolf on its flank “This is Ghost, he’s a good lad when he wants to be. Aren't ya?” Jon
said as rubbed Ghost’s face with both of his hands. The wolf’s tail started wagging a little more aggressively as he started happily panting. She had to admit, the change between the cold stance the wolf had to begin with compared to what she was seeing now was truly incredible.

Jon looked back up at her from where he was knelt with a smile on his face.

It was like a kick to the gut.

She knew that smile...

That's what that odd feeling was when she looked at him, like she’d somehow met him before even though she knew she hadn't.

She hadn't met him before...

He just looked like somebody that she had met...

Somebody she birthed from her own womb...

The cheekbones...

The curvature of his nose...

The jawline...

The smile...

... why?

Why did the man in front of her share so many features with her own son, her Rhaegar?
She looked back at the man in front of her after getting lost in her own thoughts, now that she’d made the connection with her son it was difficult not to see those shared features.

Why? It didn't make sense.

She was too stunned and affected to get herself through a full conversation with him, it was almost unnerving as she looked at him.

She needed to regroup, put the whole of tomorrow into working out whatever this was. A plan to tackle this confusing development.

She cleared her throat “Well it was nice to meet you two, if you would excuse me, I think my bed is calling for me.” She explained to Jon, still fazed by the whole situation.

Jon looked almost disappointed by what she’d just said but nodded in reply “It was nice meeting you too, sleep well your grace.” He replied. She nodded at his reply and with one final look at his very familiar face, she turned away and headed back towards the castle. She took a steadying breath to calm her heart.

It was safe to say, she wouldn't be sleeping well tonight, there were too many questions that needed answers to allow such a thing. She had a feeling that she’d just uncovered something she wasn't supposed to.

The elusive bastard of Winterfell. Crazy stories of adventure, valyrian swords and defeated Kingsguard. The man was like a book she couldn't put down, and she was determined to read the whole thing.

She was determined to get to the bottom of this.

Chapter End Notes

Oh dear Ned, Grandmama has the scent :(
Don't worry if you thought the conversation was a bit short at the end, Jon and Rhaella will be having a full blown conversation next chapter. They'll be tea and everything ;)

The ETA on the next chapter should be sometime between the 15th - 22nd. Sorry for the wait, finding time to write has been lacking lately due to work and other commitments, hope you understand.

Thanks for reading :)
Jon

“Later this afternoon Arya, Lord Umber’s asked me, Ser Rodrik and Ser Jorah to get a bit of practice in this morning. And by asked, I mean demanded.” He answered as his little sister pouted at him.

“Hopefully nobody will disturb us this time.” She replied. He nodded as he shovelled the last of his breakfast into his mouth. She was right, hopefully they wouldn’t be disturbed.

He had to admit to himself, it was all getting a little odd, first a kingsguard approaches him looking for a spar, then another and then to top it all off, the King’s mother came to visit last him night.

*Or was it grandmother?*

It was a question he kept asking himself as he spoke to her.

Ethereal, that’s the word he’d use to describe the woman, her beauty was not of this world. Porcelain skin, a mane of silver that framed her delicate facial features, and her eyes, it was hard to forget those eyes.

It had to be the blood that ran through her veins, it must slow down the ageing process or something because somebody in that stage of her life didn't have any right looking the way she did.

*What was he doing? Was he perving over his own grandmother?*

Get a grip Jon...

He grabbed the last sausage off the plate in the middle of the table and grinned at Bran as he was too slow to get to it first. He tore it in two and handed half of it to his brother before getting up from the spot he was sat at. He caught Lord Stark looking in his direction but didn’t entertain a conversation with him, he didn’t know where to start when it came to that mess.
He waved to everybody before heading off towards the practice yard, the alone time allowed him to think about the huge mess he had to deal with. He needed Lord Stark’s confirmation, he needed to know where he stood. From there he would try to stop the man from losing his head, he was absolutely livid and confused with what he’d done but he didn’t want him executed, he was still the father of his siblings.

Probably just cousins when all this was over, he doubted they would ever talk to him ever again when everything had blown over. He would, after all, be taking their father away from them.

He sighed, *fuck Ned Stark for putting him in this situation.*

He’d contemplated just ignoring it all, resigned to staying the bastard of Winterfell, son of Ned Stark and some unknown mother, forever a mystery. It would let his siblings stay his siblings, it would let them keep their father, everything would be fine.

But he couldn’t, he just couldn’t do that. Ned Stark had done something incredibly stupid. Treason, he’d committed treason, there was no beating around that bush. And Jon had received the shitty end of that stick for the majority of his childhood.

*And why was that? Why had his uncle done that?* He was determined to find that out very soon, he was very interested to see how he explained his actions.

*Maybe I’ll hit him again, who knows.*

Brilliant, he was worked up now, that's all Lord Stark seemed to do whenever he thought of him. It's a good job he was about to get some of it out of his system. Maybe some idiot will get in his face.

*He hopes some idiot gets in his face, he needed a scrap.*

He let out a heavy sigh when he approached the yard, calling it busy was an understatement, with the size of the crowd that surrounded the ground, anyone would think the melee was already taking place.

He ran a hand through his curls and counted to ten in his head as he squeezed through the crowd and
out towards the corner where the northerners were situated. The whispers he heard about him as he squeezed through were just something he’d have to live with, it was what happened when word got out that you slapped a couple of kingsguard around.

A lot of heads seemed to swivel in the direction of the northerners as Lord Umber spotted him approaching and essentially announced his presence to the world.

“JON! Get over here and show Ser Jorah that thing you did to Ser Wylis a few days a go!” He bellowed out as Jon inwardly cursed at the man’s loud nature. He thought Greatjon was barrel of laughs but sometimes he didn't know when to tone it down.

Either that or Jon was taking his bad mood out on a friend, probably the latter when he really thought about it.

He huffed as he approached them, Ser Wylis looking at him with a bit of interest, probably wondering how he’d been beaten so easily. In reality, there wasn’t a certain move that beat him, he was just in better shape than the White Harbour knight. Even Ser Wylis must see how portly he was.

And that’s what he told them.

“Ser Wylis is fat, too top heavy. His legs instantly became the target and that's what I exploited with my superior movement.” He explained, leaving Ser Wylis gobsmacked. He walked up to the makeshift table in the corner and grabbed a blunted training sword as he heard Lord Umber guffaw.

Ser Wylis sputtered and looked slapped before replying “I beg your bloody pardon? I’m not fat, most of this is pure muscle I’ll have you know.” He replied as people carried on chuckling, even the dour Ser Jorah had a small grin on his face as he looked on.

“Pure bullshit more like!” Lord Umber replied as he laughed at his own joke, people having no choice but to chuckle along with him. Ser Wylis clamped his mouth shut and huffed before walking over to the benches and taking a seat away from them.

He felt the bear paw of a hand clap him on the shoulder “It would seem Jon here has a bit of vinegar to get out of his system, what's troubling you lad?” Lord Umber asked as he closed his eyes and rolled his shoulders. The last thing he wanted to be doing was talking about that colossal shit show of a situation with the biggest mouth piece in the north.
So he lied.

“Just a headache, don't mind me. I'm always shit to be around when I have one. I’ll apologise to Ser Wylis when I can be arsed.” He said., with zero intention of apologising to the knight for telling the truth.

“Ah, don’t worry about him, he’ll be fine. Somebody had to say it to him, no surprising it was you to tell him. You seem to have a knack for cutting people deep with that mouth of yours, probably that wolfs blood you Starks are known for. Your uncle Brandon and aunt Lyanna were the exact same, no beating around the bush with them two either.” Lord Umber explained. His gut twisted at the mention of his mother, or who he was led to believe was his mother.

Before their practice even started, a bit of a situation cropped up across from them in one of the corners of the yard, everybody was doing a poor job at concealing their interest in what was happening.

“I don't why you even want to train wench, the team has been decided, you're not on it. Don't you have somewhere better to be?” A cruel looking scab of a man seemed to seethe at somebody.

When the person replied, he was surprised like everybody else to find out it was a woman. The tallest woman he’d ever seen with short slicked back blonde hair. He could've easily mistaken her for a Lannister.

“I'm just here to practice Ser, I don't want no trouble." She replied. It seemed all she wanted was a sparring partner.

“Nobody wants to practice with you.” The man replied as he looked behind him at a few men. By the looks on their faces, they weren't comfortable with anything that was being said. “A show of hands, who wants to spar with this freak?” He asked as none of the men behind him moved.

*Cowards.*

Jon may have just found his source of venting.

The prick turned back around and looked at the woman with an ugly smirk “See, nobody wants you here. Now fuck off will ya.” He finished.
His legs were moving on their own as he walked across to the group with purpose, he caught Lord Umber’s weak plea to be careful but he wasn’t listening.

“If you need a sparring partner then I’m up for it if you want?” He asked out as the woman turned around, glassy blue eyes looked at him in shock.

_Brought to the brink of tears by this vile cunt’s cruelty_. He thought. He’d be making sure this creature was crying for a different reason by the end of this.

The man sneered in his direction “And why the fuck would you want to do that? In fact, more importantly, who the fuck _are_ you?” He asked.

He chuckled “I’m Jon and you must have me mistaken. I don’t mind sparring with her but only after I’ve sparred with you.” He said as he nodded at the woman and smiled. “Jon Snow.” He said as he held his hand out to her.

She looked down at it grasped it with surprise still on her face before shaking “Brienne, of House Tarth.” She replied.

“And what makes you think I want to spar with some northern bastard hmm?” The vile creature of a man replied with yet another sneer. Jon was convinced he was pulled from his mother already sneering at the world he’d been brought into.

“I didn't quiet catch your name, Ser...” He asked as he slowly stretched his legs in preparation.

“Ser Meryn Trent, that's my name boy. What's it to you?” He replied. Jon just shrugged in response.

“Not much. Not many people remember the names of small, hateful twats like you, lost to the history books. Human garbage if you will.” He replied. There were a few chuckles heard from behind him.

That seemed to anger the prick “You dare speak to me li..."
He angered the man even more as he disrupted him “We having this spar or what?” He asked. Ser Meryn Twat let out a humourless chuckle.

“And why would I do that bastard? You’re not worth the dirt on the bottom of my boot.” He replied.

“Well if your gonna run that wastepipe of a mouth of yours, you better know how to back it up. Wouldn't want people thinking your nothing but a shit talking pussy now would we?” He answered. He was well up for hurting this man now, even if it was just to see a different expression on his face other than the seemingly permanent sneer he had.

The prick didn't even reply as he pushed Brienne out of the way and swung his tourney sword right at his head. Jon parried the strike with surprising ease.

Ser Meryn Twat swung his blade again, this time sideways in the hopes of cracking a rib or two. Jon saw the way he wheeled his swing and saw it coming a mile away, he sidestepped to his right and lifted his arms in the air to avoid those being struck as well. He actually heard the man growl when he whiffed a third strike.

“Stop running and fight you fucking bastard!” He bellowed out as he went for a fourth strike, this time it was aiming for his head again. Jon already had enough of this scrote and with the way he was genuinely trying to knock his head off, he saw red.

The prick tried swinging his sword with both hands above his head and down in the hopes of cutting him in half from head to balls, but he saw it coming with the way he grunted as he heaved his sword back. Just at the precise moment the sword began its descent, Jon took a sharp step backwards, just at the right time for Trent to think he could readjust the swing mid descent.

He was wrong.

The moment the man took a step forward to make up for Jon’s backstep, it was the beginning of the end. As soon as Trent took his step forward, Jon did the same, only quicker, giving him the half second to turn his body sideways and narrowly avoid the strike. Trent was open for the taking now and the man knew it as he tried to shoulder Jon away. Jon sidestepped that as well as he shoved the man in the back to carry on his momentum, Jon hooking his foot with the fumbling knight’s own was enough to send the man face first into the ground. Jon was on him like a flash with his blade laid at the back of the man’s neck and a knee in the centre of his spine to prevent him from getting up.
“Yield prick.” He said to the man. Trent still had his sword gripped in his right hand as he squirmed.

“Fuck off!” He growled as he tried to get to his knees. Jon pressed his knee harder into the man’s spine.

“I said yield.” He replied back in a cold tone.

“If you think I'm yielding to some bastard you can think again.” Trent snapped back.

“Fine.” He replied as he got off of his back and with as much force as he could, stamped on the man's right hand that was gripped around the sword.

He felt the crack of bone even through the sole of his boot and the howl that came from the man pretty much confirmed he’d fucked something up in his hand.

“YOU FUCKER! MY HAND, YOU’VE BROKE MY FUCKIN’ HAND!” He yelled out as he attempted to get to his feet. Jon kicked the man in the back and sent him back down into the dirt before pressing his knee back into Trent’s spine and his blade on his neck again.

“Do you yield now or do I have to break the other one as well?” He asked. He really wanted him to say no again, dismantling this cunt would be his pleasure.

Trent squirmed again before letting out a resigning sigh “Fine, I yield. Now get the fuck off me.” He growled out, still delicately holding his right wrist.

He tutted as he pressed his knee harder into his back “What's the magic word?” He asked as he noticed Ser Jaime slowly walking over to them with a quirked eyebrow upon his face.

“Fuck you!” Trent replied. Jon grabbed the back of the man’s head and pushed it into the dirt rather forcefully before pulling it back out using the small amount of hair on the back of the cunt's skull.

“Wrong answer. Give it another shot there's a good man.” He replied as he nodded at Ser Jaime and smiled. The Lannister knight just grinned and shook his head in amusement.
“Just get off me.” Trent replied. It sounded like the fight was completely gone from the man as he kept his right wrist clutched.

“And what’s the magic word?” He asked again. He looked towards the group of men that were stood behind Trent before and saw looks of disappointment and disgust aimed at the poor excuse of a knight.

He felt Trent sigh through the knee pressed in his back “Please.” He begrudgingly muttered.

“Please what?” He asked. He felt no remorse putting the man in his place.

Another sigh came from the man “Can you get off of me...please?” He finally asked.

He patted the man on the back of his head, well, more like smacked him before getting up off his back “There’s a good boy.” He said as Trent got to his feet and stared daggers at him.

He walked up to him and stared daggers back before bringing his mouth to the man’s ear “I suggest you learn how to fuck off.” He said before pulling his face back. The fight was gone out of the man when he saw Jon’s glare, the permanent scowl was still there though.

Trent turned around and looked back at the men that were with him before turning back to Jon.

Jon didn’t know what the man was waiting for “Go on,” He said as he nodded towards the entrance to the yards “...fuck off.” He finished as he grabbed Trent’s tourney sword off the floor and handed it to a pleased looking Brienne.

Trent grumbled to himself before briskly making his way out of the yard, still clutching his wrist and without a single person from his group following him out.

“Shithouse.” He muttered to himself.

He heard Ser Jaime chuckle as he finally approached him and Brienne “Trouble seems to follow
you, eh Jon?” He japed as he looked over Jon’s shoulder at Brienne. Jaime held his hand out to her
“Jaime.” He said as Brienne shook his hand and told him her name. There was a slight look of shock
on the Lannister knight’s face when Brienne replied but it was gone as soon as quick as it appeared.

“Thank you for that.” He heard Brienne say from behind him. He turned around and, in the process,
noticed the amount of attention the three of them were receiving from the people around the yard and
the stands. He also noticed Greatjon smirk in his direction before turning back to Ser Jorah and Ser
Rodrik.

He shook his head and gave her a small smile “Ah, none of that. The man was asking for it if you
ask me, sooner or later somebody was gonna smack him. I just happened to be in the right place at
the right time.” He said as she smiled back at him.

“I wonder if he’ll be alright, he’s supposed to be representing the Stormlands in the grand melee.”
Brienne seemed to wonder to herself.

He huffed “I don’t think the Stormlands need someone like that representing them. They should find
someone more worthy.” He replied as he looked at her with a small grin. She smiled back at him in
response and he swore he saw a light blush bloom on her cheeks.

“You're too kind.” She replied after a second.

He shook his head “I'm really not, isn't that right Ser Jaime?” He said. Jon looked at Ser Jaime and
noticed that he’d not torn his eyes from Brienne since he’d introduced himself to her.

He cleared his throat and gave the man a small smirk when he eventually tore his eyes away. Ser
Jaime’s eyes narrowed slightly at Jon’s subtle suggestion but eventually he rolled his eyes.

“Is there something I can help you with Ser Jaime? You want to be careful, this is the second time
you’ve approached me, people will start to talk.” He said as he smirked at him. He cleared his throat
and made a poor attempt at a woman’s voice “Oh I do wonder, is the gallant knight Ser Jaime a giver
or a receiver in that relationshi...haha.” He japed and laughed as he received a shove from the knight.
Brienne just looked on with amusement, confused amusement.

“My uncle really did turn you into a gobby little shitbag didn’t he?” Ser Jaime responded with.
Before Jon could reply, Jaime was waving his hand in front of him to shush his reply.
“Be quiet for a minute and listen,” Jaime said as Jon sighed and motioned for him to continue. “...get yourself tidied up, you’ve been invited to morning tea by her grace, Queen Rhaella.” Jaime finished, even he looked a little confused by what he’d said.

But not as confused as Jon was feeling right now.

His brow furrowed as he replied “What? Why? What does she want with me? Am I in trouble or something?”

Jaime held his hand out to stop his questions “I don’t know why, and trust me, I’m as baffled as you as to why she wants to see you. All I’m doing is following orders so don’t be a pain in the arse and just go and make yourself presentable.” He said.

Jon folded his arms and shrugged his shoulders. He had to admit, seeing his grandmother again was very appealing. He’d barely got a chance to talk with her last night before she almost ran away from him.

It didn’t mean he would come quietly though like some trained mutt “Why should I?” He asked rather petulantly. He already knew he’d be going, he was just being difficult to play with Jaime a little.

Jaime quirked an eyebrow at him “When a member of the Royal family requests your presence, you sure as shit better show your face.” Jaime replied.

He sighed, so much for making it hard for Jaime “Fine. But I promised Brienne here a spar so you’re gonna have to fill in for me instead.” He said as he saw the smirk drop of the Lannister’s face.

He clapped the man on the shoulder as he handed him the training sword “Who knows, you might learn a thing or two.” He suggested with a shit eating grin plastered on his face.

“Fuck off.” Jaime said as he shrugged Jon’s hand off his shoulder “Now piss off and get yourself sorted out, you wouldn’t want to keep the Queen mother waiting now would ya?” He said as he smirked at him.

Jon just hummed before nodding towards Brienne “It was nice meeting you Brienne, maybe we’ll see each other in the melee.” He said as Brienne gave him a small smile before slowly getting into a
fighting stance. From what Jon could see, she had good form.

*Jaime’s gonna get his head knocked off and I’m not gonna get to see it.*

He returned to the northern group and received a few complaints from Lord Umber when he told him he had to leave but eventually the giant lord relented. He also noticed Ghost had turned up from wherever he’d gone off to this morning and was currently laid out panting in the morning sun. He whistled at his boy as he approached him, he would have to drop him off with Bran or Arya whilst he was gone.

*Probably Bran, Arya will ask too many questions.* He mused.

“C’mon then Ghost, let’s see what the Queen mother has in store for me.” He said as the direwolf walked side by side with him out of the yard.

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**Rhaella**

“Permission to speak freely your grace.” Ser Barristan said to her as they walked the halls of Harrenhall, the morning sun catching her off guard momentarily. She lifted a hand to shield her eyes from the glare as she replied to the knight.

“Go ahead Ser Barristan, speak freely.” She said as she smiled at a bowing servant.

He cleared his throat before speaking “Is it wise to be meeting with Lord Stark’s son in secret? People will talk if they found out, they’d say it wasn’t appropriate.” He explained.

Ser Barristan had a point, she had to admit. But nothing would be stopping her from going through with this, she needed to find out if she was going mad or not. She’d lost too much sleep last night, not going through with this was not an option.

Down the corridor from them she could see a little commotion occurring between an individual and some guards. She recognised the individual straight away.
“Hold that thought Ser Barristan.” She said as she picked up her skirts and upped her pace to get to the bottom of what was happening in front of them. She could hear Ser Barristan’s armour rattle as he kept pace with her.

As she got closer, she could hear the argument that was taking place.

“Authorized personnel only, I've told you twice already.” One of the guards said to the individual.

“And I've told you twice already that I was invited. Do I have to say it a third time moron?” The individual replied in his northern burr. She recognised the hair and stature all the way from the other end of the corridor but the voice all but confirmed it to be Jon.

She heard one of the guards chuckle “Do you really expect us to believe that? Why would the Queen mother be meeting with some baseborn tramp like you? You must think we were born yesterday.” One of the guards said. The other one spoke up as well “I’ll tell you what, you turn around and leave now and we won't take you to the King. I imagine he’d be very interested to know why you're trying to get to her grace. What do ya say?”.

She had to intervene before anything unfortunate happened.

She finally made it to the door with Ser Barristan in tow “That won't be necessary, he is in fact a guest by my invitation.” She said as both of the guards turned to her. She wished she could save the look on their faces into her memory forever.

“Your...your grace.” They both stuttered out as they lowered their heads in some sort of rushed bow. She saw Jon lower his eyes to the ground as well but she could see the little smirk on his face as he did so.

*Even the smirk is the same as her son's.* She thought, momentarily affecting her before straightening her face back into her regal mask. She’d spent all night trying to prepare herself for seeing him again but she’d fallen at the first hurdle.

It only drove her more to find out what was happening.

“Now, unless you want your families to forget your mere existence, I suggest you step aside and allow *my* guest through, you know, since he was invited.” She said in a cold tone as she glared at the
two buffoons.

She’d never seen two men move so fast in her life as they stepped aside and allowed Jon through. They kept their eyes on the floor with their heads bowed as Jon glared at them as he passed. Now she was blatantly looking for any similarities to her son as she compared the way Jon glared at them to her son’s.

There was more of an edge to Jon’s than her son’s she had to admit. Although, it did seem to have a little resemblance to her daughter’s, which she used to her advantage to cut pompous lords down with.

The questions in her mind were multiplying by the second.

She cleared her throat as Jon finally approached them, before she could speak though, Ser Barristan was standing in front of her and holding a hand out in front of Jon.

“I'm gonna need you to hand over your weapons son." He said as he nodded at the two swords she could see over his shoulder.

Jon sighed as he took off the interesting looking harness or belt that held his swords on his back, he pushed the whole bundle into Ser Barristan’s waiting arms. She caught the knight eyeing the two swords with a furrowed brow but said nothing more.

“I'm keeping the dagger though." Jon said as he broke Ser Barristan’s interest in the blades he was holding.

“I think not, hand it over.” He replied as he moved the swords under his arm and held them there before holding his other arm out to retrieve the dagger as well.

“Not a chance." Came Jon’s stubborn reply.

“If you think you're walking around here with a blade then you are mistaken." Ser Barristan replied. She could tell the old knight was getting a little frustrated with the boldness of the young man.
The irony.

She herself felt a little guilty watching on without saying anything. She just wanted to quietly observe to see how this played out, see if she recognised any little mannerisms of Jon’s that he shared with her family.

Jon replied back to the veteran Kingsguard “If you think I’m gonna come here without an ounce of protection, you are the one mistaken my good ser.” He said with conviction.

Ser Barristan almost growled as he laid a hand on his sheathed sword, Jon looked almost ready to bolt.

She’d had her fun, now she needed to intervene before this got out of hand. And Jon was scared away.

She put her hand on Ser Barristan’s arm that was placed on the hilt of his sword “It’s fine Ser Barristan, he can keep the dagger. Jon is quite rightly defensive about the whole situation and entering the dragon’s den unarmed isn't the most ideal for him.” She tried to explain. She knew it wasn't protocol to allow anyone who wasn't one of the royal family or the Kingsguard to be in their presence with a weapon but she was allowing this one exception. She had a feeling, a sort of instinct that Jon wasn't the type to attack a member of the royal family, he seemed smarter than that.

Ser Barristan looked slapped “Your grace, you can't be serious?”

She nodded “I am.” She replied.

“But...” He tried to say but after one look from her, he relented.

He sighed “Fine,” He said before looking at Jon “…but I'm warning you, I’ll be watching you like a hawk. One false move and I won't hesitate with my blade.” He warned in a stern tone.

“You can try.” Jon replied as he stared down the bold knight.

“What did you just sa...” He said before she interrupted them.
“Enough!” She said as she looked at Ser Barristan then at Jon. She looked back at Ser Barristan as he lowered his head in apology, she then turned to Jon and noticed him grinning. She raised an eyebrow at him to let him know she wasn’t playing any games, the grin fell from his face as he lowered his head.

She took a steadying breath before speaking “Right, let us head to my solar, shall we?” She said as Jon nodded his head and stepped in line with her. She caught Ser Barristan burning a hole in the back of Jon’s headful of curls as he fell behind them.

She took Jon’s arm and looped her own around it as they walked towards her solar, all she could feel was a hard mass of muscle under the deep blue surcoat he donned. She had to admit the colour suited him.

They weren’t walking for long before they entered the family wing of the castle, as soon as the doors to the corridor were opened, she instantly noticed four figures making their way down the corridor towards them. Ser Oswell and Ser Jonothor escorting their charges, her daughter and granddaughter.

Now this should be very interesting.

She noticed the way the two of them seemed to stiffen when they noticed her and Jon, Rhaenys subtly grabbing hold of Daenerys’ wrist in some sort of supporting gesture. Inside of her head, Rhaella was finding it all very amusing.

“And where are you two off to?” She said to them. They both blinked a few times before flicking their eyes back and forth between her and Jon. Her daughter was the one to finally answer her as they both gave her their attention. It didn’t stop them from sneaking looks at her guest though.

Daenerys cleared her throat “We’re um...we’re going to have a walk around the markets, see what the vendors have brought with them. We’ve heard that there’s some Essosi traders that have just arrived and we wanted to get there before the good stuff is gone.” Her daughter explained.

Ser Oswell looked a bit confused by what the princess had said “I thought we were going to the training yard your grace?” He said as her daughter turned and looked at him. Whatever face she’d given him must have been something jarring as she saw the knight’s eyes widen before he looked down in reverence.
She looked at Rhaenys, who was still sneaking looks at Jon with zero shame on her face. She had to clear her throat to get her granddaughter’s attention.

“What would you be going to the practice yard for Rhaenys?” She asked innocently. She didn’t have to ask, she knew exactly why they were going, the reason stood right next to her. It would seem inviting Jon for morning tea had really made a mess of their plans.

Rhaenys looked like a child sneaking sweets, but before she could come up with some elaborate excuse, Daenerys was interrupting to try and save both of their hides.

“What mother, are you not going to introduce us to your guest?” She said as the two princesses looked towards Jon with undisguised interest.

Before she could answer, Jon, just like last night with her, delicately grabbed hold of her daughter’s hand and kissed the back of it before introducing himself.

“Jon,” He said as he dropped Dany’s hand and went and kissed the back of Rhaenys’ hand as well “...Jon Snow. Pleasure to meet the two of you.” He finished as he let go of her granddaughter’s hand.

Her daughter raised her chin as she put on her royal mask but the fight she was putting up was for naught as a faint change in the colour of her cheeks slowly made its appearance. Rhaenys on the other hand was just staring at Jon as she fiddled with one of the rings on her hand, a habit she’d inherited from her mother.

She’d never seen them like this with any of the men that vied for their hand, whether it be visiting lords at the Red Keep or cocky knights at tourneys.

It only made her more eager to find out who Jon Snow was.

“Well, me and Jon here will leave you to it. Oh, and if you see Viserys while you’re out perusing the stalls, tell him his mother wants a word with him.” She said to the pair of them. Her son was something else she needed to deal with as well, she couldn’t have him being so distant with his wife so publicly, people will definitely start talking if it becomes a regular occurrence.

“Okay mother. Bye Jon, lovely to meet you.” Daenerys said as she grabbed hold of Rhaenys arm
and practically dragged her away from the two of them. Her, along with Jon, turned around and watched them walk down the corridor, she could hear her granddaughter harshly whispering to Daenerys as to why Jon was here before turning around and looking at them, her head snapped back forward when she saw her and Jon looking at them already.

She turned back forward but noticed Jon hadn't turned with her, he was still looking at the backs of the two retreating princesses.

*The art of subtilty didn’t seem to be his speciality.* She thought as she cleared her throat and raised an eyebrow at him as he turned and looked at her. There was zero shame on his face.

“Shall we?” She said as she held an arm out for him to loop his through which he did before making their way to her solar which didn’t take them long. She opened the door to her solar and noticed the servants had set up the little meal she’d requested, a couple of plates filled with small cakes, fruits and sweets along with a pot of tea, some tea cups and a pot of honey which she personally enjoyed in her beverage.

Jon followed her in, she noticed him scanning the entire room, probably as a precautionary procedure, or a habit. She’d noticed him doing it with every corridor they entered on the way here. Ser Barristan tried to follow in after Jon but she put her hand out in front of him.

“It's okay Ser Barristan, I wanted a private conversation with Jon here.” She explained as she turned to look at Jon who was walking around the room observing his surroundings.

Ser Barristan lowered his voice and harshly whispered “But your grace, he’s armed, he said so himself.” He tried to plea as he readjusted the two swords under his arm.

“I’ll be fine Ser Barristan. If it makes you feel any better, you can check in on us after ten minutes or so to make sure I’m fine, although I expect you’ll be wasting your time, I’m positive Jon won’t do anything stupid.” She said to him.

“Plus,” She said as she as she slightly lifted the side of her skirt to show him her leg “…It's not as if I'm unarmed.” She informed with a grin as she nodded to the small dagger tied to her calf that she’d carried with her for years.

Ser Barristan let out a sigh and seemed resigned to the fact that he had to wait outside “Okay. But if he tries to do anything your grace, I want to hear some sort of signal or anything from you.” He said.
She didn’t like that he was in a way, demanding something from her but she relented and nodded. At this point, she just wanted to sit down and start her conversation with the young man in her solar.

The door closed with a click and she turned around just in time to catch Jon sneaking a grape off the table. He saw that he’d been caught smiled at her.

*Another kick to the gut.*

"Not one for simple etiquette I see.” She said with a little grin as she made her way to the table and took a seat. Jon followed her lead and took his own seat. For a few seconds she just sat there and looked at his face, in the light of the morning sun that lit up her solar, the similarities were even more noticeable. The colouring and the beard on his face were decent for disguising his features but to someone who knew what they were looking for, it wasn’t enough.

She saw Jon raise an eyebrow at her as she looked at him shamelessly, it was enough to break her out of her thoughts and reach for the pot of tea to pour each of them a cup.

“I’ve never had tea before.” Jon said as she handed him his cup. He nodded to her in thanks as he took it from her.

She smiled at him as he took a sip from his cup, a small hum emitting from his chest as he tasted the contents.

“It's good.” He said to her.

She nodded to herself as she poured a small amount of honey into her own drink “That's from my own personal stash, not many get to taste it. Personally, I like mine with a bit of honey.” She said. She grabbed a small spoon and stirred the honey into her tea before taking a sip, the cup clinked atop its saucer when she’d taken her first taste.

There was a nervous silence in the room, Jon busying himself by taking sip after sip from his cup, she herself was too busy taking in her guest’s appearance. Jon looked somewhat apprehensive as he looked around the room before locking eyes with her and smiling.
That bloody smile. She thought as she swallowed another mouthful of tea.

How was she going to go about this? She had to have a decent reason for inviting him, the excuse “You look like my son when he was your age.” Was not a good enough reason for her to be here with him, alone.

“Have you been enjoying the festivities Jon?” She asked in an attempt at small talk and to rid the room of the awkward silence. She wanted to talk to him, ask him some questions she really had no right to ask, but at the moment, she couldn’t. She was scared of what she would find out.

But she really wanted to know, she needed to know to ease her running mind.

She caught him in mid sip as he nodded at her question before swallowing “I have, meeting Ser Jaime was probably the highlight so far.” He said as he reached for another grape, his cup completely devoid of its contents.

She smirked as she took his empty cup and refilled it without giving him a chance to refuse “You didn’t only just meet him I hear. He told me some very interesting tales about you.” She said as she placed the cup back in front of him.

He chuckled “Aye, I bet he did.” He said. He grabbed the small pot of honey in the middle of the table and added the same amount to his tea that she had.

“And are these tales true?” She asked as she grinned back at him. Slowly but surely he was loosening up, becoming more comfortable in her presence.

She ignored the warm feeling in her heart at such a thing. It meant nothing at the moment.

“It depends on what he told you.” Jon replied with a smirk. A cheeky side to him that was evident from the first minute she met him.

Rhaegar was a bit like that when he was younger, that was until he got lost in his books full of pacts and prophecies.
She smiled as she placed her cup back on her saucer and reached for a small lemon cake “All manner of impossible things really, a tale of an impossible journey, the revelation of the survival of a long-lost uncle, the return of a lost family heirloom, you know, those kind of tales. Not to mention word of a certain northerner on his way to defeating the entire kingsguard in the practice yard.” She said with a grin as she scoped his reaction, it would be a good measure of his character.

Jon didn’t disappoint in that regard as he rolled his eyes and snorted “Ser Jaime loves to talk it would seem.” He replied before taking a sip from his cup.

*Not a single gloat of his accomplishments in sight.*

That was another check on the imaginary list she had in her head. What that list was about even she wasn’t sure.

She wanted to know more.

She cleared her throat before taking a sip from her own cup “If you don't mind me asking, what made you make the decision to cross the *Sunset Sea*? A choice like that can't have been made on a whim, you must have had a good reason to go through with such a dangerous journey.” She said as she looked at Jon’s face for any changes in mood.

*It was almost instantaneous. A cloudy mood crossing over his face.*

He took a breath before answering, almost like he was trying to calm himself “In all honesty, I'm not sure why I chose to go west when I could've easily gone east. I think the sheer lack of information of what lied beyond the *Sunset Sea* was what made me want to find out for myself I think.” He said.

She hummed “The infinite possibilities of the unknown can be very appealing to some, others it instils fear. Surely a boy of your age had everything to live for, going beyond the *Sunset Sea* would be considered suicide to most.” She said before filling her own cup up with more tea.

“All I saw was an escape.” Jon replied almost instantly. From the look on his face, he’d not meant to say that.

She quirked an eyebrow at that as she looked at him, he was staring down at his lap looking like a man with the weight of the world on his shoulders. The cheeky lad she’d met was gone and in his
place was a drained looking boy.

*She wanted to give him a hug.*

She was still unaware as to why he would leave his home to go through with such a thing but for some reason, she had a feeling she’d be finding out why pretty soon.

“Do you want to tell me what it was you were escaping?” She poked softly.

*C’mon Jon, open up for me.* She thought as she looked at him. She hoped it would help her find out more about him but also relieve him from whatever burden he had inside that head of his.

He sighed once again “I fear if I go down this hole, there's no going back.” He said as he fiddled with a spoon he’d picked up at some point. “To be honest, this was the kind of conversation I wanted to have with Lord Stark.” He continued.

*Lord Stark.*

...*not father or lord father.*

A small bubbling of anxiousness became apparent in the pit of her stomach for some reason.

She sighed herself as she put her cup down “If you're not comfortable with this conversation then you don’t have to talk about it right now.” She said, a slither of disappointment felt at the idea of not finding out what it was bothering him. She gave him the out though, she didn’t want to pile on the pressure and scare him away.

She was actually shocked to see him shaking his head resolutely. He sniffed before taking a calming breath in and out. The look he gave her when he looked up and locked eyes with her was intense.

“I’m ready.” Was all he said as he closed his eyes.

*Something was about to happen.*
“Are you sure?” She said but it felt like a waste of time, the boy looked like he was on a mission, like he’d made a decision already.

There was no backing down now it would seem, she was unaware of the sheer magnitude of what she was about to be told.

He nodded “I’m sure. You need to know, all of you do. I’ve been holding it off for a bit now, unaware of how to do it or what would happen when I did. I think the best thing to do is to just get it over and done with, just rip the arrow out.” He said, mainly to himself since he was looking out the window. A warm breeze from outside flowing around them.

She was scared, why was she scared?

She placed her hand over his that was laid on the table in the hopes of calming him of whatever it was that was troubling him so. She felt the shock in it as he turned away from the window and looked at her.

It was her turn to be shocked as she saw the glassy look in his eyes. Now she was really scared, what was happening?

He moved his hand from underneath and placed it on top of hers before giving it a small grip. He smiled as he looked at the two hands together “I left Winterfell because of my mother.” He said.

His mother?

Nobody was aware of the identity of his mother if she had her information correct. There were rumours but that was about it, Lord Stark had done a very good job at keeping the woman’s identity a secret.

Until now it would seem.

“Your mother?” She said softly. The door to her solar opened with a small click as Ser Barristan poked his head through to check on her. She mouthed ‘Not now’ when he looked at her, the look on his face was not missed as he noticed Jon holding her hand but he nodded his head and closed the
door quietly.

Jon didn’t notice any of it, he was in a world of his own as he looked at their hands.

He visibly swallowed before nodding “Aye, my mother. Or to put it another way, the identity of her and Lord Stark’s refusal to speak on the matter. 14 years of silence and excuses whenever I asked about her had ran its course on my soul and I needed to leave.” He said.

She just sat there and listen to everything he said, a few reassuring squeezes to his hand here and there.

“When I came back after 3 years away, I was determined to find out about her. Unfortunately, my temper got in the way and I ended up smacking Lord Stark when he decided to lie to my face one too many times.” He explained. “I had to get out of Winterfell until everything cooled off so I ended up travelling up to the wall to visit my uncle Benjen, hoping that it would help clear my head. Boy was I wrong.” He continued.

He was an open book at this point, he was telling her everything and she just sat there and absorbed it all.

“When I finally got there and we spoke, I knew something was off straight away, he kept looking at me funny, like he was seeing me for the first time all over again.” He said.

“In what way?” She asked, asking him to let him know she was actually listening to everything he was saying.

He looked at her and smiled softly “The same way you looked at me when I smiled at you last night.” He said.

_He’d noticed._

“And what way would that be?” She asked, slightly abashed at being caught staring last night.

“Like you were looking for something. Chances are, you probably did, I know maester Aemon did
when I met him.” He said with a smile.

“Aemon? Aemon Targaryen?” She asked with a raised brow.

Jon nodded.

“I met him, and my uncle Benjen was adamant he felt my face when we greeted. I knew he was practically blind from what my uncle had told me beforehand but I still found it all a bit odd. Not as odd as his reaction after he’d roamed my face.” He said as he smiled sadly.

“What was odd about it?” She asked. She felt like she was on the cusp of something, there was no going back now.

She felt him squeeze her hand again as he replied “He cried.” Was all he said.

She looked at him in confusion “He cried? Did you find out why?” She asked.

He sniffed before visibly swallowing again “He recognised me, or my features that is,” Jon explained “…the same features I think you recognise.” he finished with another sad smile.

She was struggling, breathing, blinking, everything really as she looked at him with blurry eyes.

“Jon...”

“I found out on that day who my mother was, the pieces of the puzzle were put together by my uncles.” Jon interrupted, not giving her a chance to react. She wasn’t sure if she was capable of such a thing anyway.

“Jon, what are you sayi...”

“Lord Stark isn't my father, he never was. He’s my uncle in fact.” He interrupted again. Any other time she would have reprimanded whoever it was doing such a thing to her but right now she was finding it hard to even breath to care about such a thing.
She felt the drip from her eye hit her lap as she looked at Jon, really looked at him in a different light. He was tearing up as well.

“My mother isn't some whore or tavern wench, she isn't Ashara Dayne as much as the rumours like to say. She’s Lord Stark’s sister, the person who I thought was my aunt.” He said as he looked down at his own lap, a few drips landing on his own lap.

“My mother is Lyanna Stark, and..I think your son is my real father.” He finally said the thing she was waiting for him to say. He closed his eyes and slipped his hand out of her grip before she could stop him.

She closed her own eyes to calm all the emotions that had just erupted from within her. Anger, a lot of anger was felt before remembering who was sat in front of her. That’s all it took to let the love and joy and happiness take over.

*I think your son is my real father.* That one sentence was the missing link to all of her questions. It answered all of them, it explained why he looked and acted like her son, it explained why Aemon had recognised him and was brought to tears the same way she was right now.

She had another grandchild.

She opened her eyes and realised she hadn't said anything after he claimed to be her son’s son. The defeated look on Jon’s face as he looked down at the floor was enough for her to get to her feet and move around the table to his side.

She grabbed hold of the top of his arms and ushered him to stand, he did just that but still refused to open his eyes to her. Without giving him any warning, she wrapped both of her arms around his midsection and hugged the life out of him, trying to give him 17 years of affection in that singular embrace. Her right hand lifting up to the back of his head as she buried her hand in the soft curls that felt just like her son’s before bringing it down so he could rest it on her shoulder.

After a few seconds of holding him, he finally relented as he slowly wrapped his much larger frame around her, squeezing her back before totally breaking down. His tears racked his whole body as he released his pain into the shoulder of her gown. She shushed him to calm him down, it had worked.
on Rhaegar when she’d consoled him over Lyanna’s death 17 years ago, why wouldn’t it work on his son as well.

They stood there in the middle of her solar crying on each other’s shoulders for what felt like hours before they pulled back from each and stared at one another. Jon’s face was an absolute mess, eyes red rimmed, dried tears across his cheeks and in his beard. She had a feeling she didn’t look any better.

She looked at him with determination as she grabbed hold of his arms “We’re gonna fix this, okay?” She said, “I don’t know how long it will take but I promise this will be fixed.” She said before giving him another hug, something she couldn’t help but smile about.

_I have another grandchild._

She felt him nod as she held him before pulling back from him again.

He cleared his throat “What now?” He said as he sniffed. Her heart clenched at the look on his face, she couldn’t imagine what was going through his head right now.

“What now?” _Now wasn’t that the million-dragon question._ She mused. She had no idea where to go from here, all she knew was that she’d get her family through this, all of her family she thought as she looked at the new addition to it.

_It was time for mama Rhaella to get to work._

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Chapter End Notes

Ned is now officially on borrowed time...

A side note, if anybody was wondering, this is what I envision Rhaella looking like in my head.

Charlize Theron - https://i.pinimg.com/originals/e1/f7/89/e1f789c7584e9846bee99f5ef5986c01.jpg

Next chapter is the Grand Melee and I have no ETA for when it will be finished. If I
were to guess, I would say 2 weeks from today. Hopefully the story is good enough for people to stick around, I know how waiting can put some people off.

With all that said, I'll see you for the next one :)
The Grand Melee of Harrenhal

Chapter Notes

Longer chapter than normal this one so be prepared.
Don't get used to it though, this happened because of a special occasion...

It's Grand Melee Day!
Enjoy :)

Ps. I've been through getting rid of any extra spaces, I'm not sure why it started doing it during the copy and paste process but hopefully I've got them all. Do excuse me if you find any extra.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rhaegar

Another day, another evening feast. This one in his mind had been earned after the day he'd had to endure. If it wasn't dealing with Lord Stannis' assault claims on one of his team members for the grand melee tomorrow, it was having to deal with the boisterous entrance the men of the Iron Islands had decided to make early this afternoon.

Their arrival was a shock to everybody, nobody including himself didn't think they would turn up. Lord Balon didn't make the journey to Harrenhal but he had sent his brother and daughter in his stead along with a number of colourful characters with them. When they were presented in front of the King, they were all very stiff and slow when kneeling, but they kneeled and that was what mattered.

He'd asked for some advice from his mother afterwards on whether he'd done the right thing allowing them to roam free with the rest of the lords and ladies and not keep them separated but when he did seek her advice, he was met with a very distracted dowager Queen. And when his mother was distracted, she was more than likely planning something.

He received no clues as to what that was when he enquired.

Right now, in the great hall of the castle, him, along with his family and the rest of the lords and ladies of the seven kingdoms were currently enjoying their evening meal. An assortment of everything really, no expense seemed to have been spared. Personally, he was enjoying the boar, his wife sat next to him was currently tucking in to her fish, what that fish was he hadn't asked. He was too distracted by his mother's attitude at the moment.
He lent across and whispered into Elia’s ear as she grabbed her goblet of wine “Have you talked with my mother today?” He asked as he kept an eye on the crowd.

She swallowed the wine she had in her mouth before replying “I've not actually seen much of her today. She seemed rather busy when I saw her after lunch and I didn’t want to disturb her when she’s in one of those moods, you know what she’s like.” She explained.

He hummed, he knew exactly the mood his wife was talking about, the “I won't be held accountable for my actions if you distract me from my task” kind of mood. He’d learnt the hard way how wise it was to avoid her in one of those moods, but what he wanted to know is why she was in one of those moods. As far as he was aware, apart from Lord Stannis moaning and the Ironborn turning up unexpectedly, there wasn’t any issues of note.

Out the corner of his eye, he caught Rhaenys and Daenerys, who were sat next to Elia, having a pretty intense conversation about something. He leant in and whispered to his Queen again “What is that about?” He asked as he subtly nodded towards the two princesses.

Elia chuckled “Don't even get me started with that, something to do with some boy and your mother.” She said before tucking back into her meal.

A boy and his mother?

Maybe he was starting to get somewhere with his mother’s odd mood.

“And what is this about a boy and my mother?” He asked with a raised eyebrow to his wife. Elia shook her head with a mouthful of fish before swallowing “Apparently your mother has been having tea with a strapping young man. The two girls seem obsessed with the idea of it, I for one, hope your mother has found herself a budding relationship with somebody, she deserves it after what she’s had to put up with.” She explained with a small grin.

“What!?” He replied almost instantaneously. What Elia was suggesting was beyond his comprehension. A few people looked in their direction at his outburst. He kept his voice down as he carried on “You can't honestly be suggesting what I think you're suggesting?” He asked in disbelief.

Elia quirked an eyebrow at him “And what's that? Your mother moving on and seeking out happiness for herself in the arms of a new man?” She asked “Good on her is what I say.”
She finished with a sip from her goblet.

He looked away from her in a daze before slowly looking in his mother’s direction. She looked in a world of her own sat in between Aegon and Viserys, a look of indifference on her face as she looked into the crowd.

*Was he in here? The man who had the gall to court his mother?*

He followed her eyeline into the crowd to see if she was making eyes with this new man of hers but the only thing he could see was Lord Stark talking with his wife and the younger of the Stark daughters stabbing her dinner with a fork.

*Surely not. Lord Stark is a married man, and he’s far from the strapping young man his wife had made apparent was the recipient of his mother’s affection.*

*Then who was it?*

He huffed and shook his head as he brought his goblet to his mouth and took a generous gulp.

*There goes my restful night's sleep.*

---

**Jon**

He moaned as he sat up from his cot, he felt like a groggy mess after that shit excuse of a night’s sleep. The culprit of his early morning awakening pawing at his leg.

“What?” He said as he rubbed the sleep from his eyes. The little sod of a wolf padding over to the sealed entrance of his tent and pawing at it before looking at him.

He rose from his pit and walked over to the tent entrance in an almost comatose state before unpinning the flaps and letting the wolf out to go piss or whatever. He didn’t really care as he made his way back to his cot and collapsed back onto it with a huff. He closed his eyes in the hopes of getting maybe an extra half hour of kip but it was no use, he was up now.
Back into the real world Jon, your wacky dreams can’t distract you now.

“Fuckin’ mornings.” He muttered to himself as he got up and ready for the day. The big day as some people would describe it, the day of the grand melee where many men and possibly women would battle it out for fame, glory and riches.

Jon had tarnished all that for himself, the talk and revelation with his grandmother taking front and centre of his mind ever since it happened yesterday morning.

The rest of his day after it’d happened had gone by like a blur, he spent most of the afternoon wandering through the market before remembering that he’d promised Arya a sparring session. It was probably one of the quietest spars he’s ever had with her, something she was bored of after an hour before she went off with Bran, Rickon and Ghost to no doubt cause mischief to Jory’s annoyance.

The rest of the evening was spent sat high up in a large oak tree he’d found on the outskirts of the God’s Eye, he wanted to get on the back of Kireina and just leave but instead he just gorged on beef jerky, a treat he’d bought himself at the markets earlier in the day.

Gorging on dry meat and feeling sorry for himself, what a way to spend a night.

He’d returned to camp late at night, well after the evening feast had ended and practically crawled into his bed. Ghost was already there laid in his makeshift bed when he arrived. He received a relentless licking from the wolf when he laid down but he had a feeling it wasn’t out of affection and more to do with the taste of beef on his hands.

That all led him to now, pulling his thin, dark grey cloak over his shoulders. The weather outside felt a bit too warm for his fur cloak so he’d resorted to his thin one instead, or that’s the excuse he was using for wearing a different cloak. It had nothing to do with the hood it had that he could use to hide himself away from the world.

He couldn’t hide all day though, he had this bloody melee to compete in this afternoon, something he really wished he could get out of.

He huffed as he pulled the hood over his head and left the tent, Lord Umber would drag me into that yard by my ear if I told him I didn’t want to compete anymore.
As if summoned by the old gods themselves, the Greatjon was already approaching him with a weird smile on his face. It was almost like the man was waiting for him to wake up or something.

He tried to pretend like he’d not seen him by walking away in the opposite direction but his efforts were in vain as the lord of Last Hearth bellowed out at him.

“Jonny boy!” He heard the man yell, a volume way too high for how early it was. He sighed heavily when he realised he would have to converse with the man regardless of the black mood he was in.

He turned around and looked at the man with a quirked eyebrow.

Lord Umber caught up with him and palmed him on the shoulder as he seemed to assess his choice of clothing “What’s with the get up lad? Planning on a little sleuthing? Seeing if you can sneak into some of the sparring sessions to check out the opposition?” He asked as they both walked towards the smell of breakfast.

Greatjon had already given him an excuse as to why he was dressed like he was and who was he to deny the man’s assessment, even if he couldn’t be more wrong.

“Yeah, something like that.” He replied without looking at the man.

Lord Umber slung his arm around his shoulders as they neared the chatter of the camp “Well don’t spend too long sneaking about, we need to sneak in one more session before the big event later this afternoon.” He explained.

*Brilliant.*

The man carried on talking without giving Jon a chance to even reply “Have you heard the teams that are gonna be fielded? They announced them all at the feast last night and I know you weren’t there, something to do with feeling a bit under the weather your father said.” Lord Umber said as he looked at him in concern “Really can’t be doing with you not being one hundred percent, I have a feeling you might be our win condition today.” He finished.

“No pressure.” He replied sarcastically, more annoyed with Lord Stark’s fabricated reasoning for his
absence from the feast than the pressure the Greatjon had just dropped on his reluctant shoulders.

Lord Umber clapped him on the shoulder again as they entered the camp, people greeting them good morning “Ah you’ll be fine lad, you’ll wipe the floor with those southern nancies, I can feel it in my bones. Something special about ya.” He tried to reassure.

*If only he knew the first of it.*

He sat down at the table and grabbed hold of the jug of ale, he poured himself a generous helping into a mug and gulped half of it in no time.

Today was gonna be a long and eventful day.

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**Rhaenys**

The walk down to the practice yards was pretty uneventful, a few polite nods of acknowledgement aimed at the couple of people who had bowed at the King’s daughter. All in the presence of her assigned shadow for the day, Ser Barristan.

And when she says assigned she means requested by her personally, all in the hopes of extracting valuable information about the liaison between her grandmother and the man who had haunted her thoughts for the past few days.

She’d already tried to extract it from the source itself in the form of her grandmother but she’d failed miserably in that conquest. The only thing she did get out of that conversation was the very ominous warning from the dowager Queen, “*Something will be happening in the near future and as a princess of the realm, I expect you to act appropriately when that time comes.*” Was all she was told. When asking more questions about what that even meant, she was met yet again with that unbreakable royal mask.

It was safe to say that that warning had really put her on edge ever since the moment she heard it. Her grandmother didn’t make serious warnings like that unless something big was going to happen, the last time was when the unexpected announcement was made about her cousin Arianne marrying Viserys. It did make her wonder though.
Is there to be a betrothal announcement? Is that what her grandmother was warning her about? Am I to be betrothed?

Fuck.

She’d spoke to a few unmarried suitors at this tourney up to now, all but the one she actually wanted to speak to that is.

One of those lords stuck out last night at the feast, Lord Edmure had conversed and danced with her with the confidence of a man who’d just single handily ended a war. The smug speech, the way he danced with her, the cocky smirk she caught when he didn’t think she was looking.

Have I been betrothed?

The rest of the journey to the yard was quiet as she went over that possibility in her head. Over the genuine possibility of her father announcing it to the masses making it nigh impossible to get out of without causing a massive slight to one of the great houses of the seven kingdoms.

She huffed to herself as she lifted her skirts and walked along the stands and towards where her mother’s side of the family were sat. She needed a distraction and Arianne’s invitation to join her and the rest of the girls in watching the dornish contingent practice in the yard was the perfect thing to help with that.

It was either this or joining Dany and Marge on yet another picnic. She liked picnics but she could put up with Marge’s dull cousins only so much.

She might get to see a certain someone in the practice yard as well, that bonus was too hard to pass up on.

“Rhae!” She heard Ari almost shout as she approached the group. Ari, along with Ellaria, Nym, Tyene, Sarella and the four youngest of the “Sand Snakes”, Elia, Obella, Dorea and little Loreza were all sat in a group watching the action. A large dornish guard surrounding them was enough to keep people away from their group.

She smiled at Arianne before being pulled into a hug, she received a cheeky squeeze on the bum by the older girl before being crushed to death by an embrace by the three youngest girls. She looked
towards Ser Barristan and noticed how uncomfortable he looked as he watched his charge be
manhandled.

After breaking from the younger girls and giving Nym and Tyene a hug each, she turned to Ellaria
and hugged the older woman last.

“Glad you could make it dear.” She heard her aunt say before breaking way from the hug and sitting
back down, patting the space next to her for Rhaenys to sit down in.

“I'm surprised to see you arrive alone Rhae. I thought aunt Elia and Ashara were joining us?”
Arianne said to her from where she was sprawled out in her seat, lazily popping grapes into her
mouth and looking on at the yard.

She thanked Tyene as she handed her a goblet of dornish red and replied to her cousin “She told me
she wouldn’t be long and to go without her. She was with my father when I spoke to her.” She
explained. She took a sip from her goblet and let the liquid slide down her throat rather pleasantly.

“I hope Ashara brings Clarissa with her, I enjoyed her company the last time we spoke.” Sarella said
as she looked up from the journal she had rested on her crossed legs.

“She was nice wasn’t she Sarella, thank you.” She said as she smiled at her younger cousin before
looking at Ari and lifting an eyebrow at her.

Arianne rolled her eyes and sighed “I didn’t say I didn’t like her, I said she was a bit dull that's all.”
The Princess of Dorne tried to explain.

“Everybody is considered dull to you Ari, what's new?” Nymeria replied. She looked a little sullen
compared to her normal self as she sat there polishing her knives.

“You alright Nym?” She asked as she cut off Ari’s no doubt, snide reply to her cousin. She saw her
huff from the corner of her eye as she returned to lazily popping grapes into her mouth.

It was Tyene’s turn to interrupt as she answered for her sister “She’s been miserable ever since she
found out Obara was competing in the melee and not her.” She said as she shot a cheeky grin
at Nymeria.
“I’m not miserable.” Came Nym’s stubborn reply.

“Tell that to your face.” Ari said quietly but everybody heard her, especially Obella who couldn’t resist giggling.

She smiled at her cousin’s antics before attempting to prevent the situation from getting out of hand “Where’s your brother Ari?” She asked as she took a sip from her goblet.

Arianne chuckled “Which one? The frog or the little one?” She replied before dropping a grape into her mouth.

She closed her eyes and looked down as she smiled, she regretted the thought of knowing exactly what her cousin was talking about. Not so much “the little one” as she liked to put it because that was true in a sense, Trystane was her baby brother. No, it was more to do with the frog comment used to describe her other brother, Quentyn.

She knew if Dany was here, she’d be high fiving the Princess of Dorne right now. Quentyn was quite low on Dany’s list of favourite people.

“The little one as you like to put it. I know Quent is with Viserys right now.” She eventually replied.

“When isn’t he.” She heard Tyene say before Ari replied to her question by nodding her head towards the practice yard. Out on the yard she could see her uncle drilling Obara and Ser Daemon with Trystane trying to keep up.

“Did uncle Oberyn decide on a fourth member for Dorne’s team?” She asked Ellaria.

“Gerold Dayne.” She replied.

Now that was a surprise, from what she’d heard from Ser Arthur, his cousin was not favoured by many. Ellaria must have seen the look on her face as she thought about that.
“In the words of your uncle Oberyn  “Ser Gerold is a bit of a cunt, but he can fight and that’s all he needs for the melee”.” Came the woman’s no-nonsense explanation. She heard Ser Barristan’s armour move as he squirmed on the spot due to Ellaria’s choice words in front of her, her aunt just fired a wink at the veteran knight.

Arianne butted in “Quentyn talking about him as if he’s god’s gift to Dorne might have helped as well. I do question if my brother is interested in your aunt as much as he likes to say he is, being practically attached to my husband’s hip doesn’t help him at all in that regard.” She said.

She did have a point, her cousin spent an unhealthy amount of time following Viserys about.

*And at the moment, you’re doing the same thing with Jon Snow.* She thought as her mind betrayed her.

The same man she’d been quietly aware of at the other end of the yard, practicing with what looked like the unmissable Lord Umber and a few other lords. With the number of eyes that were around her, sharp eyes that rarely missed a thing, she only snuck a couple of looks his way. She didn’t linger on his powerful form as he avoided strikes with ease and returned them twice as hard.

She closed her eyes and looked down at her lap to collect herself, she hated how much he affected her.

She opened her eyes and looked around at all of her cousins, most of them had their eyes on her uncle and cousins in the yard.

Most of them...

All except one...

Arianne looked back and forth between her and the northern group at the other end of the yard. Her eyes narrowed her way and a dirty smirk emerged on her face.

*Fuck.*
Ned

“I'm not wearing that!” He heard Arya say as he entered the girls tent. Stood in front of her was Catelyn who was holding up a dark grey dress.

“Yes you are young lady. I won't have you turning up to today’s events with the rest of the lords and ladies wearing a tunic and a pair of breeches like some common street urchin.” His wife replied with determination.

He knew this was gonna happen, he hoped it wouldn’t but it had.

Arya stood there with her arms crossed and a very unimpressed look on her face. She was also the first one to see that he’d entered the tent. Before he knew it, his daughter was throwing her arms around him.

“Hello father!” She said as she looked up at him. She was doing that thing again with her eyes where she tried to make them look bigger but he knew exactly what she was up to.

He hugged her back “Hello little wolf.” He said before greeting Catelyn and Sansa after. “What's happening here then?” He asked to nobody in particular.

Catelyn huffed as he felt Arya’s grip around him tighten “I’m attempting to get everybody ready for this afternoon but this one here,” She said as she nodded towards Arya “...is being nothing but difficult.”

Arya turned and looked back up at him “Do I have to wear a dress?” She asked as she blinked her glassy eyes at him.

As hard as it was, he wouldn’t be falling for her little games. She made a habit of using him as a buffer against her mother.

Before he could answer, Sansa was taking the dress from her mother's hands and walking towards them.
“Please Arya, I made it for you especially. I tried to keep anything flowery off of it because I knew you’d hate that and look.” She said as she showed Arya the embroidery around the neckline “...I sowed little direwolves on it as well, all six of the pups that were found.” She said as she pointed out the little wolves on the dress.

Arya looked down at the dress and ran a finger across the wolves, seemingly deciding whether or not to actually wear the dress she’d just this minute been complaining about. One thing he was sure about, he was happy the two of them were no longer at each other’s throat anymore. Whatever it was that caused such a thing, he was grateful.

“Can I wear my breeches underneath?” Arya asked as she looked back at him, subtly avoiding asking her mother.

He sighed but nodded.

He looked towards Catelyn and noticed the way her face morphed into a look of annoyance but surprisingly, kept quiet.

“Okay, I’ll wear it.” Arya said. Sansa looked at her sister and smiled before dragging her to the back of the tent and behind the dressing screen.

He sat down on one of the chairs at the side of the room and sighed, Catelyn looked at him as she went around the tent folding garments that were strewn about the place.

“Where are the boys?” She asked without looking up from her task.

“With Jory. They were playing with Ghost the last time I saw them.” He explained as he leant back in the chair.

He heard her hum as she carried on with her task.

“That thing should be on a leash, I’m not comfortable with it being allowed to roam around doing whatever it wants.” She said before moving across the room and placing the clothes down in a chest. All without looking at him still.
“That thing is the living embodiment of our House, the sigil of the Starks. Putting a leash on such a creature would be wrong, and besides, Ghost is well trained. I’ve not seen him misbehave once.” He explained, slightly annoyed with her thinking a direwolf was some common dog you could chain.

Catelyn still didn’t look at him as she moved back across the room and tidied up the remnants of somebody's lunch.

“Letting it socialise with the nobles is inappropriate and dangerous.” She replied without taking any of his words into consideration.

Socialise?

He let out another sigh and shook his head as he looked at the ground “I don’t think we’re talking about Ghost anymore are we?” He said as he looked her way.

“Say your piece Cat and let's be done with this already hmm?” He said as he prepared for yet another tirade about Jon.

She was eerily calm as she replied “Does it matter? Whenever it comes to that boy he can do no wrong in your eyes. At this point, I’m just wasting my time trying to explain myself.” She said as she placed a couple of empty plates on the table next to him and looked towards the dressing screen where the two girls currently were.

She was too calm. Whenever the subject of Jon was brought up, he was normally faced with anger and pettiness.

But not now, now she was quiet. It felt wrong.

The girls emerged from behind the screen and made their way towards the two of them.

“What do you think?” Sansa said as she seemed to present Arya to them. Arya looked a little uncomfortable in the grey dress she was in but to her credit, she kept still as her two parents looked at
Catelyn made her way towards Arya and smoothed her hand down the front of the dress to rid any bits off it before replying.

“Beautiful.” She said with a smile as she looked on at her daughter and he agreed as he nodded. At least the two of them could agree on that even if it was a little hard looking at his wilful daughter dressed up in a gown in the colours of their house.

_It brought back too many memories._

He jumped when Cat clapped her hands “Right, you're up next Sansa. Go and get that dark green dress you’ve been working on would you dear, I think it will go nicely with the shade of your hair.” She said as Sansa moved across the room towards the chest.

“Can you go and see if the boys are ready to leave soon and aren't just rolling around in the muck my lord?” Cat said without looking at him.

He knew a dismissal when he heard one and, in all honesty, he embraced the chance of getting out of this uncomfortable situation he had with his wife at the moment.

He nodded as he rose from his seat. Arya was quick to give him a hug before he made his way towards the tent flap.

“Isn't this all exciting? I for one can't wait for the grand melee to begin.” He heard Cat say to the two girls. He turned around and looked at her with a furrowed brow since that didn’t sound like something she would ever say.

His eyes locked with Cat’s from across the room and the way her smile dropped when the girls weren't looking disturbed him. He didn’t know what that was about but he didn’t stick around to find out as he exited the tent with an unnerving feeling in the pit of his stomach.
They were gonna be late if Rhae didn’t hurry up and the way Ser Oswell’s foot tapped on the floor where he was stood next to her, he was aware of that fact as well.

“Is she going to be much longer your grace?” The knight said to her a few minutes later when her niece still hadn’t emerged from her room.

She huffed as she went to knock on her door again, this time with a little more aggression. Fortunately for all of them, Rhae opened the door as Dany’s hand rose to go knock.

“Finally.” She said as her niece walked out of her room with a smile on her face.

“Sorry.” Rhae said to them as they made their way to the rest of the family who were waiting for them in the entrance hall of the castle. A tongue lashing from her mother was almost guaranteed due to their tardiness but it was safe to say that she’d be pointing the entire blame on Rhaenys if she was dragged into it.

As expected, the rest of the family were waiting for them in the entrance hall, everyone apart from Egg, Ser Arthur, Ser Jaime and Ser Loras since they had already left earlier to prepare for the opening event of the tournament, the grand melee.

She had to give it to her brother, the melee was nowhere near as popular as the joust but ever since his announcement of the grand melee, it was all anybody spoke about. Even she’d forgotten there was a joust near the end of the tournament and she had a feeling she wasn’t the only one.

Jon Snow’s addition to the north’s melee team was also another talking point amongst people as well. Not many had seen what had happened between him and the two Kingsguard knights he’d beaten but the word had gotten out regardless. People were genuinely excited to see what the man could do, she’d even heard Ser Oswell and Ser Jonothor having a wager with each other, one of them believing Snow would get found out in the melee, the other believing that the man’s list of defeated Kingsguard would grow by the time it was over.

Problem was, there were three Kingsguard competing and two of them had already made that list. The remaining one was regarded as the best in the realm.

She’d not seen what he’d done to Loras so she couldn’t really judge his abilities herself. Unfortunately, she didn’t fancy Jon Snow’s chances against The Sword of the Morning.
No, you don't fancy his chances, but you fancy other things about him. Her mind betrayed.

She shook her head as the three of them approached the group, her brother Rhaegar noticing them over the shoulder of his wife.

“Here they are.” He said as Elia turned around and frowned at the pair of them, probably annoyed as much as she was with having to wait around.

After apologising for their tardiness, the group made their way out of the castle and made the short walk towards the yard where the melee would be taking place. Margaery, who was holding an excited looking Alysanne, moved across to her and Rhae after politely excusing herself from whatever conversation she was having with Ser Jonothor.

She looked around at their group and noticed her mother walking along with Ser Barristan. She’d expected to receive an earful from her about her and Rhae being late but it looked like she was too lost in a world of her own to do such a thing.

She’s been like that ever since that morning she spent with Jon Snow.

She didn’t know how to feel about that, and neither did Rhae.

She felt a bump against her shoulder and looked to her right at Marge who was giving her that smirk of hers.

“I’m surprised your mother hasn’t said anything to you and Rhae. I think we were all expecting it to be honest.” She said as she held onto Alysanne securely. The little girl getting to that age where she wanted to crawl everywhere now.

She hummed as the stands around the yard came into view “Trust me, I’m as baffled as you are.” She replied.

She refrained from gasping as she saw the sheer amount of people who were stood and seated around the outskirts of the yard, the heralds horn announcing their approach making her jump.
Their whole group was ushered into the main stands and up to the seats that were reserved for the royals, rather hastily ushered she might add. It would seem they were the last ones there, something she would've felt guilty about if it was her fault in the first place. She looked to her left at Rhae who was smiling out to the masses as she waved, the rest of the family doing the same thing before taking their seats, everyone apart from her brother, the King.

Rhaegar held his arm up high and the whole yard slowly quietened to hear what their King had to say to them.

“Citizens of Westeros! I will keep this short due to everyone's eagerness to get this event started.” Rhaegar said with a smile as a few chuckles could be heard throughout the crowd. She kept her regal mask on and smiled as she looked around the crowds, noticing important lords such as Lord Tywin and Lord Stark. All of them clearly sat with their respective men.

The sense of sport and competition was thick within the stands, looks of pride on the faces of onlookers as they looked upon their champions stood inside the yard waiting to get started. From where she was sat, she could already see men and women exchanging notes and coin, all with the hope of walking away with a winning bet.

The buzz in the air was exciting and contagious, she for one couldn’t wait to see what this competition would bring. She loved her brother but he couldn’t half speak when he got going. When he said he would keep it short she was expecting him to keep it short.

“...and finally, I would like to wish these brave men and women all the luck in their quest for glory! Over to you.” Rhaegar finished as he held both of his hands out towards the herald stood in the middle of the yard holding a large scroll. The man bowed deeply towards his King before turning to the crowd.

“Citizens of Westeros, allow me to announce the teams that will be representing their Kingdoms.” The herald announced as the crowd listened on.

“Representing Dorne, Ser Gerold Dayne, Ser Daemon Sand, Obara Sand and last but not least, the Red Viper himself, Prince Oberyn Martell!” The herald announced as Prince Oberyn walked forward and twirled his blunted spear rather impressively before bowing at the applauding crowd.

Prince Oberyn moved back to his spot with his group and waited like everybody else for the herald to name the next team.
“Representing the Reach, Ser Tanton Fossoway, Ser Arys Oakheart, Ser Baelor Hightower and the gallant Ser Garlan Tyrell.” The herald announced next. The four knights waving at the clapping crowd. She could see the Reach group looking on proudly, Margaery pointing down towards her brother and whispering into Alysanne’s ear about her uncle.

“Next up, representing the Stormlands, Ser Cortnay Penrose, Ser Balon Swann, Lord Beric Dondarrion and due to a last minute change, Lady Brienne of Tarth.” Came the next announcement. The lady in question waving along to everyone just like her teammates but with clear discomfort on her face due to the stares she was getting. She looked at the Stormlands group and noticed Lord Stannis and his wife Lady Cersei sat together but separated by their three children. The Lord of Storm’s End glared into the yard, a cold glare that was aimed at a group in there.

Dragging her eyes to where the stern lord was looking, she noticed it was the northern group he seemed to be having a problem with.

I wonder what that’s about?

She couldn’t think any more of it as the herald was announcing the next group of competitors.

“Representing the Crownlands...” The herald said before the crowd erupted with cheers “... The Knight of Flowers and member of the Kingsguard, Ser Loras Tyrell!” He announced as Loras stepped forward and bowed to the crowd, the grin on his face telling everybody that he’d noticed a few of the girls near the front swooning at him.

If only they knew.

“Next up, member of the Kingsguard, The White Lion, Ser Jaime Lannister!” The herald announced and again, the crowd cheered the knight. Jaime waved at the crowd and winked at a lady stood near the fence, the poor woman looked on the brink of fainting as she fanned the blush on her face.

Jaime stepped back before the herald announced the next man, the man everyone was excited to see compete.

“Next up, member of the Kingsguard, The Sword of the Morning, the one, the only, Ser Arthur Dayne!” Came the next announcement before the crowd cheered yet again. She caught the knight’s eye roll at the herald’s antics before stepping forward and waving before moving back to his group.
“And finally, last but certainly not least, the Crown Prince and our future King, Prince Aegon of House Targaryen!” The herald shouted before bowing to Egg.

The cheers were the loudest for her nephew, her nephew who was soaking it all up as he waved at everybody. He gave them a dazzling smile before moving back to his group and entering an intense looking conversation with his knights.

It was obvious to everybody in attendance that Egg and his Kingsguard were favourites to win this. Unfortunately, you couldn’t write off any of these groups, especially with the second favourites being announced next.

The crowd quietened down as the herald held up his hands “Next up, representing the Westerlands, Ser Lyle Crackhall, Ser Addam Marbrand and none other than the Clegane brothers, the Hound, Sandor Clegane and the Mountain, Ser Gregor Clegane!”

This was the group many expected to give problems to the Crownlands team, mainly the Clegane brothers.

Ser Lyle and Ser Addam smiled and waved at the crowd but they were the only two. Both of the Clegane brothers just stood there looking cold and ready for a genuine war. The way they were side eyeing each other, one would think it was each other they were ready to fight.

“Up next, representing the Riverlands...” The herald said with a few people cheering, no doubt locals from the surrounding lands of Harrenhal “...Lord Tytos Blackwood, Ser Jason Mallister, Ser Brynden the Blackfish and the future Lord of Riverrun, Ser Edmure Tully!” Came the announcement. The men, like the rest of the competitors smiled and waved at the crowd. One thing she didn’t miss was Ser Edmure looking up at Rhae with a smirk on his face.

*Fighting a losing battle there buddy.*

One thing she did miss was the man’s uncle glaring at the northern group as he moved back to his spot.

The herald cleared his throat and made his next announcement “Representing the Iron Islands, Lord Andrik, Ser Harras Harlaw, Asha Greyjoy and Lord Victarion Greyjoy!”
There were a few courteous claps from the crowd but the main noise was coming from the ironborn, the group everybody was sat the furthest away from.

The boisterous group calmed down enough to allow the herald announce the next team.

“Representing the Vale, Ser Mandon Moore, Ser Lyn Corbray, Ser Andar Royce and last but not least, Lord Yohn Royce, more commonly known as Bronze Yohn!” The herald declared as the group stepped forward and waved to the crowd, Lord Yohn sticking out like a sore thumb in his bronze armour.

The crowd settled down and the herald cleared his throat for the final team to be announced. A member of said team a lot of people had an interest in.

“And finally, representing the Northern kingdom, Jon Snow, Ser Rodrik Cassel, Ser Jorah Mormont and the unmistakable, the Greatjon, Lord Jon Umber!”

The crowd cheered after the final team was announced, Lord Umber seemingly the only one enjoying the attention whilst the other three men stood more towards the back out of view. The crowd quietened as Lord Umber moved back towards his group and clapped Jon Snow on the back, doing nothing to disrupt him from the cold dead stare he had on his face as he looked towards the Riverlands group.

She had a feeling somebody in that group would be eating it rather soon if the determined look Jon had on his devilishly handsome face was anything to go by.

She looked down at her folded hands laid across her lap to refocus herself, it wouldn’t do her any good staring at a single individual for the entire event.

Who was she kidding? It was hard not to look when he’s stretching the way he’s stretching right now.

The herald’s horn made her jump as it disturbed her from her ogling, a sign that the competition had officially begun.
Rhaella

Her regal mask was firmly in place as the herald’s horn blasted to begin the melee, it hid the mixed emotions that were quietly affecting her as she sat in her spot with her family. None of them aware that there were two Targaryen boys of theirs in that yard as opposed to one.

She looked on at her two grandchildren as they circled around the yard along with their own respective groups, everybody in the yard waiting for somebody to make a move. She wouldn’t lie to herself, she was slightly worried for her two boys, yes, everybody was using blunted tourney swords but one wrong move and one could easily lose a full set of teeth, break a nose or even crack a skull open.

Jon looked calm, taking instructions from Lord Umber as all the groups carried on circling around the yard, none of them wanting to be the first ones to make a move. Aegon looked primed and ready for an attack as he too moved with his group, the three Kingsguard forming a personal shield wall for the Crown Prince. Even in a mock battle they were still well aware of their duty.

Ser Arthur twirled his tourney blade in his hand, seemingly choosing to only use one sword instead of the two she knew he was capable of, hopefully that wasn’t a mistake on his part.

The Crownlands team were situated in between the Reach group and the Iron Islanders, it was safe to say that with Ser Loras the only one keeping his eyes on his brother’s team that the group from the Iron Islands were definitely the ones they were more wary about.

And with good reason.

Within a blink of an eye, all hell broke loose, Sandor Clegane seemed like he’d had enough with waiting as he grumbled out something inaudible before hefting his sword into the air and aiming it at one of the Vale knights to his right. The knight saw it last minute and only just managed to recover from the hit.

The crowd roared into shouts and cheers, the fight officially was underway as the sound of dulled steel clashing filled the yard. Men shouting instructions, yelling and grunting as they traded blows with the man next to them. The word hectic was the only way to describe the situation in front of her.

Her eyes instantly hunted for her blood amidst the carnage.
She instantly spotted the white capes of the Kingsguard as they held men off. Her grandson, Aegon, fighting against one of the Reach knights, Ser Tanton by the looks of it. The Crown Prince was holding his own against the knight as they traded blows, from the returning strikes, it looked like Aegon would be successful in that match up. She was comfortable enough to seek out her other grandson to see how he was getting on.

Her eyes roamed the small battlefield, looking for that head of raven curls but failed to spot where he was. She instead looking to see where the giant form of Lord Umber was, that didn’t take her long as she spotted the man overwhelming Ser Mandon Moore. The Vale knight was in nothing but survival mode as the hulking frame of the Greatjon came down upon him.

Behind that fight was something that almost made her rise from her seat in anger but instead she remained in her spot and quietly stewed at what she was seeing.

Jon was, to his credit, handling the situation he found himself in with grace. The way he manoeuvred around the two knights as they continued to fight an uneven contest was like watching flowing water, the fluidity in his movements were surprisingly calming to watch. She could even feel the ire that had built within her slowly ebb away as she carried on watching the fight unfold.

It would seem that Lord Edmure and his uncle, the Blackfish already had a target from the moment the horn was blown, the other two Riverlanders battling it out with Ser Rodrik and Ser Jorah.

They had a plan, and it was to single out Jon, the pair of them.

Now, she would think it was a smart strategy for the two men, to attempt to eliminate the man who people have been whispering about ever since the rumours about his spar with Ser Jaime came out. But she had a strong feeling this wasn’t to do with Jon’s skill with a blade, an attempt to eliminate a genuine threat in this melee, no, she had a feeling this was personal.

It would seem Jon was having none of it though, smartly singling out Lord Edmure and using his body as a shield as he traded blows. It was a smart move to separate himself from the Blackfish. A frighteningly quick counter riposte caused the future lord of Riverun to lose his grip on his sword and drop it into the dirt.

Jon took the opportunity in an instant, pushing the unarmed lord into his uncle with such force that it sent the two of them to the ground. Lord Edmure with a scowl on his face rose up to his hands and knees but before he could even react, Jon was smashing his knee into his face, her grandson putting his whole weight into the strike.
The Blackfish was a little slower rising from his spot in the dirt, no doubt due to his advanced age, but it was all too late. Jon taking a small run up and kicking the older knight in the gut before he could get to his feet, the force sending the man onto his back and ridding him of his grip on his sword. Jon’s knee’s pressed down against Ser Brynden’s shoulders as he sat on him to prevent him from rising and he held his blade to the man’s neck. The knight closed his eyes and nodded, seemingly yielding to the younger man.

The Riverlands knight slowly rose from his spot, Jon not offering him a hand to help him up which she couldn’t blame him for. Ser Brynden bent down and heaved Lord Edmure’s shoulder over his and helped him out of the yard. The younger Tully’s face was a mess from Jon’s knee strike and it would seem, with the way he was barely able to walk out of the yard, Jon had straight up knocked the man out cold.

*Serves him bloody right.* She thought proudly as she watched her grandson help put away the last two members of the Riverlands team with ease, the man she believed to be Ser Rodrik patting him on the back and Ser Jorah nodding at him in thanks.

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**Arya**

*Serves them right.*

That’s what she thought to herself as she watched her mother’s brother and uncle leave the yard. Watching the two of them ambush her brother almost as soon as the fight broke loose left a bad taste in her mouth.

*They planned it, they must have.* She mused.

She looked to her right and noticed that she wasn’t the only one who wasn’t impressed with her mother’s side of the family, her mother was almost red in the face with such a display.

*It’s a good job Jon is the best.* She thought proudly as she looked back into the yard.

Energy thrummed through her veins as she watched the clashing of steel between two competitors who were rather close to where they were seated. What was even more exciting to see was the number of women competing at the moment, it held promise for herself when she was old enough to
compete in such a thing.

One of them specifically drew her attention, a tall, majestic woman with blonde hair, moving around the yard in her full plate. She looked like she was unstoppable with the way she clashed with one of the Reach knights.

*I'll never be that powerful.*

*But I can be quick.* She thought to herself.

She smiled as she watched Jon move around the yard with his team, there she was, having to settle to being a quick fighter over a powerful one due to her size, and her brother was there right in front of her proving that you could be both. It spoke volumes of how good he was at what he did.

And what he did was fun to watch.

“C’mon Jon!” She shouted as she stood up from her seat and clapped. Bran and Rickon to her right joined in with her clapping as the fight went on. To her left she caught the look of annoyance on her mother’s face.

*I'm cheering my brother on in the greatest melee to bless this realm, I'm not gonna pass up on this opportunity even if her behaviour annoyed some people.*

“Oh no!” She heard Sansa say to her right from where she was sat, Jeyne had a hand over her mouth where she sat next to her sister.

She looked where Sansa was looking and noticed what had made her say what she did, Ser Rodrik by the looks of things, had been caught out by one of the Vale knights and currently had a blade held at his throat from behind.

She saw the old knight’s lips move, probably yielding she imagined, and soon after, headed for the exit of the yard.

*One down, three left.*
Lord Umber had eliminated a Vale lord earlier on when Jon was fighting his two on one and by the
looks of things, the Vale team had returned to get revenge for their teammate.

One of the men she recognised was Bronze Yohn, unmistakeable in his breastplate of bronze. Next
to him, sizing up the northern team was his son Ser Andar and stood where Ser Rodrik last stood
was the man who had eliminated the old knight.

“That’s Ser Lyn Corbray. It’s a pity they weren’t allowed to use their own weapons, I would have
liked to have seen his valyrian steel sword, Lady Forlorn.” Bran whispered to her as they looked on.
Thankfully her brother was a fountain of knowledge when it came to knights, wanting to be one
when he was older would do that.

He was right though, it was a pity they weren’t allowed to use their own weapons. If they were, this
whole competition might have been over already if Jon had been using his own swords. Those
blades were no joke, to the point where Jon had even shouted at her when she started messing with
them. He later explained to her that he only shouted because he was scared, the pitch-black steel the
swords were made up of looked impossibly sharp and he was afraid she was gonna badly hurt
herself.

If Jon was scared of how sharp they were then she couldn’t imagine how devastating they were.

The sound of clashing steel near them broke her from her thoughts, she looked back where the Vale
team were squaring off with her brother’s team and noticed they were already going at it, Ser Jorah
was holding his own against Ser Lyn, the Greatjon was battling it out with Bronze Yohn and Jon
was...already making Ser Andar yield!? 

She laughed and shook her head in disbelief, she couldn’t believe how good he’d become. She’d
listened to his story on how he trained with his “Master” as he liked to put it, how he was given
almost insane tasks to complete, even told to climb a mountain at one point. She didn’t understand
how such things would help him learn how to swing a sword better but clearly it had. He even told
her that before he left to return back home, he’d managed to defeat his teacher in a spar for the first
time in the years he knew him.

The work and effort he’d put in was repaying him tenfold.

The sight of his son being beaten so swiftly must have breathed new life into Bronze Yohn, because
one minute he was giving as good as he got against Lord Umber, the next, he was pushing the Lord
of Last Hearth on the back foot. Jon primed himself as he stalked his way towards the two of them.

“Don't you dare, boy! This is our fight!” She heard Bronze Yohn cry as he swung his sword against the Greatjon’s own. Jon didn't have time to even respond to the Vale lord as he was avoiding a bulk of clashing steel approaching him from behind his back.

“Fuckin’ move you dumb cunt!” She heard a gruff looking man grunt towards Jon as he parried hits from whoever he was fighting against.

Or whatever he was fighting against, the man was enormous!

“This doesn’t make any sense.” She heard Bran say from his seat next to her.

She managed to draw her eyes away from the pure carnage the two large men were creating together and looked at her brother with a furrowed brow.

“What do you mean?” She asked.

Bran huffed “Well that’s the Hound fighting,” He said as he looked on.

“Yeah, and?” She asked with a quirked eyebrow.

“...and, he’s fighting against the Mountain, Ser Gregor...his brother.” He explained. He shook his head in disbelief “Why would they be fighting each other? They're supposed to be on the same team.” Bran said, mainly to himself by the looks of things.

She looked back at the yard and carried on watching the two brothers hack chunks out of each other's swords, it honestly looked like they were trying to kill each other.

And for some reason, Jon was following them around the yard, albeit from a safe distance.

_Oh Jon, what in the world are you thinking?_ She thought to herself.
Jaime

“Ser Jaime, watch your back!” He heard his prince say from his left. He looked over his shoulder and noticed the bulk of the Mountain moving backwards with no care in the world. If you were in his way, you were getting knocked over.

Him and Aegon moved to the side away from the giant but found themselves separated from Loras and Arthur, who were across from them fighting against three of the ironborn group.

*Two against three, they should be fine.*

His sword was back up in position in preparation for their next encounter but failed to notice the hulking figure approaching them from his right. Before he could even notice the man, the Mountain’s bulk was smashing into him and knocking him to the floor. The man that Clegane was fighting against looked familiar from his spot on the floor and at a closer look he realised that it was the other Clegane brother.

*Father is going to be apoplectic.* He thought amusingly to himself as he slowly rose from his spot in the dirt. The prince’s hand shot out to help him up even faster.

He nodded at the prince “Thank you, your grace.” He said as he gave Rhaegar’s son a grin. What he expected back was something witty or charming from the ever-joyful prince but instead all he saw was the lad’s eyes widen.

“Watch out!” Aegon shouted as he nudged him out of the way and readied his weapon. Jaime stumbled but not without looking to see what had spooked the prince enough to shove him out of the way.

It was his turn for his eyes to widen as he saw the sprinting form of a man nearly the size of Lord Umber, two blunted hand axes in each hand primed to strike the crown prince at full tilt.

*Shit.*
Aegon can put his sword up all he wants but he was gonna end up knocked to the floor with some force with the way the other man was moving.

He told Aegon to move to his right and Jaime took his left side, both of them prepared to brace for impact in the hopes of catching the man out with his recklessness.

But it was for naught.

His sword lowered slightly as he watched someone come out of nowhere and two foot the oncoming brute in the side with such force, it sent the man flying to his left and into the dirt. The growl that emitted from the brute as he rose from the ground promised blood.

He turned to his prince to check to see he was still okay, a nod from him confirmed so. He noticed both of the Clegane brothers still hacking at each other as they moved around the yard before turning his eyes back towards the man, who he’d now worked out was one of the ironborn competitors.

Aegon looked at him with a quirked eyebrow when he caught him letting out a small laugh. The cause of such a reaction standing toe to toe with the ironborn monster.

“Something funny, Ser Jaime?” Aegon said as he looked around checking their perimeters before looking back at him.

He shook his head as he eyed the new acquaintance he’d made since they’d arrived at the tourney. The lad was bonkers with the way he was dancing around the ironborn warrior, poking and prodding him in the side with his tourney sword as he avoided every swing.

“C’mon your grace, let’s go help Ser Arthur and Ser Loras out.” He said as he turned away from the scene in front of him.

“Shouldn’t we at least help him? I mean, he did stop an ugly fight between us and that beast.” Aegon said as he looked on at Jon, an impressed look on his face as he watched the young northerner put on a clinic against the big man.

Jaime looked over his shoulder and towards Jon, he’d just landed a nasty looking elbow against the iron islander’s jaw.
“Nah, I think he’ll be fine.” He answered simply. Aegon nodded as they both moved to help out the rest of their team.

Arianne

Oh Rhae, sweet sweet Rhae. It would seem you do have good taste in men after all. She thought to herself as she watched the roguishly handsome northerner slowly and methodically dismantle a truly off-putting looking man.

She sighed, unfortunately he was off limits according to her cousin, and what a tragedy that was for her. She could already tell she’d have had fun with him, the way he moved in combat spoke volumes, especially if they translated into moves in the bedroom like her uncle Oberyn would always say.

She sipped from her goblet as her eyes moved over to where the dornish team were, already a member down. Her cousin Obara had well and truly been caught off guard by some blonde knight, and whatever the knight had said to her after seemed to have caught her even more off guard if the comically confused looked on her face was anything to go by.

I wonder what he’d said to her? Maybe her cousin was affected by a member of the opposite sex for the first time in her boring life. She chuckled to herself at the mere thought of such a thing.

“Anything to share Ari?” Her aunt Ellaria said from her seat next to her, a small grin on her beautiful face.

I hope I look that good when I’m her age.

The lie came easily as she eyed the yard and nodded in the direction of the two idiotic Clegane brothers “Just find it positively hilarious that Lord Tywin’s team has imploded in such a way. Them two hacking bits out of each other left their other teammates with their trousers down, something the Reach group took full advantage of.” She explained.

Ellaria hummed “Not to mention Ser Jaime fighting for the crown instead of his father, to be a fly on that wall when that was announced to the man.” She said as she sipped from her own goblet.
Arianne sniffed “Not to worry, it’s not our team who is falling apart. In fact, I’d say we’re doing just fine.” She said as she witnessed her uncle force Ser Garlan to yield the same way Ser Arys was to Ser Gerold shortly after.

The dornish group in the stands clapped and cheered in applause at their team’s success, all of them aware that the competition was thinning and they were in a good spot.

“Well that’s the Reach out, your cousin’s team dealt with one half, and we dealt with the other.” Ellaria said to her. Her eyes immediately looked towards where the Reach attendees were sat and she wasn’t disappointed to see the gutted look on Mace Tyrell’s fat head.

“Who’s left then?” She asked as she finished the rest of the wine in her goblet before handing it off to a steward to refill it. She winked at the young man as he handed it back to her, making him shyly look away from her.

She smiled to herself at the effect she sometimes had on men.

Ellaria coughed as she noticed her making the boy nervous “Well, the Riverlands were knocked out early and now the Reach have been fully eliminated.” She said.

Ellaria then laughed to herself “Make that the iron islands fully eliminated as well.” She said.

Arianne looked towards where the ironborn scum were at, the last she saw of them they were fighting the Kingsguard and it would seem they’d been knocked out by them as she watched three of them walk out of the yard.

“Wait, all of them? Even the one Jon was fighting?” She said and instantly cringed when she realised what she’d said.

Ellaria turned to her with a raised eyebrow, mischief written all over her face.

“Jon?” She said in a light voice.
She sighed and decided to look for herself, instantly noticing him move around the yard with his sword in hand.

So he had beaten him.

“Are you gonna ignore me or am I gonna have to ask Tyene who Jon is?” Ellaria said. She fully expected her to follow through with her threat.

“Fine.” She said. Last thing she need was big mouth knowing. “Jon Snow, Ned Stark’s son. Rhae is quite interested in him and has personally told me he was off limits.” She explained.

Ellaria hummed and nodded to herself “Is he the pretty one that’s been skulking around the yard?” She asked as she nodded towards Jon who’d just found his next fight in the form of one of the Stormlands knights. Her uncle’s team was currently fighting the fighters from the Stormlands and Jon had taken the opportunity to fight their fourth member, almost siding with the dornish team temporarily.

“Yes that’s him.” She nodded.

Ellaria sighed “What a shame, me and Oberyn could have had a lot of fun with that one.” She said as she smirked to herself. Arianne daren't imagine what type of scenario’s Ellaria was creating in her mind at that moment.

“I wonder if he’s as useful with his other sword as he is with the one in his hand right now?” Ellaria said to nobody in particular, a smirk still on her face.

Okay, this conversation needs to end.

“Alright, you’ve had your fun. What would uncle Oberyn say if he heard you?” She said as she witnessed Jon drag the Stormlands knight over his shoulder by his arm and hold him on the floor with his blade held to his neck.

That was quick. She thought.
“Oh darling, your uncle would be saying the same things as I am if he was sat here with us.” She replied.

She rolled her eyes, deep down, she knew Ellaria was right.

She felt Ellaria shuffle in her seat next to her “Who knows, he might be saying these things to him that I've been saying as we speak.” She said as she nodded towards the yard, her uncle and Jon talking to each other as they held their weapons primed in front of them, her uncle with his spear and Jon with his sword.

Her uncle had eliminated his foe shortly after Jon it would seem, Ser Daemon and Ser Gerold were still battling it out with their adversaries, one of which was the blonde knight that had eliminated Obara earlier.

Daemon seems to be struggling against the same knight Obara had as well. She thought as she saw Daemon narrowly avoid a strike.

“Ooo, here we go. This should be interesting.” Ellaria said as she stood from her seat and clapped for Oberyn. She looked back towards her uncle and Jon and saw them clap each other's hand before backing up and circling each other.

Interesting is an understatement dear aunt. She thought to herself as she looked on with genuine intrigue, just like everybody else in the dornish section of the crowd.

Elia

“That's Lord Stark’s son is it not?” She heard Rhaegar say next to her. Rhaenys seemed to shuffle in her seat next to her.

She looked at the scene in front of her, the boy was doing well for himself in the competition, even giving Aegon a helping hand against one of the ironborn, although she wasn’t too sure if it was done for the sake of her son or something else entirely.

Now though, now he was facing off against her brother, the Red Viper of Dorne. She didn’t fancy his chances.
“Correct.” She said to her husband. “I’ve seen glimpses as to why Lord Umber thinks he’s their “secret weapon” but I think he might struggle against your brother in law.” She explained as she saw Jon Snow comfortably avoid a strike from Oberyn’s spear.

The crowd seemed torn on what to watch inside the yard. One half were watching her brother come together with Lord Stark’s son and the other seemed to follow the mess that the Clegane brothers were causing to each other. One person who wasn’t witnessing any of it was Lord Tywin, the man looked beyond angry when he witnessed what was happening with his team, so much so that he left the stands.

*Probably to prepare himself. I wouldn’t want to be one of the Clegane’s when this was over.*

“I’m sure Oberyn will deal with him, I imagine that will wipe the smile off Lord Umber’s face.” Rhaegar said as he lifted his goblet to his mouth.

She was about to reply to him but their daughter butted in.

“I wouldn’t be too sure father. You don’t take a man who has defeated two Kingsguard whilst sparring lightly. Isn't that right grandmother?” Her daughter said as she involved Rhaella into the conversation as well.

Rhaegar’s goblet stopped on its journey to his mouth and he looked at Rhaenys in shock. He then looked at his mother to see what her take on it all was.

Personally, she was kind of surprised at what she’d just heard. The two Kingsguard that he’d apparently beaten had kept it very quiet to say the least.

*These are the kind of situations where I miss Varys’ skills.* She thought. Although, Varys wasn’t the only one with his own personal network of informants she remembered as she eyed Rhaella. The Queen mother definitely knew the identity of the two Kingsguard.

*I wonder why neither of her or Rhaegar knew about this then?* She thought. Something felt a little off.
She caught Rhaella looking at Rhaenys before looking at her son and answering “I’m sorry, what was the question?” She asked. To be fair, she did look like she’d been caught in her own world when Rhaenys had asked her.

“Rhaenys said Lord Stark’s son beat two of our Kingsguard in the practice yard, is that true?” Rhaegar asked, his eyes still on the action in front of them. There were a few gasps around them when Jon Snow managed to drop Oberyn with a leg sweep and a couple of murmurs when her brother got back to his feet before Jon could capitalise on the situation.

Nobody just drops Oberyn like that. It would seem Rhaenys’ story was true after all.

Rhaegar glanced at her quickly before looking at his mother.

Rhaella nodded with a tiny grin on her face, so subtle you’d miss it at first glance “Yes he did, Ser Jaime and Ser Loras were the casualties.” She said as she lifted her goblet to her lips.

Rhaegar’s eyebrows rose at that and she felt the same shock as he did “Ser Jaime AND Ser Loras?” He said “Two of the four members of the crowns team?” He finished.

“One. Ser Loras has just this second been knocked out.” Rhaenys interrupted as they all tore their eyes away from the battle Oberyn and Jon were having and looked to see where Loras was.

She noticed Lady Brienne slowly backing up towards her teammate who was still battling it out against the Darkstar. It would seem she’d beaten Ser Daemon and decided to move onto to better competition.

“What happened?” Rhaegar asked. Rhaenys was the one to fill them in.

“Lady Brienne had just finished defeating Ser Daemon, Ser Loras decided to go rogue and take advantage of the situation. Safe to say it didn’t turn out well for him.” She explained.

She shook her head.

“Don't worry your grace, we’ll hammer that out of him, he’s still young.” The Lord Commander of
the Kingsguard, Ser Gerold added. She turned and gave the knight a smile.

“I hope to be there to watch that happen.” She replied. Ser Gerold smiled and nodded his head before moving back to his position behind them.

“We should be fine, we’ve still got three members remaining.” Rhaegar said as he surveyed the yard. The groups had really thinned out.

“Who’s left then Rhaenys? You seem to be keeping a keen eye on the action.” She said as she eyed her daughter. She’d not missed how her eyes followed Lord Stark’s son around the yard whenever she sneaked a look at her.

The situation was less than ideal, if only her daughter had shown this type of interest in the trueborn son of Lord Stark. A match between her and this Jon Snow would have consequences even if he was legitimised. A legitimised bastard being chosen over a trueborn heir to a great house would definitely create more problems instead of fixing any.

She was broken from her thoughts as Rhaenys replied “Well, we’ve still got Egg, Arthur and Jaime. Dorne still have uncle Oberyn who is still fighting with Jon Snow and Ser Gerold Dayne who is fighting Lord Beric. The Stormlands have Lady Brienne and Lord Beric left, the Westerlands somehow still have those two idiots left, though I imagine people are just waiting to take the victor of that.” She explained.

“And the North?” She asked, already knowing that Jon Snow was still competition.

“Jon left Lord Umber and Ser Jorah to face Ser Lyn and Lord Royce earlier, Lord Umber was the only one to walk away from that fight.” Rhaenys explained as she pointed the large lord making his way across to where his last remaining teammate was who, to everybody’s shock including hers, was tiring her brother out and forcing him on the back foot.

*He’s gonna beat him.* She concluded, and what a hard conclusion that was to come to.

“Coming down to the last few competitors then. Still, I’m confident in our team’s chances.” Rhaegar said as they looked on. Egg’s team were at the other end of the yard to everybody else, waiting to see how the situation at the other end of the yard ended whilst keeping an eye on the two Clegane brothers who were at that very moment, slowing down in their quest for destruction.
“Looks like the Mountain might be winning that one.” Rhaenys said as the Hound struggled to parry each of his brother’s strikes before falling into the dirt. The Mountain was on top of him shortly after, it was only then that people realised what was happening.

“He’s choking him to death!” Rhaella exclaimed as she pointed at the two brothers. Thankfully, Ser Arthur and Ser Jaime were on Ser Gregor in a flash, just about pulling the man off of his brother and preventing a public kinslaying.

Rhaegar stood from where he was sat and called some guards forward to enter the yard. “Get him out of here!” He said to them.

It took nearly ten guards to get him out of the yard but eventually he was escorted out to a chorus of boos from the crowd, and rightfully so.

Sandor Clegane was helped from the ground by the two Kingsguard but he didn’t look a single bit appreciative of the two men as he stormed out of the yard without a single look to anybody else in that.

Lord Tywin has his work cut out with those two.

In the midst of all that happening, the Darkstar had defeated Lord Beric and had moved on to Lady Brienne, Prince Oberyn was on the cusp of defeat and Lord Umber was watching his teammate with a smile on his face.

Catelyn

The northern section of the crowd erupted with shouts and cheers as Prince Oberyn yielded.

To that boy.

How had it all gone so wrong?
How had her brother and uncle failed so miserably?

The answer was clear, the evidence had been out on that yard defeating men left, right and centre.

She’d greatly underestimated the boy, and she hated that simple fact.

And now he was one of the very few combatants left.

She ground her teeth as she witnessed the Prince of Dorne laugh as Jon helped him from the ground before clapping him on the shoulder and whispering something into his ear, whatever was said made the two of them grin. Prince Oberyn bowed and waved to the crowd on his way out of the yard, turning around one last time and winking in Jon’s direction.

The way the boy had integrated himself with the nobles during their stay at this tournament had made her anxious to the point where sleep would allude her some nights.

This should have been what her son should’ve been doing instead of the bastard. He should be here creating friendships and alliances with some of the current and future lords of the great houses.

Not him.

She knew this was going to happen, she’d told Ned time and again that something like this would happen. That his bastard son would gain a bit of popularity and a bit of influence over some of the lords, that as soon as something like that happened, he would climb the social ladder and garner more interest than their trueborn children did.

And then that would be the beginning of the end, an end where she envisioned Jon Snow sitting in Winterfell as the ruling lord, taking everything from her children and proving her fears to be true.

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, she drowned out the clapping and shouting around her as she calmed herself. She was getting carried away, that’s all it was.

Nobody would allow any of those things to happen. Her father wouldn’t let something like that happen and if she asked, Lysa wouldn’t let something like that happen. The combined might of the
Vale and the Riverlands wouldn’t allow anything like that to happen.

That calmed her rising anxiety.

Her eyes shot open at the sound of Arya cheering from where she was sat, the losing battle she was fighting to get her to act a little more sensibly in public was always tiring.

She looked back over to the yard to no doubt see Arya’s annoyingly favourite brother doing something else extraordinary, well in Arya’s eyes it would be extraordinary, her daughter practically worshiped him.

Instead, she witnessed the final member of the Stormlands team eliminate the final member of the dornish team, Lady Brienne holding the point of her tourney blade at the neck of Ser Gerold Dayne.

The Stormlands section of the crowd look both shocked and amazed as they all stood and cheered for the only representative of the Stormlands left in the bout. The dornish looked gutted but seemed to appreciate the Lady’s skill as they polite clapped at what they’d just witnessed.

She’ll never hear the end of this from Arya, it will most likely fuel her want to become some type of knight even more.

She looked to the two remaining members of the northern team, fully expecting them to take advantage of the two on one situation. But instead of striking while the iron was hot, both of them lowered their weapons and seemed to have a conversation with Lady Brienne, all whilst pointing in the direction of the other three members left of the melee.

The Crownlands team.

Ser Jaime, one of the best knights in the realm, Ser Arthur, considered to be the very best and the Crown Prince himself, Prince Aegon, a man who’s been trained by the best in the realm.

This was surely where it ended.
Rhaegar

It would seem he’d underestimated Lord Umber when it came to Jon Snow, the Lord’s trust in the boy’s abilities had not been in vain. The information he’d received from his daughter, coupled with the fact that he’d seen him go toe to toe with the Red Viper proved the boy’s worth.

Ser Gerold may have a new Kingsguard on his hands if the boy was at all interested. He thought to himself as he watched him, along with his teammate Lord Umber and Lady Brienne.

Smart. It would seem the three of them had come to the agreement that for them to even stand a chance of winning this thing, they needed to work together to get rid of the biggest threat.

It would be for naught though, he had belief in his men, he had belief in his son. His son at that moment in time had stepped forward and was saying something to the makeshift team that was approaching, unfortunately, it was too quiet for any of them to hear. It didn’t help that the crowd was getting pretty loud with excitement.

Regardless of whoever wins this bout, he could safely say this had been a major success.

Well, apart from those Clegane brothers. Lord Tywin could sort that mess out, he wasn’t getting involved.

“Looks like they’ve decided between them who would face who.” His Queen said from her seat next to him. He looked at her and nodded before looking back to the yard. It would seem that Lord Umber had drawn the short straw and was paired up against Arthur, Jaime looked like he was attempting to redeem himself against Jon Snow and Aegon would have to deal with the warrior lady from the Stormlands.

He heard his mother tut from her seat next to his “I think Egg is going to struggle against her.” She said as she looked on at the scene. He noticed her eyes bouncing back and forth between her grandson and Jon Snow.

Ser Barristan was stood behind his mother and he decided to ask his opinion on the matter, the veteran surely had a good idea as to why his mother thought such a thing.

“What do you think Ser Barristan? Is my mother correct?” He asked as he looked at the knight.
The knight seemed to prepare his answer in his head before answering moments later “Unfortunately I have to agree with her grace, your grace. Lady Brienne’s fundamentals are almost perfect, something Prince Aegon has regularly struggled with and against whenever we’ve drilled him. It’s the main thing Arthur gets on his back about your grace.” He explained.

“A good test for him then, wouldn’t you agree Ser Barristan?” Elia said as she gave the knight a kind smile. The knight nodded and replied.

“Correct. It would be impossible for him not to learn anything from this encounter your grace.” Ser Barristan replied. Him and Elia both nodded at the knight before turning back to the yard, just in time to see their son squaring up against Lady Brienne.

“She’s a bit bigger than him isn’t she?” Elia seemed to say to nobody in particular as Aegon moved forward and made the first move between the two, Lady Brienne parried the strike easily before returning her own to which Aegon parried himself.

He didn’t miss how much easier it was for Brienne to parry his son’s strike compared to his son parrying her strike. He knew they were just testing the water against each other but it didn’t fail in emboldening the Stormlander who parried another strike and returned a strike herself harder than the last.

The clashing of steel between the other two bouts didn’t distract him from watching his son in his attempt to best the admittedly, fantastic fighter he was paired with. They went back and forth with each other striking and parrying each other’s hits with precision, to anybody without an ounce of military background, the two of them were on an even playing field but to anybody with a little bit of knowledge about sparring, they could see that the Crown Prince was tiring as he blocked the heavier hitting strikes.

The sound of the crowd cheering and the groaning from the northern section of the crowd made him tear his eyes away from his son’s bout and dart across towards the bout between Ser Jaime and Lord Stark’s son, fully expecting to see the boy finally yielding after biting off more than he could chew. Instead, his eyes were treated to a beautiful looking riposte from the boy that almost disarmed Ser Jaime.

Okay, he’s good.

So if wasn’t Jon Snow being eliminated then it must be...
The sight of Arthur helping Lord Umber off the floor must have meant that the giant lord of Last Hearth had finally been defeated. The lord seemed to take it well as he laughed and smiled at the Sword of the Morning. He looked towards his teammate and seemed to think about yelling something at him but, as if realising it wouldn’t do the lad any good with that sort of distraction, decided to stay quiet as he turned and waved at the crowd before making his way out of the yard.

Three against two.

_C’mon Egg, you can do it._ He thought to himself as he watched his son block a heavy strike. The hit looked like it almost sent him to the ground. It was clear to anybody that he was struggling against Lady Brienne.

The swords clashed again, this time locking in place against each other. The bigger frame of Lady Brienne was helping her out as she slowly pushed Aegon backwards, his boots scrambling for some sort of grip in the dirt as he dug them in. Out the corner of his eye, he noticed Arthur moving towards the pair of them, more specifically, behind Lady Brienne, with his sword primed to attack.

“No, don’t!” He heard his son grit out through his teeth as he slowly succumbed to Lady Brienne’s strength. Ser Arthur listened to his Prince and backed off from the two of them.

Everybody in the crowd seemed to deflate when one of Aegon’s knees dropped to the dirt under the pressure, well, not everybody, the Stormlander’s were ecstatic.

And they were even louder when his son begrudgingly yielded to the heir of Tarth.

_A valiant effort Son._

Lady Brienne helped Aegon up from the ground and nodded at whatever he was saying to her, a smile lighting up her face then instantly giving way as she turned around and looked at Ser Arthur. His son smirked and patted her on the shoulder and with that, walked out of the yard, not without waving and bowing to the clapping crowd. The audience seemingly appreciative of their Prince’s efforts.

“He did better than expected, your grace. You should be proud, one of the final five out of the many great fighters we’ve had is nothing to be embarrassed about. And he lost with dignity instead of taking a cheap victory.” He heard Ser Gerold say from behind him. He turned and gave the Lord
Commander of the Kingsguard an appreciative smile.

“I’m very proud of what he’s achieved,” He said as he looked back to the yard “...I can't imagine what Lord Stark is feeling though, I mean look at him Gerold.” He said as he nodded towards the fight between Jaime and Lord Stark’s son. His mother shuffled in her seat.

“Hmm, his fundamentals seem spot on from the glances I've been taking, and his swiftness makes little sense given his frame. A natural talent if I've ever seen one, your grace.” Ser Gerold replied.

He turned and looked at him again “There’s potential there, wouldn’t you say? A future brother of the Kingsguard maybe? You and Barristan aren't getting any younger.” He said as he chuckled at his little jape. Ser Gerold obviously didn’t find it funny, his eyebrows rising in surprise.

It was at that moment he heard the crowd go quiet and group further away from him cheer. His head swivelling back towards the yard, the reason for Ser Gerold’s surprised look helping Ser Jaime up off the floor with a big smirk on his face.

A funny feeling in his gut took root for a split second before dispersing.

“What happened?” He said, still shocked to see one of his best walking out of the yard, waving to the crowd as he exited.

“I think you need to invite him back to the Red Keep Rhaegar. If Lord Stark agrees and the boy is open to the idea, I think we might have a future Kingsguard on our hands.” Elia said to his left, his question completely forgotten about. He didn’t miss Rhaenys and Daenerys fidgeting in their seats as they pretended like they hadn't heard what his Queen had just said.

He looked at the yard, still surprised at what had occurred “How old did you say the boy was, your grace?” Ser Gerold said from behind him.

He shook his head “I didn’t. But if I'm not mistaken, he’s around the same age as my sister.” He replied as he watched the boy walk around the two other fighters left in the yard. The way he watched them it was like he was trying to learn what to expect when he eventually faced one of them.

It’ll be Arthur by the looks of it. The dornishman’s superior skill slowly becoming too much for
Lady Brienne.

He heard Ser Gerold clear his throat “Well in that case, I would have to agree with her grace. Inviting him to the Red Keep so we can assess him personally would be in all of our interests.” The old knight replied. Rhaegar nodded without taking his eyes off the yard.

The crowd cheered, Ser Arthur holding the edge of his sword under Lady Brienne’s chin. The woman had fought like a champion throughout the whole competition but it would seem that she’d met her match, something she shouldn’t be disappointed about in the slightest, Arthur was the best of the best after all.

*She’s gonna inspire a lot of girls with that performance, it was almost a given.* He thought.

He stood and clapped as she walked off the yard, everybody joining in when they saw what their King was doing. It wasn’t long before Lady Brienne was out of sight and the applause came to a stop and was replaced with an excited murmur.

There was a buzz in the air, that was something he couldn’t deny.

He turned to Ser Gerold “This is the big test for him, wouldn’t you say Ser Gerold? How long can Jon Snow last against the Sword of the Morning.” He said as he turned and looked back into the yard, both men slowly circling.

“The ultimate test your grace...especially now.” Ser Gerold replied from behind him. The knight’s belief reinforced as Ser Arthur picked up a discarded tourney sword left in the dirt and began swirling the pair of them hypnotically. An intimidation tactic if he’s ever seen one.

To Jon Snow’s credit, he didn’t look too worried about the famous knight arming himself with a second blade. Rhaegar knew if nobody else did that Arthur arming himself with a second sword was his way of showing respect to his opponent’s skill.

He could count on one hand the amount of times he’s faced off against an individual with two blades outside of real battle.

Jon Snow had just joined that illustrious group.
“Arthur must rate his skill Ser Gerold, when was the last time you saw him do that?” He said as he nodded into the yard, Arthur still trying to intimidate the younger man.

Jon Snow looked cold and unaffected as the two of them carried on circling.

A quiet thumping grew and grew in volume as the crowd stomped their feet in rhythm, almost like they were trying to coax the two men to strike. The sound of clapping added to the stomping as the crowd grew louder and louder. It was starting to get deafening as the rhythm grew in tempo.

And then it stopped.

And replaced with murmurs as Jon Snow picked up a second sword out of the dirt himself.

“Surely not.” He heard Elia murmur to herself as everybody looked on to see what the young northerner would do now he had a blade in each hand.

The silence in the yard was deafening as Jon Snow tested the weight of his second sword, seemingly identical to the one in his other hand. Gasps emerged all around the stands as the young man replicated the twirls that Ser Arthur had exhibited just before. He looked around the crowd, at his own family, all of them equally amazed at what they were witnessing right now.

He’d never been this interested in the outcome of one of Ser Arthur’s fights in all his life.

He almost felt like a child again.

The two men slowly circled each other again when Snow eventually stopped with his own display, almost taunting the older knight as he grinned at him.

*There’s that funny feeling in his gut again.*

He never had the chance to dwell on it because before anybody was even ready, the two of them were clashing in a dance of steel and power. It was almost like looking at art.
He’s definitely coming back to the Red Keep with us, talent like that comes once in a lifetime.

He looked at Arthur as the two of them traded blow after blow, neither of them budging for the other. He couldn’t imagine what was going through his head, this was probably the first time he’s ever fought against someone who seemed to be able to stand toe to toe with him.

Arthur

Oh he was good, he was very good.

One of the lad’s strikes nearly landing a hit on his arm if he hadn't twisted his body away from it.

Back and forth they went, clashing steel against steel without any breakthrough. He was very impressed, right about now he would be looking to take advantage of the glaring weakness of his opponent and ending this bout round about now.

But he couldn’t. He thought, gritting his teeth as he blocked a heavy downswing. Any normal opponent would have left themselves wide open for the counter but not this one, the lad’s second blade covering any sort of reply Arthur could muster.

The worst thing about it all was there was no talking, no taunts, no japes, nothing. The boy was cold, determined and uninterested in any sort of verbal competition. It made it hard for him to get a measure of the lad’s temperament.

Focused would be one way to describe him. He mused as he just about avoided a lighting quick leg sweep, his trailing foot still getting caught but not enough to send him into the dirt. He stumbled a little as he rebalanced his stance, just in time to spin away from another downward swing.

Gods he’s quick.

Who was this man? He thought. His blades flurrying against his opponent’s, each jab and slash avoided or blocked. The only positive was the backfoot he’d put the lad on.
His offense is good and it would seem his defence is exactly the same.

I wonder if this is how Aegon feels when we spar?

Frustrated, that would be the word he’d describe what he felt right now as Snow saw every single one of his strikes coming every time without fail, each one hitting harder and harder against the dulled steel of his tourney sword as his frustration built.

Even under the relentless punishment he was dealing out against Snow’s blades, he still didn’t budge. Block after block as he moved backwards in an attempt at creating some space for himself.

All I need is one opportunity, because this isn’t working.

The look in Snow’s eyes was calculated and it filled him with dread when the lad repositioned himself. He favoured his right side as he blocked the strike from Arthur’s righthanded sword, using his own strike to do so. It sent an uncomfortable jolt up Arthur’s arm from the collision.

That’s when Snow’s eyes lit up, darting to the lefthanded strike Arthur had automatically decided to try in an attempt to catch him out.

He’d been read like a book.

Jon had recovered from the right sided blow a lot quicker than he had, thus giving him the ample time to block Arthur’s lefthanded strike and lock it in between his crossed swords. The sword in Arthur’s left hand was scissored between the two and ripped away from his hand deftly.

Fuck. He thought as the crowd around him gasped and muttered.

He didn’t get chance to go back and wonder when he was last disarmed because as soon as the sword in his left hand hit the dirt, Jon Snow was on him like an opportunistic wolf. Left, right, left, right, he had to work twice as hard to block the dual onslaught of the two blades.
This was exhausting. He thought as he attempted a riposte against the lad’s left strike, anything to even the playing field. But it was for naught, Snow had an iron grip on his hilt.

And an iron grip on this bout.

The effort he put in to disarm one of the lad’s swords left him open for a strike in the midsection, the blunted steel clashing against his breastplate with force, sending shockwaves through his ribcage and producing an awful ringing noise in his ears.

I can’t break through...

I’m gonna lose...

Snow stuck a foot out and forced him backwards with a push of his boot, if anything, he appreciated the chance to catch a breather.

Unfortunately, Snow had other ideas. The moment he was forced back with the kick, he was swiftly attacked again with another flurry of strikes coming from both sides.

He was relentless.

The only way he could scrape a win here would be due to an error, something Snow had shown little to no sign of.

He’d like to meet the person who’d trained him, congratulate him on creating a monster.

The strikes weren’t letting up, he was exhausted, he could feel his tunic sticking to his skin, drenched with sweat. If he was going to make his move it had to be now or never.

There! The subtle lowering of Snow’s left sword every time he struck with his right. He blocked the attack and waited for the strike from his right sword again to see if it was exploitable.

There it is again! The left sword lowered as he struck with his right again. All he had to do was pick
his time...

Which was now! The right strike was blocked, a burst of adrenaline giving him the energy to twist his sword against the one in Snow’s left hand. The contact held true as he twisted his wrist to rid the sword from the lad’s hand, the sword was released from Snow’s grip with ease...

Released...

Snow didn’t even attempt to grip the blade as it was ripped from his hand...

He watched the sword fall to the ground but before it hit the dirt, he looked up at Snow’s face...

He was smirking.

...He’d been played.

His free arm was dragged forwards, pulling him towards Jon before a knee was smashing into his chest and sending him backwards into the dirt.

His back collided with the ground and knocked the air out of his lungs. Muscle memory working overtime to right him back to his feet was futile, the weight and pressure of Snow’s knee pressed against the Targaryen sigil on his breastplate spelt only one thing. He closed his eyes and came to terms with it.

He’d lost.

The cold steel gently rested against his throat, his eyes slowly opened as he let out a tired sigh. Snow didn’t even speak, he just raised an eyebrow at him.

“I yield.” He begrudgingly answered.

The crowd exploded with sound. The majority of the sound coming from the far end of the yard, where the northerners were situated.
The pressure from his chest subsided as Snow stood up and held a hand out, he grabbed it and was helped up to his feet by him.

“Well fought Ser.” He said, the first thing he’d said to him, his northern accent lacing each word.

He gripped the lad’s hand and gave it a solid shake whilst nodding “You fought brilliantly, the truest competition I’ve had in a while.” He said. Snow looked down and smiled.

At least he’s humble.

“He answered, barely audible over the sheer noise that had took over the stands.

He nodded and grinned as Jon looked around the crowd, the lad sighing to himself “I think you might hate what comes next.” Arthur said to him.

Jon huffed “Do you mean the attention? Yeah, I probably am.” He replied, a little grin on his face. Arthur’s own grin slowly fell from his face.

That grin...

Before he could over think anything, the herald’s horn was blowing to announce the ending of the melee. The two of them turning to look up at their King as he stood up from his seat. With a wave in the air, the crowd quietened down to listen to what he had to say.

“Well, I think I speak for everybody here when I say I didn’t see that coming.” Rhaegar japed as the crowd chuckled.

His King held both of his arms out and pointed them both at Jon “The victor of the first Grand Melee of hopefully many to come, The North! And their champion, Jon Snow!” He announced as he began clapping, the rest of the royal family rising to their feet and joining in.
He held the lad’s wrist and lifted it into the air, the crowd joining in with their King’s applause. A couple of “Snow” chants heard from the northern spectators as the lad threw a thumbs up their way.

A weight had been lifted off of his shoulders in a funny way, the pressure of being one of the best fighters in the realm now shared with the man next to him. He just hoped the lad was ready for the kind of attention you got for having such a reputation, her remembers it taking him a few years to get used to it.

He smiled at the royal family as they looked on, Aegon’s future Queen politely clapping with a smirk on her face as she nudged Daenerys in the shoulder. The King’s sister was too busy beaming in their direction to even notice the nudge, so too was Princess Rhaenys. His Queen looked impressed by what she had seen and so too did the King as they nodded in their direction, Viserys was Viserys with his lacklustre applause but Arthur could see an almost shocked look on his face.

It was the Queen mother though, her reaction somewhat confusing.

Her chin held high with her royal mask well and truly in place as she clapped, what concerned him was the crack in said mask.

The sunlight illuminating her face, light bouncing off the moisture on her cheeks.

She’d been crying.

Chapter End Notes

Hopefully that was a decent attempt at the event the characters have been hyping up.

I believe the different POV’s in and around the melee were a better choice compared to a singular one involving Jon, it allowed me to write their thoughts and reactions as things were happening.

I left a line in Dany’s POV about the joust slipping people's minds, its safe to say that things will be happening in that as well :)

I hope you enjoyed this one, it was probably the hardest one I've had to write to date and I know how long chapters can sometimes exhaust some people.

Now for the bad news, I'm gonna be taking two weeks away from writing, 2 days from now I'll be moving house, those of you who have experienced such a thing know how
stressful that can be. Thankfully for some of you, Thrones is back on our screens pretty soon so that will keep people occupied.

For those who are perpetually worried that I'm gonna abandon this story, this isn't goodbye, this is just see you later :)

Roll on the next one :)
The Calm

Chapter Notes

I'm back, well sort of, still got a few things to sort out with the new house but knock on wood, nothing will go wrong :)

What did people think of episode 3 of Thrones? Personally, I have mixed feelings.

Anyways, enjoy the chapter :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Aegon

The merriment was thick in the air, so was the smell of good food and the sound of good music as the band played a cheerful tune. The northerners in the corner of the great hall of the newly renovated Harrenhal were in good voice tonight as they joyfully sang and drank, toasting to their victory earlier that day.

Their mood was contagious as men, women and children took to the dance floor and just enjoyed the moment for what it was.

He smiled as he let his eyes scan the crowd, softly tapping his leg to the beat of the band’s tune.

“...so you can see why I wouldn’t mind talking to the man, that beautiful creature of his could potentially produce a fine litter.” He heard Margaery’s brother and his brother in law, Willas say to his other brother in law, Garlan as they sat at a table together.

“Have you spoken to him?” Garlan replied as he took a sip of arbour gold from his goblet. Aegon turned back to the two of them just in time to see his uncle Oberyn slowly making his way towards their table.

Willas shook his head “Not had the chance to I’m afraid, whenever I try to find him, he’s nowhere to be found and when I do spot him he seems to be busy. I imagine he’ll be even busier now after what happened today.” He replied as he looked over the hall towards the table the Starks were currently sat at.

He furrowed his brow “What’s this about?” He asked, a slight grin growing on his face as he locked
eyes with his approaching uncle.

Garlan turned to him “Willas wants to breed with Snow’s wolf.” He said as Willas’ eyes widened.

His uncle seemed to join the conversation at a completely unfortunate time for his brother in law.

“Aren't you afraid of what people will think of you when they find out?” His uncle said in his thick dornish drawl as he winked at him and patted Willas on the back.

Willas huffed but smiled at his uncle “Prince Oberyn.” He said in greeting. Garlan nodded his head at the Prince of Dorne.

Their friendship had always been an odd one, many in the realm expected the heir of Highgarden to hate his uncle after the unfortunate joust that resulted in the Tyrell man having to live with a walking cane glued to his hand for the remainder of his life. Nothing of the sort happened though, Willas seemed to know that Oberyn hadn't hurt him on purpose during their bout and even went as far as to let him know there were no hard feelings.

Ever since then, his uncle and brother in law had sprouted an unexpected friendship. One that most people to this day, still didn’t understand.

“I know you have an interest in mutts Willas but I didn’t you think you’d resort to taking one as your wife.” He heard his uncle reply. He chuckled at his uncle’s behaviour whenever he was around him. He knew he really shouldn’t but Oberyn was his favourite uncle by a country mile. It wasn’t like he had much competition though, he didn’t see enough of his uncle Doran due to his ailment confining him to Sunspear and the Water Gardens and the less said about his other uncle the better.

“I think my brother is interested in a different canine to wed Prince Oberyn, the red wolf variety.” Garlan said as he grinned into his goblet.

“Don't.” Willas replied to his brother in a low tone as he glared at him. Garlan just shrugged his shoulders in response before finishing off his wine.

That glint in his uncle’s eye was unmissable, you had two options whenever you were on the receiving end of it, brace for impact, or run. He smiled to himself already knowing that The Red Viper had already sunk his teeth into Willas.
His brother in law closed his eyes and seemed to deflate as Oberyn slung an arm over his shoulders. “I thought you and me had something Willas, and here I am, finding out you’ve been looking elsewhere. You wound me my pretty rose.” His uncle said with a grin as he whispered the last part into Willas’ ear.

He’d never seen Willas move so fast as he bolted up from his seat “Right, I’m going to go and find grandmother, even a lecture from her is better than whatever this is going to turn out to be.” He said as he grabbed his cane and made his exit, not without a few good natured laughs being fired his way.

As soon as he was out of ear shot, he nudged Garlan in the shoulder “Who’s this red wolf you speak of? It wouldn’t happen to be Lord Stark’s daughter would it?” He asked as his uncle made himself more comfortable with the extra space that had been left in Willas’ departure.

“The very same. Caught him staring a few times.” He said.

He furrowed his brow “I thought he was interested in my sister? I thought it was going well with the amount of times I’ve seen them talking with each other back at the Red Keep.” He replied. He knew his sister was digging her heels in about marriage but he genuinely thought there was some progress there between the two. Her sister could do a lot worse in his opinion.

Garlan huffed “Grandmother is interested in your sister.” He said with a bit of humour “Willas said he enjoys your sister’s company but doesn’t see anything coming from it, said it made him feel dirty trying to force something that your sister was clearly not interested in. Grandmother has had face on with him ever since he told her.” He finished with a chuckle as he refilled his goblet.

“My niece knows what she wants, it’s the Martell blood in her veins.” His uncle added as he sipped from his own goblet, dornish red no doubt.

He looked towards the table his sister was sat at, a group of ladies present at her side including Margaery, Dany and his dornish cousins. The conversation seemed to be lively between them as they drank and laughed, he didn’t miss the looks they shot around the hall at the men and women present, or the looks a few of them were sending in the northern group’s direction.

*He doesn’t blame them, the northerners were somehow getting louder and louder as the evening went on.*
“...and I'm pretty sure I know what my niece wants.” His uncle added as he looked on at the table Rhaenys was sat at.

He raised an eyebrow as he looked at his uncle “You do?” He asked.

Oberyn smirked as he tore his eyes away from his niece and looked at him “Of course I do, not much gets past me my prince.” He replied as he took a sip from his goblet.

He seemed to get both of his and Garlan’s attention after saying that, it was no secret to the realm that his sister and aunt were awfully hard to impress. His uncle was almost basking in the attention as he made them wait for him to explain. After a few moments of his uncle grinning like a mad man and enjoying his wine, he impatiently motioned for him to continue.

“Well?” He asked.

His uncle’s smirk hadn't fallen from his face as he lowered his goblet before turning to Garlan.

“Put it this way, your brother isn't the only one interested in one of them wolves. Where your brother likes the red kind, my niece prefers the white variety.” He said as he finished his goblet.

_White Kind?_

_Wait..._

“The bastard?” He almost blurted out, completely taken by the news. His uncle quirked his own eyebrow at that.

“You sound surprised, are bastards incapable of anything in general your grace?” He replied, clearly referring to his own daughters. He felt bad almost instantly for his response.

“My apologies uncle, you just took me by surprise that’s all.” He offered in apology. His uncle waved the whole situation off like it was nothing.
“Are you sure though?” He asked.

His uncle nodded “Positive, your sister isn't very discreet with her appreciation of that boy. I'm surprised nobody else has noticed to be honest.” He explained.

His eyes drifted towards the table where the b...the man in question was sat, currently embroiled in what looked like a drinking contest with Lord Umber if the rhythmic banging against the table by the men surrounding them was anything to go by.

Why? Why him of all people?

Yeah, he was easy on the eye, you didn’t have to be a woman to notice that and he was clearly an exceptional warrior, Ser Arthur had even vouched for the man’s prowess when he’d gone to rib him after the melee had finished.

But that was it. His sister had met plenty of lords and knights who shared those same enticing attributes, what was so special about this one?

He shook his head “I don’t get it, what’s so special about him?” He said, speaking to nobody in particular.

Garlan swallowed the wine that was in his mouth before answering “Not sure, I mean, he’s clearly a very gifted fighter so I suppose that’s something. I know Loras is a fan of him, make of that what you will.” He said.

Loras? Why was he a fan?

“Both of you limit yourself to only half of what's on offer, you’d understand otherwise.” His uncle interjected as he took a lazy sip from his goblet, zero shame as he stared across the hall where Snow was turning his mug over the top of his head to the cheer of the men around him.

He rolled his eyes and huffed “He seems to have caught your attention as well uncle, what would aunt Ellaria say?” He said, fully aware of how open the two of them were with their relationship.
His uncle turned back at him with trouble written all over his face “Your aunt has already asked if we can take him home with us.” He said before finishing the contents of his goblet.

_He expected nothing less._

He remembered what had happened after his uncle was eliminated by Snow “Uncle, what did you say to him in that yard?” He asked. He looked back towards his sister’s table and noticed that not only was she being very obvious with the way she was peaking towards Snow, so too was Daenerys.

_Seriously?_

His uncle hummed as he refilled his goblet “Not much, just the usual I suppose.” He replied with a grin on his face as he slowly looked up at him.

_The usual..._

He huffed “You flirted with him.” He said, it wasn't even question because he knew exactly who his uncle was.

Oberyn just shrugged as he finished filling his goblet, sipping from the top of it where it nearly overflowed “I flirted, he flirted back, we had fun.” He replied.

His brow furrowed “Wait...so does he...is he...”

“Does he like fucking men?” His uncle asked, eyebrow quirked. Garlan took an extra-long gulp from his goblet.

He just nodded.

Oberyn huffed as he shook his head “Nah, he’s as straight as my cock on a morning. He took my flirting in his stride, I was quite impressed really, you know how I like making men uncomfortable
with the things I say.” He replied with a grin as he caught Garlan finishing his wine in one go.

He rolled his eyes.

*Never change uncle.*

Garlan clapped him on the back before rising from his seat “And with that, I bid you both farewell, your grace...” He said as he nodded at him “Prince Oberyn.” He finished with another nod, his uncle lifted his goblet in the air bidding him farewell before bringing it down to his mouth.

He looked back at his sister’s table, for once, her and Dany weren't staring towards the northerners, they were in some sort of conversation with his wife.

He took a big swig from his own goblet as he stared at her, she’d been wearing that dress all day, the one that squeezed all of the right places on his wife’s perfect physique. She’d been a little embarrassed by the silver lines that had been left on her body after the birth of their baby girl but he was quick to reassure her.

She’d earnt them, bringing that little girl into their lives.

His cock strained uncomfortably against the leather of his breeches, the idea of what they could get up to tonight enough to cause such a reaction.

“Oh dear.” He heard his uncle say, he tore his eyes away from his wife and looked at him in confusion before looking to where his uncle was looking.

Lord Edmure had just entered the hall with determination in his stride and an awful looking black eye. I suppose that was what you ended up with when a knee is driven into your face.

“This should get interesting.” He heard his uncle say. And he was definitely right with the way the heir of Riverrun approached the northerners, more specifically, Snow.

The sound of merriment slowly reduced to a murmur as everybody noticed what was happening, the harsh scrape of a chair making a few people jump as Snow rose to his feet with nothing but a cold
look on his face as he eyed the approaching Riverlord.

*Fuck me, he felt that glare from here and it wasn’t even aimed at him.*

It would seem Lord Edmure had felt it as well as his determined stride slowed down, almost to a standstill. Aegon looked towards the head table to see what his father’s reaction was to all of this, to his surprise, he just looked on with undisguised interest.

He looked back at the scene in front of him and noticed the heir of Riverrun slowly walking backwards before he turned around and approached the table the ladies were sat at.

He bowed in front of his sister and held out his hand to her “Your grace, would you do me the honour with this dance?” He said. He already knew his sister had to agree to it, denying a dance with him would definitely cause problems in the future. It was why there was no surprise on his face when she nodded and took the man’s hand.

Lord Edmure had an annoying smirk on his face as the two of them headed towards the dance floor, a smirk aimed right at Snow. Unfortunately for the Riverlord, his sister’s polite smile screamed of how unimpressed she was with the whole thing.

“What a penis.” He heard his uncle say as the volume of the hall grew when the band moved onto their next song.

He chuckled, he couldn’t for the life of him disagree.

*Maybe Snow wasn’t the worst his sister could do after all.*

The alternative was attempting to lead her through a simple dance and making a poor attempt at it.

*Maybe Snow knocked something out of place when he kneed him in the head.* He mused.

He looked back at Snow as he looked on at Rhaenys and Lord Edmure, a cold look of indifference on his face.
What a shame, he clearly had everything Rhaenys wanted in a husband if the way he caught her attention was anything to go by.

Everything but a name to give her.

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Jon

He masked his grimace well as Greatjon bellowed out with that laugh of his, way too early for such a volume of noise to hear. What made it worse was the horrendous feeling he had after last night’s festivities, he may have been able to keep up with Lord Umber but he was definitely feeling the consequences this morning.

The copious amount of booze he’d drunk last night had served its purpose though, it had made the feast bearable, well, of what he could remember of it that is.

It wasn’t the smartest thing he’d ever done, using alcohol to help him through the night wasn’t ideal by any means. Still, it’d done its job perfectly, it wasn’t his idea of a good time, a room full of family, one side of it including a man pretending to be his father and a woman who had not hidden her hatred of him all night. The other side of his family weren't even aware of his existence, well, apart from his grandmother, who he’d caught a few times keeping an eye on him, probably silently judging him.

And then the trout's little brother had turned up with a chip on his shoulder and another eye he wanted blackened.

It was a depressing thought but that pisswater they call ale down here was his best friend last night.

He held a hand over his eyes and squeezed his temples with his finger and thumb to ease the pressure in his head, he could feel every beat of his heart through the pulse that went through his skull. His futile attempt to roll his eyes as Greatjon asked him if he wanted any ale resulted in even more suffering on this bright morning.

“Rough night? HA!”’ Lord Umber asked from his seat where they were sat as they broke their fast. He just looked back at him unimpressed.
“How are you okay this morning? You drank as much as me...I think.” He replied as he finished off his cup of water. That was his fourth cup already this morning, it was nearly enough to end his throats suffering, a throat that felt as dry as a dornishman’s sandal.

Greatjon chuckled “I've been doing it for years lad, plus I do have half a foot or so on ya.” He replied as he, to Jon’s horror, poured himself another mug of ale. He just looked at him stunned and shook his head.

“So! What's your plan for today...champ.” Lord Umber said as he took a sip from his mug, the last part said with a smirk.

“Nothing. I need to recover from last night.” He replied almost instantly. Nothing was getting done today, preferably alone. He was hoping Ser Arthur’s comment about the attention he would no doubt get for beating him was false but if the few times he was approached yesterday after the melee was anything to go by, the legendary knight was correct.

Ser Arthur was by far, the second best swordsman he’d come against, the stories about him being the best were absolutely true, the knight was insanely sharp with his actions and his mind.

But Jon was better, he had Master M to thank for that.

The real question though was why did he have to go and beat the man? He knew he’d hate the attention it brought.

Stupid male pride. He mused. That and he owed it to Ser Arthur to show him his best. He wouldn’t have appreciated it if he’d held himself back and neither would Master M, he’d taught him better.

He missed Master M, he missed Gerry.

“I’ll leave you to your day of rest then lad, though, I'm not sure of how much of that you're gonna get.” Greatjon said as he eyed something over Jon’s shoulder.

He turned and looked at whatever had caught the man’s attention, instantly noticing a group of lasses whispering to each other and sneaking looks his way.
His groan was almost reactive.

He grabbed Lord Umber’s arm as the older man rose from his seat “I didn’t mean it, take me with you, I beg you.” He pleaded. Greatjon just laughed at him as his arm fell.

“No can do I’m afraid lad, I’ve got a meeting with your Lord father, I get to see how you winning yesterday affects my coffers. Hell, there might be a full keg of northern ale coming your way courtesy of the Lord of Last Hearth HA!” He said before walking away, leaving Jon alone at his table. The mention of his uncle sobering his mood.

He had to get away before anybody even got a chance to approach him, so he finished off whatever was left in his cup and stood up, he checked his back to make sure his swords were still present before briskly making his way out of the northern camp without looking back.

The markets were a no go, he wasn’t in the mood for being shouted at as merchants tried to sell him shit he knew he never needed. The practice yards would be even worse, people would be relentless with their need to test their mettle against him after yesterday. He’d probably end up a source of entertainment as people betted on the result of his spars.

Arya and Sansa were having lessons with their septa, Bran and Rickon were having lessons with the Blackfish and Ghost the little shit had fucked off into the woods after he’d stolen Jon’s last sausage at breakfast. His options were very limited.

He couldn’t really walk up to the castle and request to see his grandmother again either, questions would definitely be asked and suspicions would be raised tenfold.

They’d probably think we were doing something we shouldn’t be. He thought, amused at the idea of such a thing.

There was someone he could see though, somebody he’d not spent time with in a while. With his decision already made, he changed the direction he was mindless walking in and made his way towards the banks of the God Eye. A brisk walk along those banks would get him to the woods Ghost had bolted towards and further in those woods he’d be able to see if he could get away with seeing her.

He chuckled as he looked on the bright side, if she was spotted it would sure as shit pull the attention
away from him.

*And probably cause mass hysteria in the process.*

Lost in his thoughts, he nearly missed the voices he could just about hear from where he was walking along the bank.

“C’mon, what are you waiting for?” He heard somebody shout. He looked in the direction it came from and noticed a group of boys in the lake, clearly enjoying the cool water of it to counteract the hot day they were inevitably going to get.

Well, not all of them, one of the boys was stood on the bank fully clothed and looking very uncomfortable.

“What’s he doing Dickon? Is your brother simple or something?” He heard a different voice shout from within the group of boys in the water.

The boy stood on his own seemed to cringe if his face scrunching up was anything to go by.

The closer he got to the group, the more he started to realise what was going on. The one-sided conversation that seemed to be happening between the boys in the water and the boy on the bank making it rather difficult for him to just ignore.

“Hey! Piggy! Are you coming in or are we gonna have to come and drag you in?” Another boy said as the group around him started laughing at the boy’s expense. All of them apart from the one he assumed was the boy’s brother.

*What a shit brother.*

Unfortunately, Jon couldn’t disagree with some of the things the boys were saying, this boy, or Sam as one of them had said, was a little bit on the large side. But it still didn’t mean they had to act the way they were towards him the fucking cowards. The brother wasn’t saying any of the cruel things but neither was he standing up for his brother.
If somebody was making fun of Bran or Rickon, bones would be broken.

“Piggy’s got an admirer, look.” He heard one of them say as he approached the group. A snooty nosed little cretin with a head of dirty blonde hair the culprit of the jape.

The image of Kireina approaching the group and annihilating them from existence until they were nothing but a thin film of viscera and dust floating on the water’s surface was a disturbing yet amusing picture in his mind’s eye. The chuckle he let out obviously didn’t sit well with one of the pricks in the water.

“What are you laughing at pretty boy?” The same boy who’d called Sam piggy.

His eyebrows raised at that and he pointed at himself wondering if it was him they were talking about.

“Me?” He replied with his grin still plastered to his face. He could already see a few of them were getting annoyed with him.

“Yes you, are you simple like him as well?” The blonde little prick replied as Jon moved next to Sam. The large boy was looking at him with a little fear.

He shrugged his shoulders as he eyed the group of boys, a few of them clearly recognising him from yesterday as their eyes widened. It would seem the reputation he’d gained wasn’t all bad after all.

Instead of replying to his question, he turned to the boy stood next to him and held out his hand.

“Jon Snow.” He said as he received a handshake back.

“Sam...Tarly, Samwell Tarly Ser.” The boy replied, rather nervously if his sweaty palm and the slight tremor in his voice when he replied was anything to go by.

He huffed and shook his head “I'm not a knight Sam.” He replied, amused by the sight of the boy blinking in surprise.
“Oh?...Why’s that?...I mean, if you don’t mind me asking.” Sam replied. At the edge of his peripheral vision, he could see that a couple of the boys in the water were getting a little annoyed with the way he’d blanked them, the exact thing he wanted from this situation.

“I’m not a knight cos I was never knighted.” He answered. Over Sam’s shoulder, he noticed Ghost slowly emerge from the woods he was just heading for until he was interrupted.

_This is gonna be interesting._

“When you put it that way, I suppose that is a good reason.” Sam replied with a smile, the boy seemingly getting more comfortable with his presence. The same couldn’t be said of the group still in the water.

“Why the fuck are you still talking to h...” The same blonde cunt shouted in their direction before he was cut off by one of his little buddies who bumped him on the shoulder and whispered in his ear.

He could pinpoint the exact moment of realisation when the blonde prick’s eyes widened.

He smirked.

“What was that?” He asked in a light voice, the blonde lad looking nervous all of a sudden.

_Wonder why that was?_

All he got back was a quiet “nothing” in reply, a few of them stiffening up when they clapped eyes on Ghost who was slowly approaching behind Sam.

He should warn Sam of Ghost but a wicked part of him kind of wanted to see the boy’s reaction.

Jon tried to think back but for the life of him, he couldn’t remember anyone yelping the way Sam did when Ghost walked around him to approached Jon.
“Oh my!” Sam stuttered out as Ghost walked past both of them and approached the pile of clothes that, if he had to guess, belonged to the five boys that were currently still paddling in the water.

Oh dear.

Ghost walked around the pile of tunics and breeches whilst sniffing them before cocking his back leg up and relieving himself all over them.

He was getting a little concerned with how perceptive Ghost was getting. Eventually, all it would take was Jon to be a little annoyed with somebody before Ghost would take it upon himself to piss on them.

“Hey!” One of the boys in the water said as Ghost finished his business before walking up to him and sitting. He looked in the wolf’s eyes and saw how proud he was of himself.

He made Sam jump as he put his arm around his shoulder “C’mon Sam, I think we might have over stayed our welcome.” He said as they both started walking away from the group.

“What do you do for fun Sam?” He asked as they made their way back towards the castle grounds.

“Oh, well I like to read. I doubt that’s your idea of fun.” He joked.

He looked at him and raised an eyebrow “You calling me stupid Sam?” He replied.

Sam instantly realised his mistake “Oh...no, I mean...I mean you’re a fighter, everybody who was at the melee yesterday knows that. I apologise.” He rushed out as he looked down.

He squeezed his shoulder “Don’t worry about it, I’m just messin' with ya.” He replied with a smile as they both witnessed Ghost walking off ahead.

Sam looked at him and smiled at that “Thanks for that back there by the way. You didn’t have to.” He said. He just shrugged his shoulders and smiled at him.
“I know.” He said in response. “Now, let's go and see if they’ll let us in the castle library, we should find some peace and quiet there.” He suggested. Sam nodded in response.

Unaware to Jon and Sam, a Kingsguard along with his charge and the group of ladies she’d brought with her for a picnic brunch had just witnessed the whole situation from under the shade of the tree’s nearby.

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**Rhaella**

“Lord Tarly had some choice words this afternoon during one of our meetings.” Rhaegar said to her from where he was sat. The whole family were in attendance for tonight's quiet dinner as opposed to yet another feast in the great hall.

*Not the whole family, they were missing one.* She was reminded by her thoughts.

She looked up from the smoked trout on her plate and looked at her son “Hmm, anything of importance?” She asked before washing the taste of fish from her mouth with a sip of arbour gold.

*Nothing near as important than what I'm dealing with right now, that's for sure.*

Her son shook his head and waved his fork before cutting into his own dinner “Just a little annoyance due to an incident earlier today, just boys being boys that’s all.” He replied. From the corner of her eye, she noticed her daughter lower her head before reaching for her goblet.

*Seventeen years later and she still doesn’t comprehend how little her mother missed. Nervous ticks, mood changes, everything, she doesn’t miss a thing when it comes to her children and grandchildren.*

She still had to learn a bit when it came to another grandchild of hers but if the initial meeting with him was anything to go by, it wouldn’t take her long. He shared a lot of habits that his father had, the rest was all wolf’s blood from his mother.

That dragon blood and wolf’s blood was a potent mixture, she’d almost seen an example of it last night when Lord Edmure had decided to wake the dragon within her grandson. The ice cold look he’d given the heir of Riverrun must have brought the fire burning inside him down to a
simmer. She wasn’t naïve though, if it was just the two of them in an empty room with no witnesses, Lord Edmure would be walking out of it with the other side of his face broken, a perfect match for black eye he’d been sporting since the melee.

Courtesy of the champion himself, her grandson. To say she was impressed by what she’d seen in that event would be the ultimate understatement. Pride, nothing but shining pride at seeing her own flesh and blood make a mockery of plenty of well-known names bar Ser Arthur. Even the Sword of the Morning looked perplexed as to what or who he was fighting when he inevitably faced her grandson, Jon had been clearly tempered and sharpened completely differently to the men who he’d shared that yard with.

_A story for her to hear about in the future._ She mused.

“Mother, what do you think is the best course of action? Personally, I think I need to get both sides of the story before any decision is made.” Rhaegar said as he lifted his fork to his mouth and looked at her waiting for an answer.

She shook her head, annoyed with herself with how distracted she’d become ever since ‘the news’ “What’s that dear?” She replied as she pierced a piece of her own fish and popped it into her mouth. Hopefully he didn’t notice how distracted she’d become lately.

He huffed before taking a sip from his goblet, he looked over the rim of it directly at her like he was measuring up his response. She knew he wanted to ask her what had gotten her so distracted lately but her son was smart enough to know that he wouldn’t get an answer from her. She looked back at him and quirked an eyebrow waiting for him to open his mouth.

He cleared his throat as he placed his goblet back on the table “Lord Stark’s son,” He said, she hid the way she stiffened up at the mention of him well “...Ser Barristan was quick to corroborate with Lord Tarly’s accusations, apparently the boy’s pet relieved itself all over the belongings of Lord Tarly’s son and a few of his acquaintances who were taking a dip in the lake.” He explained to her. She didn’t miss the quiet chuckle from her other son or the way Rhaenys hid her pleading look from her father.

_How does she play this?_

“How have you spoken to the boy about it?” She asked.
He shook his head “I haven’t yet no, but it would be Lord Stark I would be having words with. His son will have to chain his wolf, we can’t have it roaming around harassing people. Lord Stark will no doubt understand.” Rhaegar explained before lifting another piece of fish to his mouth.

She saw Daenerys turn and scowl at Ser Barristan before turning back to the table and looking at Rhaegar “Did Ser Barristan explain why Jon’s wolf peed on those brat’s belongings? I was there with a few ladies in waiting by the way, how do you think Ser Barristan knew about what had happened in the first place?” She asked, fire present in her gaze. She noticed Ser Barristan lower his eyes to the ground.

“So it’s Jon now is it?”

Rhaegar seemed to miss that and looked towards Ser Barristan for a bit more clarification.

“Care to explain a bit more in depth what happened Ser Barristan?” Her son asked.

The veteran knight sighed and clearly tried to avoid her daughters fiery gaze as he looked at his King.

“There was a situation occurring your grace, Lord Stark’s son seemed to interfere.” He explained. Daenerys head swivelled back around to look at her brother.

“They were teasing and harassing someone brother, Jon stepped in and helped him. It should be them being reprimanded, not him.” Her daughter explained passionately. She knew her daughter was a champion of the smallfolk back at home, handing out food and coin to the homeless, visiting the city orphanage along with Margaery, so it wasn’t a surprise to anyone that she felt this way.

She looked at her son to see his reaction and it was like something had clicked in his mind.

“I’ll have a word with Lord Tarly tomorrow so I can get his son’s side of the story whilst subtly reminding him that lying to the King is not in his interests.” Rhaegar concluded before taking a large sip from his wine.

Daenerys was taken back with how easy that was “Really? That’s...good, that’s good.” She replied, nodding to herself before returning to her own dinner. She didn’t miss Rhaenys’ sigh of relief.
Honestly, she had to agree with her daughter, it was very surprising that it was that easy to convince her son of the truth. She looked back across to their King and noticed he was holding his Queen’s hand on the top of the table. Elia had a soft smile on her face.

She’d heard the stories about Lyanna from the pair of them, how she was a no-nonsense wolf spirit who you didn’t want to make an enemy out of, how she’d chased a group of squires away from one of her father’s bannermen who was being harassed with nothing but a stick and a bark. Daenerys’ brief story about Jon seemed to invoke some of those memories between the two.

Lyanna’s son invoking memories of Lyanna herself, the sheer irony of the situation almost caused her to laugh at the table.

*The situation wasn’t funny though. She doubts anybody would be laughing when it all came out.*

That was a sobering thought.

“So mother, been up to anything interesting today?” Rhaegar asked, smiling at her as he waited for her response.

*Trying to come up with a plan where you don’t declare war on the North when you find out what Lord Stark has done.*

She shook her head “You know me son, when you get to my age, everything you do seems rather boring to the ears of the younger generation.” She replied with a slight grin. Her son chuckled and shook his head.

“You’ll never be boring to me mother.” He replied sincerely.

Ned

“Shall we begin?” Catelyn said from the other side of the table they were all sat at. Their dinner had been plated out, a mixture of freshly caught fish and vegetables laid steaming on their plates in front of them.
“We have to wait for Jon.” Arya said stubbornly from her seat, an empty plate sat next to her where her brother should be sat.

Catelyn huffed “If we wait any longer Arya, the food will go cold. He’s a grown man, if he wanted to be here, he would have arrived on time.” She tried to explain.

It was an innocent explanation on the surface but to anybody who knew how Catelyn felt about Jon, there was a deeper lying meaning to it.

Before any more words could be said, mainly from an annoyed looking Arya, the flap of their tent was opened by one of the guards minding it, a breathless looking Jon entering swiftly after.

He moved across to sit next to Arya who was smiling as soon as her brother entered the tent. He mussed her hair and sat down next to her before reaching across the table to fill his plate and mug. He finished by taking his cloak off and sitting back down in his seat with a sigh.

Catelyn looked at him in annoyance “We've been waiting for some time.” She gritted out.

Jon looked up from his plate and looked at her with little interest “My apologies.” He said before taking a sip from his mug. Ned missed the look Jon shot his way when he took a sip from his own mug.

“What have you been up to?” He asked in the hopes of actually getting a conversation out of him, something he’d struggled with ever since he’d returned from the wall.

Jon shrugged his shoulders as he shovelled a fork full of veg into his mouth “Not much, just went to see a friend that’s all.” He said with a mouthful. He could already feel Catelyn’s annoyance building and bad table manners weren't going to help with that. To Jon though, it looked like he couldn’t care less what Catelyn thought of him and it had been like that ever since he’d returned back to Winterfell a few months ago.

“Anybody we might know?” He asked as he placed a fork full of fish into his own mouth.

Jon seemed to look into his soul as he chewed his own food, it looked like he was mulling over his
response. He took a long drag from his mug before replying.

“Kireina.” Was his single word response.

His brow furrowed “Kireina?” He said as he shook his head “Somebody new you’ve met?” He asked.

Jon shook his head, those dark curls of his bouncing as he did so “I’ve known her for a while now.” He replied, Arya’s head snapping towards him quick enough to do herself harm.

“Her? Why have I never met her?” She said before putting a mouthful of greens into her mouth.

Jon chuckled and ruffled her hair, Arya batted his hand away and glared at him with a slight grin on her face “Don’t worry little wolf, you’ll meet her sooner or later.” He explained. Arya just pulled a face before returning to her dinner.

Jon doesn’t really speak to girls, as much as they wished he would. Whoever this Kireina was, she must be somebody special to be regarded as a friend by Jon. It would also explain why he always seemed to spurn the advances of the fairer sex, the boy was spoken for. It would also explain his random disappearances, he just hoped Jon hadn’t dishonoured the girl. He knew he shouldn’t worry about it but it wasn’t out of the realm of possibility, men did stupid things after all. He was a prime example of that.

He had to be careful with the way he worded what he was about to say.

“Have you met her family yet Jon?” He asked before taking a drag from his ale, waiting for the lad’s response.

Jon looked at him for a second before answering.

“No.”

He nodded as he ate his dinner “Do you plan on meeting them?” He asked a few seconds later.
The moment Jon’s brow furrowed, he knew he’d misstepped.

“What are you implying?” Jon asked as he shook his head. The idle chatter around the table had come to a halt as everyone took notice of their conversation.

He shook his head “I'm not implying anything son, I'm just interested with what your intentions are with this girl.” He replied. Midway through that sentence, Jon almost broke his mug with how hard he was gripping it.

“My intentions?” Jon replied. It wasn’t a growl per say but it was as close to it. “What makes you think I intend to do something with her?” He asked.

He was losing him, he needed to keep it civil “Nothing, my mistake. It's just odd to hear that you’d befriended a girl that’s all, even you have to admit you rarely talk to them.” He explained, giving Jon a smile to show he was being sincere. To his delight, it seemed to work as Jon nodded back at him with his own smile.

“Maybe I've changed, we're all capable of it aren't we? Sometimes change is needed, caused by the mistakes we made in the past, wouldn’t you agree?” Jon asked, the look he gave him looked innocent but there seemed to be more meaning behind it. He just nodded in response.

The rest of the dinner went off without a hitch and eventually, after Catelyn had ushered the children out of the tent after the meal was over, him and Jon were the only ones left in the tent. The silence between them was almost deafening, the sound of crackling wood from the lit brazier was almost comforting against the awkwardness.

Each of them had a mug of ale that they were nursing, the awkwardness between them was at an all-time high, something, at that very moment, he decided to attempt to fix. He knew it would be a slow process but it was needed, he missed his son.

Before he could open his mouth, the air around him became almost unbearable to breathe in, a foreboding sense of dread built in the pit of his stomach. All caused by the four words Jon uttered to him in a determined tone.

“We need to talk.”
Mainly a filler chapter for what is to come in the next one. Here's a hint...the jig is up Ned.

No idea when the next chapter will be released, adulting is at an all time high atm and free time to write is sparse right now lol

I'll try not to keep you waiting but no promises.

Anyways, thanks for reading :)

...and here's to a hopefully satisfying ending to the show, although my sceptic senses are tingling. Fingers crossed though :)}
Now, I'm probably going to catch some flak for this, but I actually enjoyed the past two episodes of Game of Thrones just recently. The acting, the visuals, the sound and the way the story was moving along was brilliant.

And then the writing kicked in and I zoned out.

"Sike! Gotcha" - Dingus and Dipshit.

The pacing of these past few episodes has been jarring, the plot has holes in it that are the size of D and D's egos and the characters have been lobotomised to the point where I don't even recognise them compared to past seasons. All for the convenience of moving the plot along and finishing it as fast as possible.

Because that is just horribly obvious now. The story needed to be ended, so D and D started checking boxes regardless if it made sense or not for them boxes to be checked all together.

Jon has been...well...I don't even know. But at least we got his parentage out of the way so they could use it as a plot device to send Dany "mad".

Arya feels like she's been bumped up to a lead role and sent Jon packing to be a glorified extra at this point.

The theories about Littlefinger being a faceless man and still being alive were clearly true, nobody noticed him walking around with Sansa Stark's face on.

Bran.

Tyrion is unrecognisable, his mind is supposed to be his weapon. That weapon has been getting duller and duller as the seasons have gone on.

Jaime is one of my favourite characters and his return to Cersei kind of made sense...I guess. His death along with Cersei's was very anti climactic, though them being together till the end made somewhat sense. Not as satisfying as I would of wanted but oh well.

Euron was completely wasted, I didn't find him evil, I didn't find him mad, I didn't find him mysterious, I found him annoying and cringy. I felt nothing when he died.

The cgi used for the golden company could have been used on Ghost instead of that totally useless army.

The scorpions decided to take a day off for whatever reason, plot convenience I guess.

Qyburn dying was hysterical, Cleganebowl was alright.

And now for the big one.

Daenerys.

I have no words with how awful they handled it, the city was taken and the bells were
calling for surrender. All she needed to do now was to go to the red keep and nail it.

But no, at that moment, she realised she actually hated innocent men and women, children and babies, regardless of what she's done in the past 8 years of the show. Her lighting random civilians up felt like being t-boned by a bus.

Zero logic behind the mass murder of children. All for shock value, nothing more.

Her arc just had its back snapped and thrown in the trash for the sake of Michael Bay like scenes, something Hollywood would eat up.

Sigh.

Final take - Illogical, Jarring and Rushed. But at least it looked cool...The actors and actresses deserve a collective emmy for at least trying to carry this crock of shit script on their backs.

I'm so sorry Star Wars fans, your war is yet to come.

Pardon the rant, needed saying. Truly disappointed with how its all played out.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jon

This was really happening wasn’t it? He thought he would have more time to work out his thoughts on the whole thing, more time to make sure he was making the right decision.

But the conversation they’d had tonight, the way they pretended that everything was right as rain, how they played happy family as the chatter ran freely. It grated on him, it annoyed him, it made him frustrated, it was like he was being shown what he could have had with the other half of his family, the half of his family that was stolen away from him.

That was what brought him to the decision, the decision to confront him finally, to let him know what he knew and to tell him what he intended to do with that information. He knew his grandmother wanted him to wait, to give her the opportunity to prepare things, whatever those things were, but he just couldn’t wait anymore. It was slowly eating away at him and it needed to be dealt with.

He stood up from where he was sat and walked across the tent towards the jug of ale that had been put away, so much for taking a break from the booze today. As he made his way back to the table, he noticed that Ned was watching him rather anxiously.

“What’s this about Jon?” Ned asked as he refilled both of their mugs, he sure as shit needed it and when Ned realised what he was talking about, he would be grateful for it as well.
He sat down and sighed before taking a big swig from his mug, the warm sensation running down his throat doing just enough to calm him.

“My mother.” He replied. No point in pussy footing around the topic anymore, enough of that had been done in the past and it’d done nobody any good.

Ned sighed and closed his eyes, his head bowed.

“Jon, we’ve been through thi...”

“I know who she is.” He interrupted. There was a calmness to him that had been dug up from the depths of his soul, just in time for what was to come.

His uncle’s head shot up and his eyes bored into him, darting left and right, eye to eye, trying to figure out the truth to his claim.

Ned scratched his forehead, a nervous tick if Jon had ever seen one.

“Jon, whatever you think you kno...”

He shook his head “Don't do that, don’t disregard this like its nothing. You of all people know this isn't nothing.” He interrupted again, his calmness levels being tested but holding out for now.

Ned sighed and looked away as he took a sip from his ale, the way the brazier flickered in the corner of the tent seemingly more interesting than what he was telling him.

*Rip the arrow out Jon...*

“She’s hasn’t attended this tourney if this is what all this is ab...”

“Lyanna Stark.” Was his final, devastating interruption.
You could pinpoint the exact moment of realisation on the man’s face, he hid it so poorly. Lord Stark wasn’t known for hiding his emotions well.

The next words that came out of his uncle’s mouth would set the tone of this whole conversation they were about to have.

The tent was quiet for what felt like hours when in reality, it was only a minute or so. Ned spent the whole time staring into his mug and Jon just sat and waited for his reply, an explanation for everything really.

A heavy sigh exhaled from his uncle, his eyes closed like he was steeling himself.

*Do it.*

*Confess.*

*...please.*

The exhale in breath was almost coupled with tears at the sheer relief he felt when he saw his uncle nod, the confirmation that he needed was now in his hands.

Ned looked up from his mug and at that moment, he’d never seen his uncle look so old, the sheer pain and tiredness in and around his eye almost jarring to look at.

His uncle nodded again as he necked his ale and refilled his mug. It was only at that point did he feel a tear run down his cheek to take refuge in his beard. It was like his whole body was reacting to the relief he was feeling without him even knowing it was happening, his mind was feeling other things though, it needed details, it needed an explanation.

He rubbed his fist across his cheek to rid the evidence of his relief, Ned noticed the movement and looked, if it was even possible, more pained. The glassy eyed look he was receiving from his uncle showed just how close he was to breaking down himself.
“How did you find out?” Ned asked as he looked back down into his mug, the shame thick in the air around him.

He cleared his throat, swallowing whatever was in there with a swig of ale before answering.

“Uncle Benjen.” He replied.

A humourless chuckle escaped his uncle “How did he work that one out.” He said, mainly to himself really.

“The clues were there, it just needed a different perspective, somebody who knows you, me and my aun...my mother.” He explained, the last part feeling truly surreal to utter out loud.

Ned just nodded, he seemed resigned to the fact that he now knew who his mother was, like all the fight had gone from him whenever they butted heads over the topic.

The silence ruled the tent once again as they both just sat there absorbing the situation. It was out now, Jon now knew who his mother was and Ned no longer had to answer that life long question anymore.

“What now?” Ned almost whispered a few moments later.

He already knew the answer to that question, the calm inside of him suppressed the rage that brewed when the question was put forward.

* A calm mind would prosper over a raging one in this situation.

The burning rage of his inner wolf snarled at that thought.

...or was it the dragon within him?

“What now? Now it's time for you to explain.” He replied back, his uncle nodding. It was as if he realised that the fight was over, something he secretly thanked his uncle for.
If he had started lying once again, he’d dread to think what would have happened.

“You know what happened during the rebellion.” Ned started.

“Robert’s?” He asked to which Ned nodded in reply.

“That war tore the realm apart and it tore my family apart.” His uncle said, the creak of his mug showing how he really felt about that whole war.

“Aerys Targaryen murdered my brother and father in cold blood and I was made the head of our greatly weakened family at the ripe old age of nineteen.” He started.

“At the time, we all believed that Rhaegar had kidnapped my sister and hid her away. For all we knew, she could’ve been dead already.” He carried on with a sigh.

“Obviously, when the war ended and the truth came out, we all knew that Lyanna had gone with Rhaegar voluntarily, they’d even found the chance to wed in secret as well.” He further explained, almost rocking Jon to the core.

He didn’t know they’d married. And why would he, Ned never talked enough about her to know.

If they married, that meant...

“Wed? You mean...” He whispered.

His uncle’s nod was like a balm on his soul.

“They married Jon...you’re not a bastard.” Came the verbal confirmation.

The years believing he was a bastard, the years of his childhood spent believing he was less of a person because of the way he was born, the years spent putting up with Lady Catelyn’s vitriol.
...for nothing.

That burning rage within him was snapping and snarling through the bars of its confinement, his calm mind barely keeping it in check.

*Calm minds prosper, calm minds prosper.* Was like an endless chant in his head.

The adrenaline in his body needed to be cooled, so he stood up from where he was sat, not missing the slight flinch from his uncle as he stood, and paced back and forth across the tent. The mug of ale in his hand was downed in one before he relented in his pacing and moved back to the table, refilling his mug for what felt like the hundredth time tonight.

A heavy sigh, a large swig from his freshly filled mug and an aggressive head scratch was what he managed to achieve before looking back at Ned, an unimpressed look on his face was what he imagined his uncle was seeing right now.

*Calm minds prosper...*

With a deep breath, he uttered one word.

“Why?”

He needed answers and soon, the seconds were ticking away within him. As soon as he had what he wanted, he was walking out of this tent, finding *Kireina* and taking flight high into the night sky so he could be where nobody could hear him screaming.

“Why what?” His uncle naively replied.

A humourless chuckle left his mouth “Why did you do it? Why did you take me in instead of handing me to my family? I need answers, help me understand why you did what you did.” He replied, just about keeping the volume in his voice from rising.
For the first time in his life, he witnessed Lord Stark cry. A small tear running down his cheek as he looked into his ale.

“Handing you to your family? Are we not your family?” He said as he looked up from his ale and stared into Jon’s eyes. He couldn’t handle how hurt the man looked when he asked that question.

He shook his head “That's not fair, you know that you're all family to me.” He answered back, annoyed that he would even ask such a question.

He almost flinched with the way the man's face contorted “Not fair? I’ll tell you what isn't fair, returning from a war with considerably less family members than the family that caused it.” His uncle snapped out before taking a large sip from his mug and dropping it back down on the table with little care as he looked away from Jon and stared across the tent, fury evident on his face.

He’d never seen him like this, ever.

*Was this the reason he took him? To spite the Targaryens?*

“I lost my father, my brother and my sister within the space of a year all because of that fuckin’ war, what casualties did the Targaryen’s suffer within their family? I wasn’t able to marry the woman I fell in love with because of that war, a woman I dishonoured when I was unable to marry her.” Ned carried on. He was on a roll, letting all his demons loose, and Jon just sat there and absorbed as much of it as he could.

Eventually, he deflated right in front of him, slumping over his drink “My sister...your mother, made me promise that you’d be looked after by your family, that you’d be loved by them, that you wouldn’t be blamed for the war happening. How could I have done all that without taking you home? How could I make sure that the little bit of family I had left wasn’t blamed for the deaths of thousands without bringing them into my home and protecting them?” Ned explained, teary eyed through the whole thing.

“If you’d turned up in King’s Landing after the war and people knew who you were, it wouldn’t have taken long for a bitter man who’d lost everything in that war to pin the blame on you and do something stupid. I know Jon, I know what losing everything in a war can do to somebody. They make rash decisions.” He explained further, face full of grief as he drowned his sorrows in his ale.

Jon looked down at his hands that were leant on the table, at some point during his uncle’s
explanation, he’d picked at the skin around his thumb to the point of bleeding, the numbness he felt as everything was laid out on the table in front of him enough to make him ignorant of the stinging sensation he was now just starting to feel.

Deep down in his mind, he knew his uncle didn’t take him for purely selfish reasons. Yes, he was bitter, very bitter of what his family had left compared to others, there was no denying that. But there was more to it than bitterness, he’d not taken him away from his paternal family to hurt Jon, quite the opposite really, he’d done it to protect him from finger pointing, the scapegoating his uncle was sure he’d receive. Prevented a bitter individual from doing something stupid against his sister's son.

His uncle knew what a bitter man or woman would do, he himself was a prime example of that.

*He kidnapped a trueborn son of the King without the King even knowing of his existence.*

*Is it kidnapping if he didn’t know I existed?*

Of course it was. His uncle had committed treason doing something he thought was the right thing to do for his family, all fuelled by love and bitterness.

*How the fuck was he supposed to handle all of this?*

His uncle scratching the side of his mug with his thumbnail broke him from his inner turmoil, a miserable look on his face.

“She named you Jaehaerys before making me promise to keep you safe. All your mother cared about was your safety, even on her deathbed. How could I deny her last dying wish? Please tell me how anybody could do that to their own flesh and blood? Please Jon, talk to me.” His uncle pleaded as he dropped yet another truth bomb on him.

*Jaehaerys. The name given to me by my mother, one of the only gifts I have left from her.*

Another tear ran down his other cheek.

He’d not said anything to his uncle in ages, he’s probably waiting for me to stand up, walk over to
his side of the table and smack him.

*_How could he though? In a totally fucked up way, he understood why he did what he did._

*_In his own twisted way, his uncle was honouring his sister’s final wish by keeping the world ignorant to his existence._

The flap of the tent moved open for a split second before closing again, Ghost being the culprit as his little friend moved over to him, stood on hind legs and rested his bulk on Jon’s lap, letting out the quietest whine he’d ever heard, the only whine he’d ever heard from him.

He tried to stay strong but it was no use, Ghost’s fur was the perfect place for him to bury his face into as he let the mixed emotions he was experiencing flood out.

The hand resting on his back as he let his grief out into his friend’s neck made him jump somewhat, the instant urge to snap and strike at his uncle as he comforted him outweighed by the sheer tiredness in his body and soul.

“Know this Jon, what I did was never to hurt you. I kept my promise to your mother, you're alive and thriving in more ways than one. She’ll be looking down at you with nothing but pride at the man you’ve become, I know it because it’s the same way I look at you son.” His uncle said as he rubbed his hand up and down his back.

“Whatever you decided to do in the future, know that I don’t blame you for whatever happens to me. I made my bed...” He explained further before squeezing him on the shoulder and leaving the tent.

After a few minutes of clutching his wolf, Ghost nudged him in the neck with his snout and began licking the remnants of his tears up. With a sniff, he raised his head and looked around the empty tent, contemplating what to do now.

He rubbed both of his hands through Ghost’s thick mane before reaching for his mug and downing the entire thing. His wolf decided that he wanted to sit his whole self on Jon as he struggled to fit his entire body on his lap, he eventually managed it though with a little help from Jon himself.

“What do I do boy?” He asked Ghost. The wolf’s huff was the only reply he was going to get out of his furry friend.
His uncle’s last words to him before he left the tent rang through his head.

“Whatever you decide to do in the future, know that I don’t blame you for whatever happens to me.”

How could he in good conscience throw his uncle to the dragons, they’d execute him without a second thought for what he did.

Deep down, Jon knew his uncle did what he did for his sake.

He let out a deep sigh.

He needed to talk to his grandmother.

Rhaella

Today promised to be an interesting day for Rhaella, the fresh smell of rain could be detected from the hallways of Harrenhal as she walked down them with her son, the King.

The morning breakfast they’d had just now had been rather interesting, talks of their plans for the day, mentions of dragon dreams and such. Most of it had gone over her head as she went through her plan of action for the day. At the top of her list was a meeting with Lord Stark.

“...Ser Barristan was telling me that the storm came out of nowhere last night.” Her son mentioned as they made their way towards her room. Apparently, he wanted to have a private conversation about something, a delicate situation he’d described it as earlier.

What that situation was she wasn’t too sure.

Rhaegar twisted the knob of the door to her room and pushed his way in, her following in behind him “Elia was tossing and turning last night, she’s never been much of a fan of the thunde...” Her son began to say before he stopped and held an arm out in front of her.
The cause of such a reaction was sat at her breakfast table looking out of the window, in a world of his own.

“I’ll get Ser Barristan.” She heard her son say as she looked at her grandson, it looked like he hadn’t slept at all.

She grabbed Rhaegar’s arm before he could leave the room “No don’t.” She replied to him reactively. Something had happened to Jon and the last thing he needed was being chased out of the castle.

Rhaegar looked between her and Jon in confusion “What do you mean? He’s trespassing, he shouldn’t be in here.” He whispered to her. She looked at Jon and noticed he’d still not looked in their direction.

Thinking on her feet, she decided to lie to him. She didn’t like lying to her family but in this instance, she could forgive herself for this little white lie “He was invited my son, I invited him. I decided to see for myself if he’s Kingsguard material so I invited him for morning tea,” She explained before increasing the volume of her voice so Jon could hear the next bit “…it would seem he has the subtlety to sneak past guards in his arsenal so that’s a point in his favour.” She said as she looked at Jon who had still not turned away from the window.

*Something has definitely happened.*

Rhaegar looked back at Jon before looking at her “Are you sure?” He asked.

She nodded “Positive. I’ll speak with you later.” She said.

Her son nodded “Ser Barristan is right outside if you need him.” He replied before kissing her on the cheek.

“Be sure not to sneak into the rooms of any other members of the royal family again Snow.” Her son warned. Jon turned away from the window and nodded, an awkward look on his tired face.

Her son left the room after that, as soon as he did, she moved across the room and sat down at the table across from her grandson.
“What’s happened?” She asked almost as soon as she sat down. She grabbed his hand that was balled up into a fist that was resting on the table.

Jon looked at their entwined hands “He knows.” He said.

Her brow furrowed “He knows? Who knows? Knows what?” She replied, firing off question after question. The possibilities endless right now.

Her grandson visibly swallowed “My uncle, Lord Stark. He knows I know, he knows that I’m not his son, everything came out last night.” He explained.

“He confessed?” She replied after a few moments later to which her grandson nodded. Inside she was elated at the confirmation of Jon’s parentage, granted, she was pretty sure of it and so was Jon himself but the closure the pair of them got from Lord Stark’s confession was extremely satisfying.

She gave Jon a few minutes to process, it gave her time to process as well. He sat there mindlessly picking at his thumb as the silence ate through the room. She decided to stand and pour each of them a goblet of wine.

“None for me thanks, I’ve had my fair share of booze in the past 24 hours. Water would be much appreciated thank you.” Her grandson said as she went to pour wine into his goblet. She nodded and grabbed the water jug and poured him a healthy serving.

She back down in her chair and took a sip of her arbour gold, watching as Jon took a large gulp of water before wiping his mouth on his sleeve.

After giving him ample time to get his thoughts together, she asked him a pretty loaded question “What happened Jon?” She asked, her grandson letting out a humourless chuckle.

“It kinda just happened, after dinner when everybody left to get ready for bed. I kept him behind and we hashed it out.” He explained, his tired eyes looking at her. The melancholy behind them reminded her of his father whenever he was in one of those moods.

She sighed and looked at him softly “Have you even slept?” She asked. Jon made a face and shook
his head.

“Not really, I went for a walk after all was said and done and lost track of time. The sun was rising before I knew it.” He replied as she shook her head and sighed.

“Have you had anything to eat this morning?” She asked. She wanted to find out what had happened last night but looking after him was her top priority. Maybe a belly full of food would help the pair of them out on this damp morning.

She sent a servant off to bring a variety of different foods and they returned with two plates full of sausages, bacon, fresh bread and a selection of fruits. It didn’t take Jon long to get stuck in and destroy the bacon and sausage along with the fresh warm bread. He looked up at her and looked slightly ashamed at how quick he’d gotten through his breakfast but she just shook her head and smiled at him.

“Your father was the same when he was younger, always eager to get back to his scrolls and his books.” She assured as she picked at the fruit platter that had been left untouched up to now.

The mention of Jon’s father seemed to take him by surprise as he stopped chewing and looked at her before swallowing and clearing his mouth with his cup of water.

“You’re not used to it yet, are you?” She said when she saw the look on his face. The pair of them knew what she was talking about, it was easily left unsaid, she knew it would take time to get used to the huge change in his life but she would be there for him all the way.

He shook his head “I will in time, It's just all a bit raw at the moment. I couldn’t even look at him when he arrived with you.” He had admitted.

She nodded “You just need time to adjust. When your father finds out, you’ll be able to sit down and talk with him, and if you need it, I'll be there with you.” She assured.

“And when Lord Stark is held accountable for what he’s done, I’ll be there to support you too. I know it will be a difficult time for everybody, especially for you.” She further explained. Jon closed his eyes and lowered his head when she’d finished.

“That's one of the reasons I came to see you.” Jon said as he cleared his plate before taking a sip
from his goblet.

“Oh?” She replied as she popped a grape in her mouth “And there was me thinking that you’d come to see your dear old grandmother because you love me instead.” She japed as she smiled at him. Unfortunately, her grandson either didn’t find what she’d said funny or the situation was a little more serious than she realised.

Jon sighed “I spent a lot of time all night really thinking about everything I’d told, what my uncle had done and why he’d done it.” He started to explain.

Something clicked and her face scrunched up in confusion “Wait, so you were outside all night? Just wandering about in the rain?” She asked.

It was Jon’s turn to look confused when she asked that “Rain? When did it rain?” He asked.

She huffed and smiled at him “It poured it down Jon, you must have noticed if you were out in it all night.” She explained “Even your clothes are dry, you must have changed before you came here. Did you really not notice?” She asked. He must have been really out of it if he didn’t notice that downpour.

Her grandson sat there opposite her and seemed to be lost in thought until his eyes widened slightly, like realisation had struck him.

“Yeah...yeah, you're right. I must have forgotten, my mind was really all over the place last night.” Jon admitted but it seemed like there was more to it.

“It's okay, understandable due to the situation.” She assured before motioning him to carry on.

He then proceeded to tell her what his uncle had told him, how he’d taken him in on his mother’s wishes, kept him away from King’s Landing and all the bitterness that would’ve been aimed at him as a child and how his uncle wanted to return home with all the family he could, him included.

Jon explained how he knew what his uncle had done was treason and that he was genuinely regretful for what he had done and ultimately told Jon that whatever happened to him, he wouldn’t blame him for it.
The worst of it though was that Jon was showing genuine signs of sympathy for his uncle.

She though, she was not.

“Jon...” She whispered out as she shook her head “You can't sympathise with him. He’s clearly backed into a corner and is counting on your good nature to help him. He committed treason Jon, he stole a prince of the realm away from the royal family.” She explained. Her voice was steady and precise but she could feel her ire rise by the second, that long resting dragon inside slowly awakening within her.

Jon shook his head “It's not that simple.” He said as his eyes shut and his fist closed up on the table.

She put her hand on top of his closed fist in the hopes that her touch calmed him “It is Jon.” She said.

A slither of fear shot through her when her grandson ripped his hand from underneath hers and raised his voice “No, it isn't!” He growled as he stood from the table and looked away from her.

_The dragon was alive and well within him._

A knock on the door was heard before Ser Barristan was opening it and scanning the room, eyes locking with Jon accusingly before looking upon her. All of this was done with his hand tightly clutched around the hilt of his sword.

“Your grace, is everything okay? I heard raised voices.” Ser Barristan asked as he eyed Jon who had moved near the window.

She collected herself quickly as she addressed the knight of the Kingsguard “Everything is fine Ser Barristan, nothing to worry about.” She assured the knight as she smiled at him. She looked across the room herself at her grandson who seemed to have calmed himself down after his outburst.

Ser Barristan nodded at her “Your grace.” He said before eyeing Jon one last time and leaving the room, the click of the door sounding through the chamber.
The silence of the room was broken a few moments later when her grandson spoke up.

“Forgive me, I didn’t mean to raise my voice.” He said, his sincere apology already accepted.

She shook her head at him as he looked at her “There is nothing to apologise for, now come and sit back down, this mess needs to be resolved.” She explained.

They must have sat there in that room for nearly an hour trying to come to a reasonable conclusion to the monumental mess of a situation they’d found themselves in. They even found themselves arguing to the point of near shouting when they disagreed on things. It was safe to say, she’d never met a more stubborn individual in all her life and in a sort of unusual way, she found herself enjoying the back and forth between them.

*I’m going to really have my work cut out with this one, we all will.*

*Rhaegar won’t know what has hit him.*

She shook her head and sighed, they were getting nowhere with this discussion “It won’t happen Jon, he’ll never agree to that. I know my son, he’ll want justice.” She explained, he had to realise that his plan was foolish. She understood the reasons for it but it just wasn’t a reasonable thing to expect to happen.

An annoyed look crossed her grandson’s face “What about what I want? Shouldn’t I get a say in all of this? Am I just a fuckin’ bystander in all of this?” He snapped.

“Jon!” She reprimanded. Her grandson sighed and looked away. Every moment she spent in his presence, more and more of the famous she wolf of Winterfell made itself known. The numerous stories she’d heard from her son, his wife and Ser Arthur were enough proof of that.

*A little refinement wouldn’t be the worst idea in the future.* She mused.

A knock on the door disturbed her from her thoughts, Ser Barristan popping his head through the crack of the door.
“Sorry to disturb you your grace, his grace, the King has requested your presence in his solar.” The old knight announced, all whilst eyeing Jon.

She sighed “Thank you Ser Barristan, I’ll be along shortly. Let me just finish up here.” She explained with her royal mask on.

Ser Barristan nodded and closed the door behind him.

“He doesn’t like me.” She heard Jon say as she finished her goblet of wine.

“Ser Barristan is protective that’s all, try to look at it from his perspective. Plus can you blame him? You did kind of mouth off at him the first time you met him.” She explained with a smile. Jon just shrugged and finished off his own goblet.

She rose from her chair and Jon followed suit. Without any warning, she moved around the table and brought her grandson into an embrace.

“We are going to fix all of this, I promise you that Jon.” She assured as she felt his hands embrace her back.

“Jaehaerys.” Came Jon’s odd reply.

She pulled away but still held on to each of his arms, she looked up at him in confusion.

“Jaehaerys?” She asked.

“My name, my real name. According to my uncle that is.” He replied back with a tired smile.

Jaehaerys...

She smiled back at him “It suits you.” She said with a soft smile. She could feel the moisture in her
eyes start to build.

*The gods took her Jaehaerys away when he was just a babe but they saw it fit to give their family one back.*

Her grandson chuckled “I'm not so sure.” He believed “I've grown used to my boring name.” He carried on with a little grin.

She smiled back at him as he broke from their embrace.

“What are your plans for the day?” She asked as he picked up his swords that had been left next to the door and strapped them on to his back.

“I'm going back to my tent for a nap.” He said without hesitation. She wished she could find him a room in the castle to use so he could benefit from a feather bed instead of what he would normally have in his tent.

But she couldn’t, not yet anyway.

After one last hug, Jon...Jaehaerys...Jae left the room, leaving her to her thoughts before she went to see what her son wanted.

*Things were about to get more complicated than she originally thought they would.*

*The Unwise Sailor*

The night brought the quiet, the only sound that could be heard was crashing of the waves around them. He stood near the front of their vessel with his cloak wrapped tightly around his body and looked out into the darkness they were sailing into.

*I hope I'm not making a mistake, I hope I haven't damned these men to a watery grave.*
They’d been sailing for a few weeks now, close to a moon if he had his days right and ever since they’d entered open waters, not a single coastline had been spotted. A few comments had been made here and there, wondering if they should turn around and cut their loses.

But they’d been sailing for too long to just turn around and give up. To him, there was a method to his madness though, sailing into the unknown could be considered suicide but he had a hunch, it made too much sense.

*It was the only explanation for how he’d ever ended up on that bloody island in the first place.*

He moved off the top deck and headed back inside, a few crew mates nodding at him as he walked passed. Idle chatter could be heard as soon as he headed inside but he wasn’t interested in getting involved, his cabin was the only place he wanted to be right now, hopefully a solid few hours of sleep waiting for him.

*If his bunk mate allowed him that was.*

He chuckled as he walked through the belly of the ship, he was honestly surprised when he first boarded the boat and saw him sat waiting in his cabin, full intention on joining him on this crazy journey.

He opened his cabin door quietly in the hopes that his friend was asleep but it was all in vain, he banged his elbow on the frame of the door as a voice echoed through the room.

“Ahhh friend! Where did you get to?” Master M barked as he took a sip of that bloody wine of his.

Gerion rubbed his elbow before taking his cloak off “Just some fresh air,” he said as he shook his head and sat down on his bunk “...I don’t know how you can drink that piss.” He said. Master M just grinned at him before finishing the rest of his rice wine in one go, he grimaced before placing the small cup back on the table.

For a minute, he thought that was that and the old man was going to give him a chance to shut his eyes, until he opened his mouth again.

“What's with the misery friend?” M asked. He kept his eyes closed as he replied to him.
“I have no idea what you mean.” He said, a small chuckle heard as he finished.

“I may be old but my eyesight still works just fine my friend. You’ve been walking around this ship for the past few days like...how would Jon put it...a miserable shit.”

Gerion couldn’t help but chuckle at that.

*Jon would say something like that.*

*Jon would think him a fucking idiot for doing what he was doing...and then probably laugh and tag along with him.*

He opened his eyes and looked across the room “Have we made a mistake?” He asked.

*Master M* looked at him, eyebrow raised “Mistake? Is that what you believe?”

He shrugged his shoulders before putting his hands behind his head as he lay there “I fear I may have doomed everybody on this ship to an early grave. I have my reasons for doing what I’m doing but it seems like these men only joined me because they felt pressured.” He explained.

“I wasn’t aware that I’d been pressured.” The old man replied as he refilled his little cup.

“I stopped trying to work out the reasons behind your actions a long time ago. It was wasted time then, it would be wasted time now,” He explained with a huff “...I doubt anybody could pressure you into anything.” he finished.

*Master M* chuckled himself “I have my reasons for joining you on this journey, you already know that.” He said.

“Yeah, I know. You wished to see new lands before your time comes but I’m afraid you might have seen the last land you’ll ever see when you left home.” He said. It was a grim thought, thinking about *Master M* passing away, but the man himself would be the first to tell anybody he was getting
old and that he’d already come to terms with his own mortality. He could respect that he wanted to see more of the world when he still could but he feared that he might have wasted his time tagging along.

The wind and waves battered the side of the vessel as they ventured further and further into the unknown, a storm brewing. A loud chatter heard above from the deck of the ship.

_Master M_ looked at him and smiled “Have faith my friend, I’m sure our patience will be rewarded.” He assured. Gerion smiled at his friend before frowning as voices above deck grew louder and louder, crew mates shouting as they passed their cabin. Eventually, a thumping erupted through their room as somebody banged against their door.

He stood from his bed and looked at _Master M_ in confusion before heading to the door and opening it. Stood in front of him was one of the crew hands, he was looking a little spooked.

“ _Kaji! (Fire!)_” The man said to him in his native tongue before running down the corridor.

_Fire?_

He looked back at _Master M_ who was already getting up to his feet and looked at him in confusion before heading out of the door and down the corridor. Wherever the fire was, it hadn't flooded the inside with smoke just yet so it was possible for them to contain it.

The door to the outside was already open when they approached it, both him and _Master M_ darting through it expecting to see a mess of burning sails and crackling wood.

But there wasn’t, the boat was surprisingly...fine.

_What? Where’s the fire?_

He looked around at the men on the deck who were still talking and noticed they were looking behind him. When both of him and _Master M_ span around, they instantly realised what the crew hand had meant when he cried fire.
Piercing through the darkness of the night was a blazing inferno atop a great tower of ebony stone. The light it emitted highlighted the land around it, buildings, roads, walls and even a port, where a few boats were already docked.

*Land. They’d bloody done it. They weren’t going to die in these god forsaken waters.*

*The question was, where were they?*

He scanned the port city in an attempt to work out where they could actually be, he had to squint because of how shrouded in darkness the city seemed to be intent to stay in.

He stroked his chin as *Master M* came up beside him “There’s a darkness in this place friend.” He whispered to him as the crew moved around the boat to make sure they docked properly.

“I’m in absolute awe with your observational skills old man, truly inspiring.” He replied blandly, sarcasm dripping from every word. He carried on scanning the area as they got closer and closer to the shore.

He winced as *Master M* elbowed him “My eyes work just fine, I'm talking about the feel, the...what's the word?...atmosphere?” He said. Gerion knew what he was talking about, there was something off about this place. He was already questioning himself if it was wise for them to be approaching this place.

*Too late now.* He thought as their ship was slowly ferried into the dock. Men with faces covered with masks and veils helped secure the boat into the docks.

*Odd, very odd.*

The gangplank was dropped off the boat and onto the port but none of their men made any attempt to walk over it. To be honest, he really couldn’t blame them, *Master M* is right, this place didn’t feel right.

He huffed and walked off the boat, somebody had to make the first step and it fell to him. *Master M* along with a few men followed him off, the rest stayed on the boat.
Every single man in their group had their hand resting on their weapon as they made their way across the docks. They received looks of intrigue as they made their way through but thankfully, none of them seemed aggressive towards them.

*He really needed to find out where they were.*

He moved close to *Master M* and whispered in his ear “Tell the men to stay close. The sooner we find out where we are, the sooner we can plan our next move. I don’t want to spend too much time here, you were right, this place is bloody creepy.” He explained as he eyed the eerie surroundings.

The old man just nodded and carried on looking at their surroundings.

The moment it started to click with him was when they approached a small group of people, one of which was staring at him intently. The person was wearing a long hooded cloak and was of average height, the real odd thing about them was the dark red mask they donned.

Eyes were watching him intensely, it sent a shiver up his back.

He approached the group and cleared his throat, the mumbling between them came to a stop before he could decipher any sort of language. Before he could ask them where they were, the person with the red mask opened their mouth.

“The glass candles are burning, Lord Gerion.” The feminine voice uttered to him, another shiver running down his back.

*How does...*

“How do you know my name?” He asked. His gut was telling him to turn and run but something in the eyes of the mysterious figure locked him in place.

*Glass candles...*

*Sorcery.*
“That is unimportant. What is important is your journey home, and the person who resides there.” The mysterious individual cryptically explained.

“There importance is paramount in the wars to come, against the living and the dead...and the storm that he brings.” She further explained.

_Fucking riddles._

“Who is this, so called, person of importance? Who are you? Where are we?” He questioned. The look in her eye was beyond disturbing.

She looked at Master M before turning back to him “You have passed beneath the shadow and arrived here, in Asshai. This one is known by very few but goes by the name Quaithe.” She answered as his eyes widened.

_Asshai._

_They were in Essos._

_He was actually going to make it back to Westeros._

He looked back at her, his heart beating a bit quicker now due to the realisation that he was actually going see his family again, see Jon again, if he could find him.

_I wonder if Westeros knows about his dragon?_  

“And who is this person of importance you speak of?” He asked. Now that he knew where he was, he was keen to resupply and set sail as soon as possible.

She looked him square in the eyes as the words came out of her mouth.
“The son of the dragon, of ice and fire.”

Chapter End Notes

Again, pardon the rant at the beginning, I needed that vent.

The end of this chapter felt a little abrupt to me, I don't know.

The next chapter will be out whenever, it wont be out after the finale though so I apologise in advance for not getting some sort of escape from that forecast train wreck.
The Dragon Meets The Wolf

Chapter Notes

So...

Season 8 of GoT was a thing.

A friend of mine told me the 1 hour 15 minute series finale had only 17 minutes of dialogue in it. Honestly thought it was hyperbole at first but the writers once again subverted my expectations when I found out it was true.

And then two plastic bottles were spotted in the finale as well...

They just didn't care anymore did they?

If their is one thing I can take out of season 8 it's that you shouldn't rush your writing, its incredibly damaging.

Anyways, enough of talking about that mess.

On to the new chapter :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rhaenys

A guttural moan escaped her mouth and into the soft caress of her pillow. Her two curled fingers slowed as they pumped in and out of her core, the aftershocks felt throughout her whole body. She laid there on her front as she caught her breath, wiping on the sheets the evidence of her body's reaction to the dirty thoughts of him.

He’s in my head now.

And I’m okay with that.

She sighed as she sat up in her bed, the covers fell from her shoulders revealing the fine, wine coloured silk of her nightgown, the cool air in her room pebbling her nipples against it.

Rhae, her mother and Dany had plans for today, they’d be spending their morning with Clarissa and her mother Ashara. They’d not seen much of the two at the tourney since they arrived so it would be nice to see how they’ve been and what they’ve been up to.
Her handmaidens entered shortly after she woke, helping her get ready for the day. She was helped out of her silk nightgown and into a burgundy gown, it wrapped around her shoulders lightly.

“Thank you, ladies.” She said to them as they bowed and left her chamber. The small plate of fruit left on her table was nibbled at and nothing more, she didn’t want to ruin her breakfast.

Ser Oswell bowed as she left her chambers, his armour rattled as he followed her down the hallway as she made her way to Dany’s chamber. She shot him a smile as she knocked on her aunt’s door. Ser Jaime who was guarding her door shot her grin.

“Good luck, your grace.” He said rather humorously. She just grinned back at him as she shook her head.

The door whipped open revealing an annoyed looking princess, clad in nothing but her light blue nightgown, the fine silk of her nightwear doing very little to hide her budding nipples behind the material.

Even a man with an ironclad will wouldn’t have been able to avert their eyes from what stood in front of her. She had to put it down to her aunt’s sheer beauty, the sort of feelings the view had garnered.

*Or she just loved breasts. It wasn’t like it was the first time she’d spent an extra second or so looking at a pair of them.*

Her eyes shot back up to Dany’s face, noticing her quirked eyebrow.

Either she’d been caught red handed or her aunt was just annoyed by their presence.

It was the latter.

“Yes?” She asked, annoyance dripping from the word. She was fully aware why she was annoyed as well. Her aunt had never been a morning person.

“Good morning to you too.” She said as she invited herself into the room, as she shut the door she
noticed Ser Jaime mouthing ‘good luck’ to her once again. She just stuck her tongue out at him before the door closed.

“What are you doing here so early?” Dany asked as she moved back to her bed and sat on it with her legs crossed.

She huffed “Because we’re going to be late and for once, it isn't me.” She replied as she moved across the room and sat down on a chair near the window.

A cute look of confusion took over Dany’s face as she looked at her “Late? Late for what?” She asked.

It was her turn to raise an eyebrow “Really? Have you really forgot? It was your idea in the first place.” She asked.

The confused look on her face stayed there until a sudden look of realisation took over.

“Shit. I completely forgot.” Her aunt said as she rose from her bed and went to her trunk. Without a single warning, Dany stripped from her silk nightgown and crouched down to get a closer look at her garments, absolutely shameless of her bareness.

*She either had no shame or she was comfortable with her niece seeing her bare.*

*Or it could have just been confidence, she had the body for it.*

She sniffed as she pulled her gaze away from her aunt’s nude arse and looked out of the window to at least pretend she was giving her some privacy.

“Did you ever find out why grandmother wouldn’t be joining us this morning?” She asked to cut the awkwardness of seeing her aunt gloriously nude.

She heard Dany sigh “Yeah, she’s apparently busy this morning to join us, something about having a chat with somebody or something.” She said. Rhae heard the sound of shuffling fabric during it all.
“He was with her again yesterday.” Dany continued. She heard her huff in annoyance.

Her face scrunched up as she chanced a look at her aunt, she didn’t know whether to be relieved or disappointed to see her in a light blue silk dress, a gold belt around her midsection.

“Who’s he?” She asked. Rhae wasn’t stupid though, she had a pretty good idea who she was talking about. The first time was odd, but the news of a second meeting between her grandmother and him was even more concerning.

Dany looked at her blankly, not buying her nonchalant response “You know exactly whom I speak of dear niece.” She asked.

She shook her head “I don’t understand it, what could they possibly be talking about? I mean, ones the dowager Queen of the royal family and the other is just a northern knight.” She thought out loud. She wasn’t sure if Jon was a knight or not but he might as well be after that melee.

*Just a northern knight...who was she kidding. He was a lot more than that.*

Dany made a face “You don’t think...” She said as she moved to her dresser and started placing on jewellery.

“Think what?” She asked.

Dany shrugged as she ran a brush through her hair “I mean, my mother, even in her old age, is still hauntingly beautiful.” She seemed to suggest.

“Really Dany? She’s a bit old for him, isn’t she?” She asked as she stood from her chair, Dany followed suit after she’d finished brushing her silver tresses that fell down her back like a waterfall.

Dany shrugged “Just a suggestion. You know as much as me what they are getting up to.” She replied as they both made their way out of Dany’s chamber. The two kingsguard waiting for them bowed.
The walk towards her mother’s chamber was spent in silence, both of them clearly lost in their own thoughts. Dany was the one to knock on the Queen’s personal solar. The door opened almost instantly, Ser Arthur the one on the other side. He bowed as he opened the door a little more for them, her mother already had guests in the form of her good friend, Ashara and her daughter Clarissa.

“Thank you, Arthur. You may join your brothers now.” Her mother said from the table the three of them were sat at.

Ser Arthur bowed to all of them and moved out the room, closing the door behind him.

The two of them walked across the room and took their place at the table, it was filled with all sorts of foods to break their fast. Her mother filled both of them a goblet each of dornish red as they took their seat.

“You were almost late today, you’re getting better.” Her mother said with a grin. She rolled her eyes and smiled when she caught Clarissa grinning.

She liked Clarissa, she was quieter than a few of the ladies she knew but when you really got to know her, she was rather charming, she had a rather dry sense of humour.

She didn't like to join in with the gossip about her, the identity of her father being the main topic that was regularly brought up. Apart from the longer face and the grey eyes, Clarissa was the spitting image of Ashara when she was that age according to Rhae’s mother. The main rumour was that the late Brandon Stark was her father, a less known rumour was that she was the daughter of Lord Stark but things didn’t really add up in that sense.

Regardless, it wasn’t any of her business, the members of House Dayne seemed to be the only ones who knew that secret and she wouldn’t pry.

Dany spoke up at her mother’s observation “Sorry, that was my fault.” She admitted as she filled her plate with fruit.

Her mother shook her head “Not to worry, you’re here now.” She assured.

“Is the Queen mother or Princess Margaery joining us?” She heard Ashara say as Rhæ filled her
own plate with food.

Her mother shook her head “Unfortunately, no. Margaery is visiting her family with Egg and Alysanne, and Rhaella is busy this morning. They both apologise in advance.” She explained.

“That's a shame.” Ashara replied before taking a sip from her goblet.

The conversation around the table ran freely as the five of them ate their breakfast. They talked about anything and everything really, what they’ve been up to, how things at home were like and a little more interestingly, the melee that had occurred a few days ago and the upcoming joust.

“Arthur likes to pretend that it didn’t bother him but a sister can see right through that. Wouldn’t surprise me if he suggests having a friendly spar with him in the near future, a chance to get even.” Ashara said with a smirk. The topic being of her brother losing at the very end of the melee to the one person she couldn’t avoid thinking of.

“To be fair to Arthur, the boy was exceptional throughout the whole event. And with how humble he was at the end, it said much about his character. So much so, Rhaegar and the majority of the Kingsguard have been whispering about a future Kingsguard spot for him.” Her mother declared, a flare of excitement shooting through her at this new piece of information.

*Jon in the Kingsguard.*

*He’d be in the Red Keep.*

“The boy was spotted in the keep yesterday morning, he might have already met with the Kingsguard and agreed, I’ll have to ask my husband later. I've not met the boy myself but I would like to get an idea of his character personally.” Her mother explained further before looking at her and Dany.

She noticed that Ashara opened her mouth but decided to close it before speaking, her mother saw it as well.

“Go on Ash, you were going to say something.” The Queen urged on as she sipped her wine.
Ashara shook her head “It's nothing, don’t mind me.” She replied. She popped a piece of orange in her mouth as a distraction.

Clarissa huffed and rolled her eyes “We’ve met Jon before, back at Starfall. I think that’s what my mother was about to say.” She said. Ashara’s eyes widened as she looked at her daughter like she’d been betrayed.

“Clarissa!” Ashara chided, Clarissa just took a sip of her own wine with a small grin on her face.

Little troublemaker.

“What's this Ash?” Her mother asked. Her and Dany were rather interested in this story as well.

Ashara sighed “Jon visited Starfall not too long ago, he wasn’t there long, only stopped the night.” She explained.

Her mother raised an eyebrow at that “Stopped the night?” She repeated, humour in her tone.

Ashara shook her head and rolled her eyes “Not like that.” She reassured.

“Like what?” Her mother replied back with a little grin at the corner of her mouth.

“You know what.” Ashara replied with a huff. Clarissa giggled at the two of them and her and Dany smiled.

She was still interested why he was there in the first place though.

“If you must know, he visited Starfall for answers and I’ll leave it at that.” Ashara explained, too vaguely for her liking. Clarissa looked down at her plate and made herself busy with her breakfast.

Interesting.
Her mother looked back and forth between the two Dayne ladies, she could normally see through stuff like this, Rhae was normally on the wrong end of that ability.

The Queen nodded her head subtly before opening her mouth “He was looking for his mother, wasn’t he?” She said, almost stated it as a fact. It was a rather heavy subject to be talking about this early in the morning over breakfast.

Ashara’s lack of a reply was as good as a verbal confirmation.

Wait, Ashara was Jon’s mother!?

It made sense really, he obviously inherited his mother’s beauty.

Her mother sniffed when she got her answer “And I’m guessing he was unsuccessful in his search?” She asked. Ashara looked at Elia like she’d already had enough of the conversation but eventually nodded her head.

They all ate in silence for a minute or so before Clarissa opened her mouth “He is nice though, he let me braid his hair.” She said as she chuckled to herself.

Ashara looked at her daughter “He didn’t let you, if I recall, you tricked him.” She replied with a little humour in her voice. Clarissa shrugged as she grinned at her and Dany.

Her mother looked back and forth between Ashara and her daughter with a little smile.

“He sounds like a bit of a spoilsport, I for one can appreciate a nice braid.” Dany japed as she finished a piece of fruit off of her plate.

Clarissa shook her head “He took it quite well, he’s a sweetheart under that rough exterior.” She assured with a laugh.

The Queen chuckled “An exterior a certain niece of mine seems to appreciate.” She said, it sent an odd feeling into the pit of her stomach.
Ashara chucked herself as she placed her goblet back on the table “Arianne is going to get herself into trouble if she's not careful.” She replied. A flare of annoyance built in her chest.

*She'd warned her.*

Her mother shook her head “It wasn’t Arianne for once, Ellaria told me. Apparently, after Oberyn was eliminated by Jon, Nym didn’t take her eyes off the young man for the rest of the event.” She explained.

Her ire simmered a little when she heard that, she’d told Ari that he was off limits but she kinda forgot to tell her other cousins. Probably because she wouldn’t have heard the end of it from them.

Still didn’t mean she was happy about it.

Ashara huffed “Well good luck to her, she could do a lot worse for herself.” She said.

She needed out of this conversation, the stem of her goblet was close to bending with how hard she was gripping it. The table they were sat at jolted from something impacting it, Dany cursed as she retrieved the piece of orange she’d dropped on her dress.

“Seven hells.” She said as she moved it to her plate and began to rub her knee.

“Are you okay Daenerys?” Her mother asked. She looked at the small stain the piece of fruit had managed to make on Dany’s light blue dress.

Dany nodded “Yeah, I’ll be fine. I'm going to need to change my dress unfortunately.” She said as she let out a sigh. Dany stood up from the table an excused herself.

“I won't be long.” She said as she moved to the door. Before she could open it, somebody decided to knock against it.

They all looked at the door as Dany opened it.
Ser Arthur bowed at the princess “Your grace,” He said before looking at her mother “…your grace, the King requests your presence in his personal solar.” He informed.

*It would seem that the conversation would be ending naturally and without her having to excuse herself.*

*Unlike Dany.*

*She wasn’t fooling her with that display she’d just put on.*

Her mother stood and everybody stood with her “I think that’s a good place to bring this meal to an end, it's been a pleasure.” She said as she hugged Ashara, Clarissa and then her. “It's been a pleasure ladies.” She said after she gave Dany a hug.

“Has he said what it's about?” Her mother asked as she followed Dany and Ser Arthur through the door.

“He mentioned the Tullys your grace...” was the last of that conversation she heard as they disappeared down the hallway.

She turned to Ashara and Clarissa and smiled “Me and Dany are going to meet up with my aunt Ellaria and my cousins if you're interested in joining us. It should be interesting.” She asked. Ashara and Clarissa smiled and nodded.

“Great,” She smiled “...lets hope Dany doesn’t take too long.” She said before sitting back down, the two Daynes following suit.

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**Ned**

He felt the room around him closing in as he sat opposite the dowager Queen, a mask of indifference on her face. He wasn't sure how she kept her cool, especially after what she’d just asked him.
“Do you know what the penalty for treason is Lord Stark?” She’d said.

_She knew, she had to. Why would she randomly invite him for a chat? Why would that be the first thing she asks him?_

He wiped the sweat that had began to build in his palms on his breaches before answering.

“It depends on the severity of the crime your grace, regardless, the common penalty is death or the wall.” He answered. Anxiety ate away at him with every second that passed afterwards. She sat there with her hands clasped together on top of her desk in her personal solar, a look of contemplation on her face as she looked at him. Only the flare of her nostrils betrayed what she really felt.

_She definitely knows._

“Depends on the severity.” She echoed as she looked down at her clasped hands.

“I had an interesting chat with somebody recently and the topic of treason came up. They had an odd take on the topic, they believed there was other ways to punishing individuals for their acts of treason, ways that the realm and the people itself could profit from. _Making the most out of a terrible situation_ were their words.” She explained further. The knuckles of her hands were gripped tight and left white.

He could already feel the cool breeze from the open window blowing over his brow and cooling the sweat that was building there.

“They had a lot of interesting things to say come to think of it, a lot of dangerous truths.” She continued. The small goblet of wine she’d poured for herself was grasped with what looked like an iron grip.

“Your grace...”

She interrupted him before he could say anything “The gods can be awfully cruel, wouldn't you agree Lord Stark?” She asked.
She carried on without giving him chance to reply “The gods deemed it fit to take many of my children away from me before they could ever truly live. Its something I wouldn't wish on anybody, especially on any of my own children.” She said, a little anger growing in her voice.

“Unfortunately, my son, the King, experienced this soon after Robert’s failed rebellion.” She continued, a shot of ice going up his spine “…the fruit of his and your lady sister’s love following her mother into the next world when they both tragically passed away.” She almost growled out.

*He’s done.*

He sighed and looked down at his lap. He could feel himself deflate as he closed his eyes. He’d told Jon that whatever he decided to do, he wouldn't be blamed for whatever happened to him and he meant it, he just hoped his family weren't punished as well, he hoped his family would forgive him.

The dowager Queen cleared her throat “By that reaction, I think we can both start talking a little more openly now hmm? Lets not insult each others intelligence.” She said, almost commanded.

He looked up at her and noticed a bit of the anger had disappeared from her face, a look of annoyance and, to his surprise, disappointment.

“Aye, I think that is for the best.” He agreed. She lifted her chin in reply.

“How,” He began before clearing his throat “…how did the information come to you?” He asked. There could be only one person who could have told her, unless she’d found out by her own means.

She sniffed “I had my suspicions the first time I truly met him, the second time we met he confirmed it, the third time he informed me of everything you’d told him.” She informed, each meeting with Jon seemed more damning than the last for Ned.

*So Jon has met his grandmother.*

He closed his eyes and nodded.

“He’s a good man, has a lot of that wolfs blood from his mother. Also has some of that dragon
“His father doesn't have a quick temper like him but he’s still capable of losing it given the right circumstance. I think Jon’s separate bloodlines make a rather potent mixture.” She explained further. He knew what she was talking about, Jon had always been quick to anger in certain situations.

It felt weird when she mentioned Jon’s real father, it already felt like he was being replaced. He looked back at her with a small smile, hopefully making the situation they were in a little bit less stressful.

It didn't work, she didn't seem to appreciate his attempt. He didn't blame her, the bigger picture wasn't funny at all. Especially for him.

“It would seem that your nephew also has an understanding heart, a soft one when it mattered and a hard one when its required.” She said soon after, a little more of an edge to her voice.

He sighed “Your grace...”

“Did you ever plan to tell him?” She snapped out, the dowager Queen’s reputation fully out on display.

What was the point in lying any more, where had it got him?

He shook his “I did not, your grace.” He replied. “I explained to him when he confronted me that the truth had grown too dangerous to speak of. Everything I did was to protect him, not to hurt him.” He tried to explain but she was having none of it. He couldn't blame her, she had every right to be angry.

Her nostrils flared and her eyes grew harder “I've heard it all before Lord Stark, my grandson told me all of this yesterday. I’m just trying to work out what kind of game you’re playing with him. How you’ve managed to convince him that your punishment shouldn't be as bad as I would wish it.” She growled out.

He looked at her in surprise.
He’s trying to help me? After what I’ve done?

He didn't deserve him.

The King’s mother shook her had as she looked at him “Don't look so surprised Lord Stark, I’m pretty sure you’re the one who’s put him up to this.” She said.

He shook his own head “I promise you your grace, I told him whatever he decided to do, I wouldn't hold him responsible. This was solely his decision.” He replied.

She shook her head again, she wasn't buying it “You’ve played on his compassion, you knew the punishment you would receive and you placed that choice in his hands. You’ve guilt tripped him into making a choice where you don't lose your head and his cousins don't lose their father.” She explained.

His head shook for what felt like the thousandth time “No, that was never my intention. I've made terrible decisions, decisions that I thought were right that only turned out to be wrong. I deserve my punishment, whatever it may be, I just didn't want Jon to feel like it was his fault for what is to become of me, I swear.” He pleaded back. His mess should never fall on Jon’s shoulders.

Her grace’s face scrunched up as she looked at him “Your assurances and your pleas mean nothing Lord Stark. The secrets and lies that surround you make you untrustworthy, the words that come out of your mouth have lost all the weight they carry, the weight that they previously would’ve had before your little secret came to light.” She spoke out in a cold tone.

“My grandson doesn't want a war started over him, he doesn't want thousands of soldiers and innocents to perish because of him. I hate the choices and decisions you have thrust upon his shoulders. He appeared in my personal chamber yesterday looking like a husk of his normal self, an entire night spent wandering around the wilderness of the nearby woods, kept awake trying to make decisions because of what you have done.” She said, her voice getting harder and harder with every word said.

“The King’s son, a member of the royal family, a Prince of the realm, left alone to his own devices. Who knows what could have happened to him out there!” She finished, almost yelling the last of her words.

The dowager Queen closed her eyes and took a deep breath, it took Ned back, back to a time where
his mother was telling him off as a child.

He looked down at his lap “I never intended to hurt him, I never intended for any of this to happen.” He whispered out. His fight was gone, all that was left was his destiny.

“You never intended to get caught, Lord Stark. That’s what you really mean.” She replied. The tone in her voice left little to no chance at all for him to convince her.

The silence in the room became deafening after a while, the only sound was the thud of the dowager Queen’s goblet as she gulped from it. Ned kept his head down in reverence and shame.

He cleared his throat, the lump in it making his words raspy “What...what is to be done with me your grace?” He asked, resigned to whatever fate he would receive. He just hoped he’d be able to talk and explain everything to his family before the inevitable.

He looked up when a few seconds past without an answer, the King’s mother looking at him with undisguised disgust and hate. It was impossible to blame her.

“My son isn't even aware of what you’ve done, he isn't aware he has another son because of you. The King will have the final say with what happens to you, and may the gods have mercy on your soul when he does Lord Stark.” Came her damning answer.

She sniffed “You can leave now.” She said. Dismissing him without any interest in his reply.

He stood from his chair in a daze, remembering to bow to her before leaving. He headed for the door but before he could open it, the dowager Queen spoke up one more time.

“Oh, Lord Stark.” She said as he turned and looked at her. She’d already pulled parchment out from her desk and was running her quill across it.

*Maybe she’s writing my death sentence.*

“Don't wander too far, the King will be demanding your presence soon. Don't try to run away from your mistakes.” Were her last words to him before he was dismissed once again.
The corridors of Harrenhal felt like they were closing in on him as he made his way out of the castle. The trip back to the northern camp was quiet, almost eerie regardless of the amount of people he passed.

He needed to see his children, he needed to see Jon.

*Clarissa*

“Try this one.” Sarella said to her as they walked through the markets. Her friend handed her a different candied fruit they’d just bought from the stands. Sarella was her favourite of the famous *Sand Snakes*, maybe because she was one of the only ones who was as interested in books as she was.

She chewed through the candied plum that she’d just received, the burst of flavour making her ‘*mmmm*’ reactivity. Sarella looked at her and smiled at her reaction, she grinned back before lowering her eyes to the ground.

Sarella was beautiful, her light olive skin that she shared with most of her sisters was unblemished, her pitch black hair that was tied in a braid down her back shined under the sunlight of the afternoon and her eyes were such a deep brown they were almost black. The most attractive thing about her though was her mind, she was such a curious and intelligent individual.

That was the odd thing about her friendship with Sarella, there’s always been an intrigue with girls that she’d met in the past and she could easily sprout a friendship with them. But with Sarella, there seemed to be another step above friendship with her, like there was more she could get out of it, more she wanted to get out of it.

She liked boys, she knew that for certain. A few times her mother had caught her eyes wandering and just shook her head and smiled. Jon is the prettiest boy she’s met and she could remember, even months later, the way she’d stared and blushed shamelessly at him when they met. That was until a bucket of ice cold water was dumped over her head when she found out he was her brother. So she definitely liked boys, it was an odd way of establishing that but it did the job.

But did she like girls as well? That was the real question.
The Princess of Dorne and her *Sand Snake* cousins were undeniably beautiful, very easy on the eye. The Queen and the Targaryen Princesses were all exceptionally beautiful, even the dowager Queen could make some women half her age look ordinary.

But she felt no lust for any of them. She could appreciate their beauty but her reactive thoughts at the sight of their looks wasn’t one of sexual desire.

So why was Sarella any different? She was pretty like the rest of them, why do she feel different around her? Was it her mind she was attracted to?

She sighed, maybe she was just weird.

“A copper for your thoughts?” Her friend asked as they passed through the gates of the market and towards the yards where Sarella’s older sisters were training.

She looked at her friend and saw genuine interest in what was going through her mind and not the vague interest that people normally showed her.

She shook her head “It’s nothing, don’t mind me.” She replied, the last thing she wanted to explain was her thought process to her.

Sarella didn’t look like she believed her but she appreciated that she didn’t push. The rest of the walk to the yard was quiet, the pathway there was surrounded by trees and grassy fields, people were making the most of the sun as they laid on blankets and basked in the sunlight.

The yard eventually came into view, a few people were sat around the stands watching on in interest. Sarella grabbed her arm and moved her towards one of them, the skin on her arm burned from the contact.

“C’mon, there’s a good spot over there in the shade.” She said as they moved to their spot. In the yard, she could easily spot Obara and Nymeria sparring away with their spears. Further up the yard, there were a few other people minding their own business.

“So,” Sarella said from her seat next to her. She dusted her hands off after closing the little box her sweets came in “...have any predictions for tomorrow?” She asked.
Her brow furrowed in confusion “Tomorrow? What's happening tomorrow?” She replied. Before Sarella answered, she remembered.

Before she could rectify the situation, Sarella was already opening her mouth, a look of disbelief on her face “Really? The main reason anybody came to this thing in the first place.” She said.

Clarissa nodded and chuckled “The joust. It honestly slipped my mind for a second there.”

Sarella smiled at her “Don't forget the archery as well. Nym isn't happy about being snubbed for the melee so she’s going into that with something to prove.”

“Is she good then?” She asked in reply.

Sarella bobbed her head side to side “She's not really known for her archery skills, I thinks she’s only doing it to save face. Obara hasn't really teased Nym about being chosen over her for the melee but I can tell when my sister is annoyed. I mean, look at that...” She said as she nodded towards the yard where Obara and Nymeria were really going at it with their spears.

“She’s frustrated, and it shows. Not to mention the little talk she had with our royal cousin earlier. Whatever was said has clearly annoyed her, she had face on for an hour straight earlier.” Sarella continued.

She looked back at the two Sand Snakes battling it out, both of them being evenly matched for the time being. The thing that really caught her eye though was the man who had just entered the yard, he clearly wasn't interested with the amount of people here as turned around as soon as he walked in.

She was having none of it though.

“Jon!” She shouted in his direction as she stood from her seat in the stands. Her brother’s head snapped around as he scanned the area, noticing her as she waved to him. She noticed his eyes widen and a small smile crack through his mask.

Obara seemed to catch Nym out with a strike as the younger woman stumbled, she managed to recover to parry her sister’s strike. Jon made his way around the stands towards her, eyeing the action
in the yard as he did so.

“Clarissa.” Came the northern burr of her brother’s voice as she hugged him, his hand rubbing up and down her back.

*She’d missed him.*

She was beyond proud to see her brother and uncle be the last two to face off in the grand melee but pleasantly shocked when Jon was the one to walk away victorious. She’d not had chance to talk to him since arriving due to him either being around her other brother’s and sister’s or him just disappearing into thin air. She would have talked to him when he was around his family but it was too awkward, she was almost scared that hers and her mother’s secret would be found out as soon as they saw her.

...as soon as *he* saw her.

The clearing of a throat behind her broke her from her thoughts as she disengaged from her brother’s embrace.

“Are you going to introduce me to your friend?” Sarella asked as she looked at her.

Clarissa smiled and nodded “Sarella, this is Jon, my...a good friend of mine. Jon, this is Sarella, another good friend of mine.” She said as Jon gripped Sarella’s placed out hand and kissed the back of it.

“Pleasure.” He answered as he let go of Sarella’s hand and sat next to his sister. She looked to see what Sarella’s reaction to Jon was, expecting to see a little bit of interest, maybe even lust. What she wasn't expecting to see was a little annoyance as she eyed her and Jon.

Wonder what that’s about?

She turned and slapped Jon on the shoulder after he’d sat down, a look of confusion on his face when she did so.
“What was that for?” He asked as he rubbed the affected area.

“You’ve been avoiding me.” She replied. It was petulant but she knew he wouldn't take it to heart.

He shook his head and looked down at his hands “I’m Sorry, I’ve had a lot of stuff happening lately, I apologise.” He said in reply. It would seem that he had took her jape to heart after all.

She nudged his shoulder with her own “I was joking with you silly. Its really good to see you again.” She replied with a little smile. She managed to get one back from him before his eyes were dragged back to the yard.

Sarella sat to her left cleared her throat before speaking up “What's the story with you two then?” She asked. There was a bit of an edge to the question that she noticed, Jon obviously didn't as he answered.

An answer she really didn't expect nor appreciate.

“I’m her brother, or I hope I still am after all of this.” He replied as he kept his eyes on the yard. Her eyes widened at his reply and so did Sarella’s.

“Wait what?” Sarella said as she eyed the pair of them. Clarissa turned to Jon and thumped him on the shoulder, completely incensed he would blurt something like that out.

“Why would you say that!?” She asked him as he turned and looked at her. There was a deep lying sadness behind his eyes as he looked at her but she ignored that for the time being. She needed to know why he would betray her confidence like that.

“Because lying doesn't solve anything Clarissa. It'll eat away at you and eventually cause more trouble than its worth.” He explained as he looked at her. He didn't look ashamed at what he’d done, he just looked fed up.

It didn't mean he had the right to blurt out such a dangerous truth without warning.

“That still doesn't give you the right Jon.” She shot back. Jon sighed heavily and closed his eyes.
Something has definitely happened.

The difference between the easy going and charming brother the first time they’d met compared to the miserable looking man sat in front of her was jarring. It would be something she’d have to find out for herself in time but for now, she was still angry with him.

“So it’s true? He’s your brother?” Sarella said from behind her. She’d kinda forgot she was there for a moment.

She closed her eyes and took a breath in preparation for whatever was to come next, she expected to see Sarella’s annoyed face like she had earlier but when she turned she saw intrigue and what looked to be mild amusement.

She reluctantly nodded to her friend’s question, Sarella’s eyes widening at her confirmation. She would never hear the end of it now from her, she’d be asking questions till she went blue in the face, that was just Sarella was.

Before Sarella could start with her barrage of questions, her friends eyes glanced at the yard before rolling. Interested to see what had caused such a reaction, Clarissa glanced in the direction of the yard herself, noticing both of Sarella’s sisters making their way towards them.

Here we go…

“I have a good mind to warn father about a certain northern boy preying on his daughter. Shouldn’t you be playing in the woods or whatever it is you northerners do up in that wasteland you call home Snow?” Obara brazenly said to Jon as her and Nymeria approached the side of the yard where the three of them were sat.

Obara pointed her practice spear into the ground a leant on it, waiting for a response from Jon with a cocky grin on her face. Nymeria mirrored her sister’s stance with her own spear but devoid of a cocky grin of her own.

After a few seconds without reply, Obara scoffed and nodded at him “Did he hear me or is he broken?” She asked as she looked from her to Sarella, her eyes eventually landing on Jon. She turned and looked at Jon to see his reaction to all of this and didn't miss the bored look on his face as he sighed.
He did open his mouth to reply though “Sometimes when you’ve got nothing nice to say, its best to just not say anything at all.” He said as he looked around the yard like he was looking to leave current situation “I wouldn’t want to hurt your feelings.” He ended with.

Obara chuckled, a humourless chuckle. Clarissa looked at Sarella in concern but all her friend did was shake her head and roll her eyes.

“I find it adorable that you think you’re even capable of such a thing little man.” Came the reply of the oldest of the Sand Snakes.

She looked at Jon and caught him rolling his eyes as he heaved himself up from his seat. She heard him mutter to himself but couldn't catch what he’d said. From the corner of her eye, she caught movement from the yard and saw Obara pick her practice spear out of the ground and toss it towards Jon. Instinctively, Jon caught it out of the air before looking at Obara, a single eyebrow raised.

“What do you expect me to do with this?” He asked as Obara vaulted over the fence and moved to sit next to her sister.

“You’ll work it out.” She said as she nodded towards her other sister who was still stood in the yard. Nymeria looked back at Obara with an eyebrow of her own raised.

“Prove yourself against my sister with that spear and I might entertain kicking your arse after.” Obara boldly stated as she got comfortable in her seat, one booted foot resting on the fence as she leaned back.

She didn’t miss how she’d specifically stated the use of a spear, knowing full well if he was able to use his swords it would be a completely different game they were playing.

Jon chuckled “And why do I need to prove myself to the likes of you?” He asked as he twirled the spear with his hand. He eyed Obara before looking into the yard.

Obara shrugged “You’ll be proving my point if you don’t.” She said.

“And what’s that?” Came Jon’s reply. She too was intrigued at this point.
“That you’re just a little man who got lucky against my father.” She replied. There was a little edge to her voice when she replied.

Jon just sighed and shook his head “Sounds like you’re obsessed and in denial to me but whatever.” He said as he shrugged. “I’ll spar with your much less annoying sister because she hasn’t thrown verbal shit my way the moment we met and not because I need to prove myself to the likes of you.” He replied as he moved down the stands and vaulted the fence.

He held his hand out to Nym who shook it whilst looking at him with a blank look, she’d still not said anything since her and her sister had approached them.

Obara scoffed as Jon and Nym got into their stances opposite each other. Jon’s stance looked nothing like the one that Nym had took.

And Obara noticed this as she heckled at him “You look like an idiot who’s pretending to know what he’s doing.” She mocked.

Jon turned and looked at her with a blank look on his face “And you look like a cow chewing a wasp. I suppose we all have to learn how to live with our imperfections.” He boldly replied. Sarella almost choked on her water as she drank from her waterskin.

She dared to look to see Obara’s reaction, noticing that nothing changed on her face, nothing apart from the flaring nostrils that had took on a mind of their own.

“You better fucking break him Nym. I need to finish him off.” Obara muttered to herself as Jon and Nymeria begin their dance.

Clarissa looked at Sarella to see what her reaction to all of this was, not at all surprised to see a look of amusement on her face. She smiled back at her friend, noticing that she was getting the box of sweets back out.

Sarella held the box out at her and she picked one of the candied fruits out before popping it in her mouth. Sarella did the same before offering the box to Obara, her sister was to distracted by the fight in the yard to even acknowledge her sister’s offer. Her friend just shrugged and put the box of sweets away.
She looked back in the yard to see how the bout was faring and it would look like she picked the right time to look as Nymeria caught Jon round the back of his foot and tripped him, wasting no time in mounting him at the waist. She went to move her spear around to point it toward Jon’s neck but before getting the chance to do so, Jon managed to twist his hips and promptly flip their positions. He pushed down on the spear with both hands while Nymeria was trying to push up with hers, slowly but surely winning the contest of strength to nobody’s surprise.

With Jon pressed above her and the shaft of her spear resting against her throat, Nymeria nodded to Jon’s inaudible question. He went to stand up from his position on top of Nym but was wrenched back down by her legs wrapped around his waist. Jon looked a little uncomfortable at the inappropriate position he was in but didn’t get chance to react as Nym’s legs left his waist. She proceeded to press into his chest with them before launching him backwards onto his behind.

Jon, to her surprise, seemed to take it in his stride with a shake of his head and a chuckle as the pair of them stood back up and readied their weapons against each other again.

She didn’t miss Nymeria’s smile back at him.

Daenerys

“I apologise about my grandmother your grace, she sometimes gets carried away.” Ser Loras said to her as the two of them walked away from the Reach camp they’d just been in. Lady Olenna Tyrell or The Queen of Thorns as she was more commonly known as had asked a few questions to her during their meeting, all of which Ser Loras had heard.

Is my grandson not good enough for a Targaryen princess?

Do you and your niece plan on marrying each other?

Those were some of the stand out questions amongst many that caught her off guard.

She shook her head and looked at her friend “Don’t worry about it Loras, your grandmother has a substantial reputation for such a thing. I’d have been somewhat disappointed if it had turned out to be exaggerated.” She said as the two of them walked along the bank of the God’s eye lake. The small breeze felt lovely after the heat of the day.
The area seemed quiet as they walked along, the peace of it welcomed after the day she’d had. Meeting after meeting wasn’t her idea of fun but her brother had asked her and she was keen to prove to him that she was more than just a pretty face.

“Sit still you big baby.” She heard somebody say faintly, her and Ser Loras rounding a corner of trees and identifying where the voice had come from. Ser Loras started walking forward to make their presence known but she grabbed his arm and wrenched him back behind the tree she hid behind.

Ser Loras looked at her in confusion “Your grace?” He said, seemingly asking what her intentions were. She shook her head at him and looked back towards the culprit of the unknown voice.

Not too far away from her and Loras stood Jon Snow on the bank at the edge of the water. He was currently soaping up that white wolf of his with the lather he’d produced from the bar of soap he’d just dropped on a pile of cloths. By the looks of it, he was having a hard time keeping the energetic creature still as the wolf kept trying to jump up at him, making a complete mess.

It made quite the humorous picture, especially amusing when the wolf decided to shake off the soap suds, creating even more of a mess.

She just about suppressed a laugh behind her hand. She looked at Ser Loras and saw that he was having a hard time not smiling at the scene. Then all of a sudden, his face fell and took on a different look, one that she could understand when she turned back to the pair of wolves.

Jon Snow was stripping out of his clothes, his gambeson and his boots were the first things to go. He looked around before the tunic and the breeches were off next, leaving him in nothing but the small clothes that were left on his lower half.

He didn't give her enough time to get her fill before he was picking up his wolf and dropping him into the lake, following him in with the bar of soap he’d just retrieved.

He submerged himself under the water before emerging from under the surface, he produced a lather with his soap before tossing the bar back on to the bank and washing himself. His wolf seemed to be having fun in the water around him, paddling around his master with his tongue lolling out.

There were so many thoughts going through her head that she didn't know how to react to what she
was seeing. She should feel ashamed that she was essentially spying on him but she didn't, she tried pulling her eyes away but it was nearly impossible. Ser Loras seemed to have the same problem as she glanced at him.

“We should leave your grace.” He said but made no attempt at looking away from the scene in front of them.

“We should.” She replied back as she witnessed Jon and his wolf climb out of the lake. It was impossible not to watch him dry down his warrior’s body, the damp small clothes he’d entered the lake in sticking to his legs like a second skin, showcasing his powerful legs and firm arse.

*Turn around.*

Her mind didn't get its wish as Jon pulled his breeches on before sliding his boots on his feet. His tunic was next, she managed to get a glimpse of his chest as he lifted it over his head, showcasing the power that lied underneath his clothes. Lastly, his gambeson was the last piece of clothing to be tied up, ultimately hiding his body away from them and ending their sordid idea of a little fun.

The extra cloth he didn't use to dry himself with he used to dry his wolf, laughing away as he did so as the wolf tried nipping and licking him, probably thinking he was playing. Jon let go of the creature after he’d done and moved to pick up his swords that were in the grass, tying them to his back. The soap and cloths that were used to bathe were the last thing he picked up before standing up straight and looking around. And to her shock, he was looking right in their direction.

She grabbed Ser Loras by the arm and dragged him back further in the hopes of hiding them but it was no use, the reason for Jon’s glance in their direction looking at them with its head cocked to the side.

*How had neither of them not notice the white wolf trotting in their direction?*

“Ghost, come here.” She heard Jon say as he approached them, he still hadn't seen either of them yet. Ser Loras put his hand on his hilt as he eyed the wolf, the wolf in question taking a step back at the knight’s action. She placed her hand on top of Loras’ to stop him, the last thing she wanted was blood being spilled.

Instead, she took a step away from the tree and slowly approached with a hand held out at the creature, or *Ghost* as Jon had called it.
“Your grace, I don't think tha...” She heard Loras say from behind her before she interrupted.

“Nonsense Ser Loras, I think it’s looking for a friend that's all.” She said, a little louder than necessary so that Jon could here her. It was her attempt at breaking the ice without it being awkward.

“He.” She heard Jon reply as he approached them. She turned to him in confusion at his response. On the surface she was playing it cool, her mind was a different story though. Up close, Jon Snow was more trouble than she’d originally believed. It didn't help that his own eyes had widened when he finally saw who he was talking to, an intense look that she could physically feel.

“He?” She asked as she carried on looking at his face. She would have felt shameful if he wasn't doing the same thing to her. He nodded, his raven curls were still damp from earlier as they bounced. He looked down at Ghost and grinned “Ghost is a he, not an it.” He replied.

She blinked “I didn't mean to cause offence...”

He shook his head again “No harm done.” He replied as he smiled down at the wolf before looking back at her. He nodded in Ghost’s direction “Go ahead, he’s harmless. A bit daft but harmless nonetheless.” He said before holding his hand out to Ser Loras, who shook it. She’d forgot that they’d already met before.

She bent down and slowly held her hand out the wolf, he moved and sniffed it before licking the back of her hand. She couldn't help the little chuckle that escaped from her as he did so. The same hand that had just been licked was soon gliding through the freshly cleaned fur of the beautiful creature stood in front of her. She was shocked when Ghost moved forward and nudged her onto her bottom and proceeded to lick her face.

She couldn't help the laughter that erupted as she lamely attempted to fight off the onslaught. She heard Ser Loras say something before she was being helped out, Ghost being pulled away from her by Jon. He looked at her with a bashful smile as he held a hand out to help her up, which she took without hesitation.

Her hand burnt from the skin on skin contact.
He kept hold of her hand as they straightened up, placing a kiss to the back of it before letting go.

“My name’s Jon, your grace. Jon Snow.” He said, finally introducing himself to her.

She nodded “I know.” She said with a small smile.

His brow furrowed “Know? I thought your name was Daenerys, your grace?” He replied, a small grin at the corner of his mouth. She liked her name on his lips.

“I.” She began before sighing “That was a terrible attempt at humour.” She replied with a small grin of her own. Jon’s grin evolved into a full fledged smile after that.

That thing should be classed as a weapon with how dangerous it was.

He scratched the back of his neck “I’m sorry about the wolf attack. Like I said, he’s a bit daft when he’s in one of those moods.” He said as he looked down at Ghost. The wolf was being surprisingly well behaved as he sat next to Jon.

She stroked Ghost over the head and watched his tail wag as she did so “No harm done.” She replied with a grin, echoing the words he’d said to her minutes ago. He chuckled in response.

He bent down and picked up his cloths and soap he’d placed down on the floor to help her up, she didn't even try to look away from his arse when he did so. He stood back up and turned to her before looking down at Ghost.

“Its been a pleasure your grace, but I must be getting back to the northern camp. I promised my sister I wouldn't be late for dinner and she’s the last person I want to get on the wrong side of.” He said as he looked in between her and Ser Loras. She couldn't help but feel disappointed at the declaration.

She nodded and smiled at him “Of course, say hello to her from me would you?” She said as he smiled and nodded at her.
With a whistle, Ghost was heading off in the direction of the northern camp and after Jon had bowed to her and shook Ser Loras’ hand again, he was following after him.

She released the breath that she didn't even know she was holding as he left, that was the first time a boy or man had invoked such a reaction out of her.

“That was interesting.” She heard Ser Loras say as they started walking back towards the castle, she nodded in agreement.

She turned around to get one last glimpse of Jon and almost blushed when she caught him already looking back in her direction. As soon as he realised he’d been caught, he turned his head back away from her and upped his pace.

She turned her head back around herself and couldn't help the small grin that grew on her face.

“Interesting indeed.”

Chapter End Notes

There was a lack of response from me in the comments last chapter and I apologise. The chapter was uploaded the day after episode 5 and I was just fed up to be quite honest, I pressed upload and switched off my pc instantly after.

I wont be as unresponsive in this chapter as I was in the last.

The next chapter will be the joust and will probably be a little longer than my normal chapters. I'm not gonna give a solid date as to when that will be released as I have no clue myself.

Till the next one :)

p.s. I've just clocked on to the amount of hits and bookmarks this story has garnered. All I can say is wow.

And thank you, I'm in awe at the amount of people who have managed to enjoy this mad story of mine lol.

Again, thank you :(
A Wolf Speaks, A Dragon Plans

Chapter Notes

Part 1 of 3 chapters uploaded July 5th.

The story is back, and my god has it been a slog. These chapters would have been done a lot sooner but all I can say is blame D&D for completely smashing my enthusiasm for writing in the ASOIAF universe.

Took a couple of weeks to get back to normal though, it'll take a lot more than them shitting the bed at the final hurdle of their story to completely put me off this universe.

Enough talk, on to the 1st of 3 chapters released today, next one will be up within half an hour of this one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Arya

The excitement in the tent was contagious as she and her siblings ate through their morning meal. She looked across the table and locked eyes with Bran, he grinned at her with a mouthful of bread. She returned the smile as she made quick work of her own meal, excited to get the day going, excited to see the competitions that were to come that day.

“Where’s Jon?” She hears Rickon ask to nobody in particular. His eyes bounced between his siblings before landing on her. His legs swung underneath his seat as he ate his food.

“Don’t speak with your mouthful please Rickon.” She heard Sansa softly chide. Rickon lowered his head before looking back at Arya, waiting for an answer to his question, an answer that she didn’t have.

Before she could answer him, the flap to the tent was being brushed open, a freshly awake Jon entering.

“Jon!” Rickon shouted with a mouthful of food. Sansa sighed and shook her head but Arya could see the small smile on her face.

Jon walked past his little brother and mused his shaggy hair as he did so, his hand was batted away by Rickon who was clutching a bread roll like a weapon.
“Morning everyone.” Jon said as he took a seat next to Bran, her little brother smiled up at Jon as he did so.

She smiled across at her big brother but it dropped slightly when she noticed the odd look on his face, he looked on edge, like something was about to happen. She also noticed that he’d not even made up a plate of food when he sat down, just poured himself of mug of water.

That wasn't the big brother she knew. The big brother she knew would be piling his plate up with food and thoroughly destroying it.

“Are you okay?” She asked as she looked at him, the rest of the table looking at her in confusion before glancing in the direction where she was looking. Jon was the only person there who didn't look up.

“Jon?” She heard Sansa say, her tone was concerned. She was reassured that she wasn't the only one who thought his behaviour was odd.

Jon eventually looked up from his mug of water, he looked like he was in a world of his own and seemed to break himself free from it as he blinked.

“Sorry, what did you say?” He asked as he looked at Sansa, then at her.

“Arya asked if you were alright.” Sansa replied. It was clear on her face that she wanted to know if he was alright as well.

Jon went to open his mouth but clamped it shut when the flap of the tent was opened, her mother and father the ones to enter.

Sansa turned her head at the noise of the tent flap and greeted their parents.

“Good morning mother, father.” She said. Arya noticed the smile her mother sent her sister’s way before her eyes scanned the table. The smile dropped when she noticed Jon was here with them. Her mother moved and took a seat next to Sansa, squeezing her hand as she did so before looking around the table at the rest of them, nodding her greetings to them. Nobody missed the way she ignored Jon,
well, apart from Jon himself. He was too busy looking at their father rather oddly.

She turned to greet her father and noticed the tense look on his face as he looked at Jon, it was still their on his face as he sat down beside her. She wondered if it had anything to do with the odd chat he’d had with her and the rest of her siblings minus Jon. He’d acted very odd yesterday, the things that he’d said to them didn't make sense. He talked about how he was proud of them and that he loved them all dearly, he made it sound like he was going somewhere but when she asked if that was the case, he just shook his head and told them that he just wanted them to know how blessed he felt to have such wonderful children.

All of them had left that conversation yesterday, loved but confused.

Very confused.

She was broken from her thoughts when she hears her father sigh, she turns and looks at him as he closes his eyes and nods. Arya looks in the direction he was facing and notices Jon nodding himself, he takes a deep breath before he stops.

“What’s happening?” She asks them. She hated being out of the loop, especially when it was happening right in front of her.

Jon looked at her with such sorrow that she almost dropped everything just so she could move around the table and hug him. She shakes her head at him without even knowing what she was shaking it for. It was like she was already denying whatever grief was about to be spoken about. Her brother never looked this sad, whatever it was he was about to say, she needed some way to prepare for it.

She practically heard Jon gulp as he looked around all of his siblings before looking back at their father, he nods again as Jon stares at him.

Jon sighs as he stands up from the table and grabs one of the jugs at the side of the room, the water in his mug is finished in one gulp before it’s being refilled with ale.

She looks around the table at everyone to see what they were making of all of this, she could see that they were all confused by what was happening, even her mother.
The table moved as Jon seated himself, a long drag was taken from his mug before being placed back on the table. He looks at her from across the table with regret.

He’s leaving, that has to be it.

She could already feel a little anger brewing with that thought. He doesn't get to just leave again.

Before she could say anything, Jon opened his mouth...

...and destroyed her world.

Her head was shaking through the entire story, her hands were doing the exact same thing as well. Out of anger or grief, she didn't know.

She looked at her father in a daze, surely all of this was just some silly jape they were playing on all of them. Some sort of twisted revenge on them for some of the things they’d done in the past. Although it was a cruel form of punishment, she hoped and prayed to the old gods and her mother’s gods that this was all it was, an act of revenge and not a damning truth.

Please.

“Is this true?” She asked as she looked between her father and her b...brother. The tears were already filling her eyes at that thought, and they silently fell when Jon confirmed it with a reluctant nod.

“No.” She heard her mother say, a cold tone if she'd ever heard one. She looked at her mother and noticed the look of disgust and anger on her face.

“Cat...” She heard her father say from next to her but her mother was having none of it as she shook her head.

“It’s not true.” She said in a hard tone as her eyes locked across the table and towards Jon “Lies, all lies. Nothing more!” She said louder as she stood from the table and locked hard eyes with father “This! This is what I have been warning you about for years Ned! This is nothing but a plot to gain power for himself!” She said, almost shouting at him.
Her eyes look back across the table at Jon “I’ve seen him getting friendly with lords and ladies, talking with the Kingsguard like they’re long time acquaintances. It’s so obvious, seeing him integrate himself with the nobility and even royalty itself.” She said with disgust dripping from every word.

“And now he has the reputation from the melee and the gold from it’s winnings, but that isn't enough is it? He wants more, more than he’s ever been worth. The lies, the greed, the very nature of a bastard.” She continued on.

“Catelyn!” She heard her father growl out as he stood from his seat. They never heard her father shout, so it was a shocking thing for all of them to see. She looked around the table and noticed that Sansa and Bran looked shocked and scared, Rickon looked confused but still scared about the raised voices and Jon, Jon was looking away from them all, burning a hole in the flap of the tent.

Don’t you dare try to run from this Jon.

Her heart fell into the pit of her stomach as her father opened her mouth “It’s true Cat, It’s all true. I was the one to finally tell him everything, everything he’s just said.” He confirmed. Her mother looked away from Jon and to their father. None of them had ever seen her mother look at their father the way she did in that moment, a look of sheer disgust and anger on her face.

Her mother moved from her spot at the table and walked towards father, the sound of her hand cracking against his face was loud. All of them looked away and down at the table after that, none of them wanted to see that. She looked over at Jon and saw him look at her mother and father, a resigned look on his face.

“Mother?” She heard Bran say, rightfully concerned about what was happening. She turned and looked to see her mother’s reaction and saw her shake her head and smile at him, rather forcefully if she was asked.

Her mother points at Jon and looks at father with her chin held high as she stands at the flap of the tent “He will take everything from my children.” She said matter-of-factly before exiting. She watched the flap of the tent move around before it settled, she almost didn't want to turn and look at how everybody else was reacting to what had just happened.

She wiped her eyes on her sleeve before turning back to the table, the silence was deafening, the sadness was thick in the tent. So many mixed emotions were barrelling through her, sadness, anger,
and fear.

*Does the King know?* She asked herself.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Jon clutch the top of his head with both hands before closing his eyes and dropping his head. It was quiet but they all heard him mutter the words *“I’m sorry.”*.

Why was he sorry? If anything, it was father that should be apologising, he was the one who had hidden this dangerous truth from all of them. She caught her father shaking his head before telling him exactly what she’d just been thinking.

She stood up from her seat and moved around the table as everybody glanced at her, they were probably expecting to see her rage and rant. Instead, she looped her arms around Jon the best that she could and squeezed hard. She was hoping that her hug brought him some sort of comfort.

“It doesn’t matter to me Jon, I’ll always be your sister and you’ll always be my big brother.” She assured. She saw Sansa and Bran nodding, Rickon still looked like he didn't know what was happening.

Jon sniffed as he opened his eyes and looked at her, a small tear trail emerged from one of his eyes as he did so. He gripped her and squeezed her in one of those hard hugs she always loved from him, she heard him mutter *“Thank you.”* into her shoulder.

She looked over at Sansa as Jon hugged her, a question leaving her sister’s mouth, a question she really didn't know if she wanted answering or not.

“What happens now father?” She asked. Sansa was right to look concerned.

Her father looked around the table at them all, sadness and resignation on his face. That chat they had yesterday now making more and more sense.

His eyes finally landed on Jon who pulled his face from her shoulder and looked at him. They stared at each other like they were trying to convey something.
“I don't know.” He replied.

Rhaegar

He blew on the ink of the parchment before dusting and folding it, the wax was dripped onto the centre of the letter before his own personal stamp was pressed into it, sealing the contents away until it was opened again.

That was the last of his thank you letters he’d written for each of his paramount lords, thanking them all for their attendance. Courtesy never cost anything as his mother would tell him. A letter had been written to his good brother back in Sunspear wishing him good health and the potential for a visit from the royal family in a few moons to make up for his inability to attend and in celebration of Aegon’s nameday.

The same had been written for Lord Hoster Tully but without the promise of a visit and a letter was written for Lord Balon Greyjoy, letting him know that his presence was missed whilst also subtly reminding him that his heir was a well treated ward of the crown.

He didn't know what or if the Greyjoy’s were up to something but it didn't hurt to remind the rebellious head of the Ironborn that the future of his family was in the hands of the Starks and ultimately, the ruling family, his family.

The last of his letters was placed on the pile that was left at the end of his desk. The solar that had been assigned to him during his stay in the castle was fit for a king, beautiful tapestries and rugs, a large floor to roof window that filled the room with natural light. It was beautiful.

But it wasn't his solar, his personal abode back in King’s Landing was his little escape from the loud bustle of the Red Keep, beautiful dark woods made up his desk and shelves, those of which held numerous scrolls, tombs and trinkets he’d collected throughout his life. The tapestries and rugs were the colour of thick smoke and blood, the irony of their family’s words not lost on him when he thought about that.

Fire and Blood.

In reality, the ‘Fire’ the words referenced had died many years ago. As much as some of his ancestors believed that fire itself somehow gave them power, it was the dragons that left the world a while ago that gave it to them. That was the fire that their house words referred to, not the basic element or the dark magic known as wildfire but the creatures that essentially created their entire
But they were gone now, all they had left was blood. And blood would be what guaranteed their family’s legacy.

He sighed as he took a sip from his goblet, today was the final day of the tourney, a tourney that up to now, had been a great success. The archery contest was very soon and he was using the time waiting for his family to get ready to sort out some of his missives. But that wasn't the main event of the day, that honour fell to the joust.

He remembers the last joust that happened here in Harrenhal, that damned joust. Hopefully everything went off without a hitch today, he could already hear the songs being sang about Harrenhal being cursed if it didn't.

The joust would be a little more interesting this time around, the announcement that none of the Kingsguard would be competing today was a sure fire way of breeding optimism in most of the competitors. They'd be a lot of knights out there today who believed they could win it now that the majority of the threat was absent from the whole thing.

It also gave his son a better chance at winning it. He knew it wasn't very kingly of him to pick a favourite to win, he was supposed to be a man of the people, an unbiased party. But he just couldn't help it, he was a father and he wanted his son to win.

*May the gods strike him down if that was such a crime.*

Unfortunately for him and his son, there were still threats out there outside the Kingsguard who could easily ruin that dream. Both Clegane brothers were high on that list, although he wasn't too sure if Tywin would allow them to compete after what had happened during the melee. There were a few others that still had a shout at winning, a selection of Vale knights, Reach knights and even Northerners. One in particular gave him concern.

Jon Snow had put on, what a few of his Kingsguard had echoed, an impressive spectacle of skill and pinpoint efficiency during the grand melee. And it was enough to win the whole thing to the shock of many.

If he was that capable with a sword in each hand, what was he like with a lance and shield? What was he like as a rider? Was he like his aun…
He closed his eyes, today was not the time to lose himself in those type of thoughts.

He sighed, Jon Snow had really made a name for himself at this tourney. A lot of people had taken notice of him, a certain mother of his not immune to the pull of him either.

*What was that all about?* His mother wouldn't tell him anything whenever he hinted at it during conversation. It was almost like it was her dirty little secret, and how could it not be seen that way? The Dowager Queen of Westeros having secret meet ups with, admittedly, a handsome looking bastard from the north.

He gripped his goblet hard as he took another sip from it, the whole situation didn't sit right with him. He *would* get down to the bottom of it, his mother wouldn't tell him anything about it but could he expect the same type of response from Snow? Especially if Rhaegar reminded the boy that lying to the King was a serious offence.

Yes, that seemed like the best way of going about this. A casual chat with Jon Snow after all of the festivities had died down was sounding more and more interesting. If anybody asked, he’d tell them that he was personally meeting with him about a potential position in the Kingsguard in the future. Chatter about that very possibility had spread around the castle so nobody would think twice about it.

A small grin grew on his face, he could understand how Lord Varys got a kick out of this kind of stuff.

The door to his solar opened without a knock, there was only one of two people who could get away with that, one being his mother and the other being his wife. This time around it was his Queen that had let herself in, and it looked like she meant business as she closed the door behind her and looked at him seriously.

“My King.” She said as she moved across the room to the decanter of wine on the cabinet. She poured herself a small helping of wine before taking a seat opposite him.

“My Queen.” He replied with a quirked eyebrow as he waited for her to explain why she had let herself in.

She was looking at him with that look, the one where she seemed to be weighing up her words before speaking. Clearly the reason for her presence was important.
He sighed after a minute without anything being said “Has something happened Elia?” He asked as he stood from his seat and refilled his own goblet.

He looked at his wife as he poured his wine, she was swilling the contents of her goblet around.

“The Tullys.” Came her reply. She didn't even bother looking at him as he made his way back to his seat.

“Ah,” He replied as he took his seat. “The Tully situation.” He said as he took a sip from his freshly filled goblet.

This was not going to be a pleasant conversation, he could already tell “Elia, I understand where you stand in all of this but my hands are practically tied.” He said.

His wife quirked an eyebrow at him “You do see what they are trying to do, don't you?” She asked. “I can understand them being kind of upset about the...how can I put this...condition of Lord Edmure when he left the field after being eliminated in the grand melee, but expecting some sort of action to be taken against Jon Snow because of it is just preposterous.” She explained.

He shook his head “I wasn't planning on taking any action in the first place Elia.” He replied. She nodded at his answer.

“I know, and they weren't expecting anything to happen as well. They aren't stupid, it was nothing more than a pretence for the bigger picture. It's just another thing to convince you of what they really want.” She explained. “You know what that is don't you?” She asked. They both knew what it was really about.

He nodded and sighed “Aye, I do. He wants Rhaenys’ hand in marriage.” He replied. He hated how it’d come about, but even Elia had to admit that the marriage between Rhaenys and Edmure would be incredibly advantageous for them. It would tie the Riverlands to the crown along with the North and the Vale through Lord Edmure’s sisters.

Elia shook her head “I get how lucrative it is for the crown that such a marriage would take place, but the whole situation doesn't sit right with me one bit. It will set a precedent and could be damaging to our family.” She explained.
He looked at her, brow furrowed “How do you mean?” He asked. Clearly he’d missed something that his wife had picked up. You could always tell she was a student of his mother’s.

She took one last sip from her goblet before placing it on the table “Look at it this way, what Lord Edmure has done suggesting a marriage between him and our daughter could be seen by people as just that, a suggestion, yeah?” She said as he nodded for her to continue.

“Now, if you look at it another way, some people would see it as more than a suggestion, it could be seen as a demand so to speak.” She continued. He gestured for her to continue. He was somewhat lost but he’d let her explain herself.

“Let me ask you a simple question your grace.” She asked, he nodded for her to ask away.

“Which came first, the suggestion of a betrothal between Lord Edmure and our daughter, or Lord Edmure’s official complaint about his ‘assault’ as he liked to call it at the hands of Jon Snow?” She asked, that bloody boy’s name popping up yet again. It was as if the gods were trying to tell him something.

It didn’t take him long to realise where she was going with this but he still answered her anyway, just to make sure they were on the same page of thinking. He could feel a little annoyance brewing.

“He complained about the perceived assault first.” He said before grabbing his goblet and taking a big gulp from it in the hopes of calming his ire.

Elia nodded “Right. He wanted to use it as a tool to get his own way, almost as if you owed him something if you didn't take action against Snow, which you were never going to do, and he knew that.” She explained further.

He nodded, he was picking up what she was putting down.

Elia took a sip from her goblet “In this case, there’s a fine line between suggesting something and blackmailing someone.” She said. “The attack from Lord Edmure and Ser Brynden on Snow looked premeditated, the way they focused on him from the get go. It’s no secret that Lord Stark’s wife has no love for the boy and by extension, neither would her family. In their eyes, the attack on Snow had no downsides to it but they hit the jackpot when Snow did what he did to Lord Edmure. Best case scenario, Snow is punished for what he did and Lord Edmure gets a betrothal out of it, worst case
scenario, Snow isn't punished but there is still a betrothal agreement.” She finished.

He sat back in his chair, the wood squeaking as he did so. “And what you're saying is that if we went ahead with the betrothal, it would set a precedent for the future? That families would realise that they could get away with these sort of ploys as well?” He asked. Elia smiled and nodded her head as she took a swig of her wine.

He let out a heavy sigh as he looked at his wife, he gave her a small smile “It’s a good job you spotted that, though I’m not sure how to proceed now. The way the conversation between Lord Edmure and I ended, it was left somewhat open to the idea of the betrothal.” He said.

“Fuck him. He got his face smashed up in a melee after making a stupid decision. In my opinion, his reward for all that was him walking away without a broken nose.” Elia replied, that dornish spunk emerging.

He chuckled at that “I suppose you're right, though I’ll have to formally decline his suggestion before we leave. I’m starting to think our daughter will stay unmarried forever.” He sighed. “I mean, I don't think I’ve seen her take any interest in any of the many suitors in attendance.” He said as huffed and folded his arms as he leant back.

He saw Elia’s brow rise for a split second before she sniffed, his eyes narrowed and a small grin grew on his face.

“What was that look?” He asked.

Elia looked at him over the rim of her goblet before shaking her head.

“What was that look?” He asked.

“Nothing.” She said before finishing her wine off.

He quirked an eyebrow as he looked at her, it would seem that his wife realised he wouldn't drop his intrigue.

Her empty goblet was placed on his desk “Fine,” She said. “You might of missed it but her mother didn't.” She started.
“At first I thought it was just a wandering eye, a passing fancy if you will. But then I started noticing things, lingering looks, the way she goes quiet while she looks at him. She thinks she's getting away with it when she does it.” She continued.

His brow furrowed, she was right though, he’d definitely missed all of this. Before he could ask who it was, his wife was speaking again.

“Yesterday I got confirmation of how bad it was. I caught our daughter quietly warning Nymeria to stay well away from ‘him’. Arianne caught me listening in and rolled her eyes before explaining that she’d had the same treatment from Rhaenys a few days ago.” She finished.

*This was a good thing, right?*

Their daughter was actively pursuing a suitor and making sure nobody got in the way. They’d practically encouraged her and Daenerys to seek out a match for themselves at this tourney. If she’d found somebody without any sort arrangement from him or her mother, then that was a good thing.

*Right?*

If that was the case, why was his wife looking at him oddly.

He cleared his throat “Who’s this lucky individual that’s caught the eye of our princess then?” He asked. For some reason, he was kind of anxious about the name that was about to fall from Elia’s mouth.

She sniffed “Lord Stark’s son, Jon Snow.” She answered, thus complicating everything.

He heavily sighed, Elia chuckled at his reaction.

“She sniffed “Lord Stark’s son, Jon Snow.” She answered, thus complicating everything.

He shook his head “What is it with that boy?” He said as he scoffed. “He’s caught our daughters eye and I’m pretty sure my mother is charmed as well. I fail to believe those secret meetings she’s having with him are completely innocent, and I’m not buying the *“personal evaluations of a potential*
Kingsguard” as an excuse either. I mean, I caught him waiting for her in her room a couple of mornings ago, and she personally vouched for him.” He finished.

Elia shook her head at him “Let’s back up a little and talk about our daughter showing legitimate interest in a bastard boy. Your mother is a grown woman who’s been through more hardships than most, she’s old enough to take care of herself Rhaegar.” She said. She was right of course, but he still couldn’t help the way he felt about the whole situation between his mother and that boy.

He sighed and nodded for her to continue.

She nodded back at him “Right, as much as you believe your mother is doing unspeakable things with that boy, I don’t agree with your beliefs at all. I’ve seen the way he looks at her from time to time and not once have I seen any form of lust or longing on his face.” She explained.

“Efficiently discrete.” He muttered to himself but his wife heard him as she raised an eyebrow, an unimpressed look on her face.

He waved a hand and motioned for her to continue.

“Now, if our daughter is serious about the boy and he returned her affections, a compromise could be worked out.” She continued.

“A compromise?” He said, confused.

She nodded “A compromise. For our daughter to wed the boy, he would need a last name.” She said, and he could see where she was going with this.

He shook his head “I can’t legitimise him Elia, it would cause even more problems. Lady Stark would believe that giving Snow the Stark name would give the boy everything he needs to usurp her children and so too would her side of the family. It would strain our relationship with the Riverlands with her father and the Vale due to her sister, Lady Arryn.”

She nodded “I know. I wasn't implying a legitimisation, I was implying that he would need a name.” Elia replied as she sat there waiting for his reply.
He sat there as he slowly but surely picked up what she was putting down.

“Wait, you’re suggesting...”

Elia nodded as she interrupted him “That he take her name instead. The Tullys can’t claim that we are rewarding Snow by giving him the Stark name if he doesn't have the Stark name to begin with. It quells Lady Stark’s fear that he would use the Stark name to legitimise his claim and usurp her children’s inheritance.” She explained.

He drummed his fingers on the desk as he thought about what had just been said. The positives outweighed the negatives of such a union taking place, although they wouldn't have a seat to take over when they did marry. Unless…

“They’d be able to take the seat of Summerhall once the construction is complete. It solves two problems, one, Snow doesn't have a seat of his own or one he stands to inherit, and two, Aegon isn't in line to inherit it and neither is Viserys due to the circumstances of his marriage to my niece. It would be perfect for our daughter to rule.” His wife explained, taking the words right out of his mouth.

They sat there in silence together, mulling over everything that had been said, he chuckled as a thought struck him.

“So much for a new member of the Kingsguard eh? I fear him and Arthur working as a cohesive unit would have been comparable to a force of nature.” He said, Elia shrugged in reply.

“What's more important, the prospect of a shiny new Kingsguard or our daughter’s happiness?”

It wasn't really a question, they both knew the answer before it was even asked.

A knock on the door disturbed the quietness of the room.

“Enter.” He said, Ser Arthur opening the door. The knight smiled at the pair of them before speaking.
“Your grace, the rest of the family are waiting to depart.” He said. Rhaegar nodded in response as Elia stood up.

“Thank you Arthur, we’ll be there shortly.” He replied as the dornish knight nodded before closing the door behind him.

“This is just an idea for now, we’ll speak a bit more about this later.” He said to his wife as he rose from his chair. “Not a word to our daughter either until we’ve spoken to Lord Stark and his son, last thing we want to do is get her hopes up.”

Elia nodded as they made their way towards the door.

It was safe to say that he’d be keeping a close eye on their daughter’s gaze now that he knew of her infatuation of this, Jon Snow.

Jon

He almost tripped over his little sister as the pair of them moved around the people in the market. Ever since he’d shared the truth with his family, Arya had stuck to his side like a lost pup, and she took it a step further as she slowly slipped her hand into his.

He looked down at her and gave her a soft smile in which she returned, he assumed it was a comfort to her since she never used to hold his hand when they were both younger, another part believed it was more to do with her being scared that he was planning on disappearing again.

He couldn't blame her, in all honesty, the moment he told them all the truth, he wanted the ground to swallow him up. He couldn't bear to look at their faces when the truth came out, afraid that he would be rejected, looked at differently, but it was thankfully in vain. He remembered when Arya had hugged the life out of him, it made him jump when he felt her embrace him, whispering assurances to him.

He doesn't think that little girl realises how much it had affected him.

He heard the snickers as the two of them walked through the market, a group of young knights along with a lord that he recognised. He kept his eyes forward pretending to have not noticed them but he kept his ears well and truly open as him an Arya walked past.
“Oh look, the wolf and the rat.”

“She’s a bit young for him isn’t she?”

“That’s a funny looking horse.”

The whispers came and went as they walked past, his jaw locked up and the blood in his veins boiled, his vision narrowed and his breathing became heavy.

One squeeze though, one squeeze from his sister’s hand was like a bucket of cold water over his head. He looked down at her expecting to see an angry look, a furious look, not a sad look.

“They’re not worth it.” He heard her say as they walked on. In the background he could hear more laughs from the group. He squeezed her hand as she looked away from him and sighed.

If he’d heard those things and she wasn’t here with him, he’d have blood on his hands and a bounty on his head in no time.

As they rounded a corner of the market, he looked over Arya’s head towards the group of snickering knights. The group consisted of four people, all of them sat around a table, joking and laughing as they patted each other on the backs. He caught the shields laid against the side of the table, almost confirming their intention of entering the joust later that day. Of the shields, two of them were forest green with a black sigil in the style of a broken wheel, another was muddy brown with little white gulls painted over it and the last one was chequered with red and white squares, a small blue square at the corner of the shield with the sigil of House Arryn in the middle. He knew what house that was and he knew who it belonged to. The last thing he saw as he rounded the corner was Harrold Hardyng’s smile slowly dropping when they locked eyes.

At that moment, he knew his day was going to busy. Jon wouldn’t consider himself a spiteful man but he was determined to fuck those cunts chances of winning the lists. The only problem was that he didn’t consider himself to be a great jouster. Yeah, people considered him as one of the best riders of a horse back in Winterfell, unbeknownst to everyone that he probably got it from his mother if the stories about her being half a horse were anything to go by.

But Jon was serviceable at best when it came to the sport of jousting, it was more Robb’s thing if he was being honest with himself. The last time he’d even practised was years ago with his brother, and
it was evident that the art wasn't for him.

All he’d have for him would be his resilience, something that seemed to be limitless when the adrenaline was coursing through him. He still remembers the training session he had with Master M a while back, it wasn't until it was finished that he realised that he’d lost the fingernail off his little finger during their bout.

*Master M had learnt quite a few curse words in the common tongue that day.*

*And Gerion nearly had his nose busted open when he openly laughed in his face when he found out.*

He moved across the path to the other side of the market, bringing Arya along with him. She looked up at him and he smiled at her, the questioning look she sent him was adorable.

*He needed to procure some armour if he was serious about this. The problem with that was he was unsure if he’d be able to get himself some at such a short notice.*

*He’d have to enlist too, was he too late for that as well?*

“Where are we going?” His sister asked as they made their way towards the busy blacksmith just outside of the castle.

He shook his head at her and smiled as he opened his mouth “What did you think of that archery contest? I don't think Theon was best pleased about being beaten right at the end by some unknown.” He chuckled. “What was his name, Argyle?” He asked as they moved through the group.

Arya shook her head and scoffed “His name was Anguy and you didn't answer my question.” She said. He just nodded towards the blacksmith and smiled at her.

She looked where he was looking before looking back at him in confusion “What are we going there for?” She asked. He detected a hint of excitement in her tone.

“If you think we’re going there to buy you another sword, think again.” He japed as he let go of her
hand and draped his arm over her shoulders. Arya pulled a face in reply.

“Why not? I’ve been good with the one you got me before we left Winterfell, nobody knows I even have it.” She exclaimed as they squeezed past people.

“Because you only need one sword sweet sister.” He said.

“You have two swords, why shouldn't I?” She replied stubbornly.

“Because I said so, that’s why.” He answered as they approached the blacksmith’s counter. The old armoury was behind the keeper and he hoped there was something in there he could use.

He heard Arya sigh and whisper “This isn't over.” to herself as he waved the shopkeeper over.

The keeper’s eyes lit up when he saw Jon “Ah, Ser Jon, how can I help you today?” He exclaimed with a smile.

He internally cringed as he looked at the shop keep, whether it was the title of ‘Ser’ or the fact that he knew who he was in the first place.

He knew winning that melee would bite him in the arse, although it did come with a couple of benefits. He thought as he pulled a pouch of gold from his pocket and dropped it on the counter. He couldn't think of a better thing to spend a bit of his winnings on than this at that given moment.

“You don't happen to have any spare armour going do you?” He asked as Arya looked back and forth between him and the shopkeeper.

The older man stroked his beard as he looked into nothingness, deep in thought.

A small nod from him almost made Jon sigh in relief “Aye, I think we can work something out for ya.” The keeper said as he disappeared into the armoury.

An elbow in the side made him look towards his sister “What do you need armour for?” She asked.
He just looked at her with a raised eyebrow.

It only took her a few seconds to work it out for herself as her eyes grew wide “Are you gonna enter the joust?” She exclaimed. He put a finger on his lips and shushed her as he looked around.

He nodded as her smile grew “Yes but don't tell everyone, big mouth.”

Arya was about to reply but the shopkeeper returned from the armoury hefting a bunch of dark steel plate onto the counter.

“This the sort of thing you’re looking for lad?” The older man said as Jon eyed the armour in front of him. It was very plain looking but the steel looked decent, he stroked his hand down the dark, almost black steel of the chest plate, feeling the little dints here and there. It wasn't freshly forged and was clearly second hand but it would do the job perfectly.

“Perfect.” He replied as he handed over the gold dragons the old man was asking for. He grabbed the vambraces and handed them to Arya who huffed as he placed them in her arms. The keeper handed him a large square of cloth which he used to wrap around the rest of the armour, it made it a little easier for him to carry back to the camp.

“You got it lad?” The keeper said as Jon hefted the armour over his shoulder. He nodded in response.

“Don't you need a shield?” He heard his sister ask. She was right, if there was a shield somewhere in all that armour he’d lifted over his shoulder, he’d not spotted it.

He looked back at the shopkeeper “Have any spare shields?” Jon asked as the keeper disappeared back into the old armoury.

“Good shout sis.” He said. It wasn't hard to miss the pleased look on her face as he praised her. He was glad to see her feeling a little better after that mess earlier.

The keeper returned back from the armoury, he had more soot and muck on him than he did when he entered.
“Sorry lad, we haven't got much left back there. This was the only one I could find that was in an acceptable condition. Bit dusty but it looks like it’s had a new lick of paint not to long ago.” The keeper said as he slid the large shield across the counter towards him. The keeper was right, the shield had been recently painted, the whole thing was painted white without any sort of sigils on it, well, apart from the faint shape under the thin layer of paint. But without chipping the paint away, he couldn't really tell what it was.

He looked back at the keeper and handed him a couple of silver for the shield “It’s perfect, thanks.” He said. The keeper took the coin and nodded at him.

“Good luck.” Was the last thing he heard as he turned around and started walking in the direction back to camp, Arya trailing with a small smile on her face.

“Hey.” He said as he nudged his shoulder into Arya. She turned and looked at him.

“Yeah?” She replied.

“I might need a bit of help with all of this. You know, getting in and out of it...” He casually announced, all whilst grinning at her.

His sister looked at him and smiled “You want me to squire for you?” She said. He could feel the excitement radiating from her. He shook his head at her which made her smile drop somewhat. It didn't stay dropped for long though.

“You can’t be my squire, I’m not a knight. You’ll be my honorary partner in crime.” He jested. She chuckled in response as they weaved past people and headed to go and actually enlist for this thing.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter had the normal amount of words I would normally write for a single chapter, roughly 7.5k words.

The next chapter will be 10.2k words,

the 3rd will be 13.2k words.
Now you can see why I've broken them up into more digestible chapters. Might just be me lol but reading 31k words in one sitting can be rough without a break.

If you are reading this, the chances are the next chapter is up, so a refresh will probably be needed for it to show up :)

On to the next one...
A Prodding Contest

Chapter Notes

Chapter 2 of 3 released July 5th.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Rhaella

She knew he wasn't but it felt like her son was avoiding her, like he knew she wanted to talk to him but he wasn't interested in hearing what she had to say. Earlier, before she could even get chance to talk to him, he was being pulled away by yet another meeting, and yet again, it was another meeting with the Tullys.

Whatever that meeting consisted of was a mystery to her, she’d not had chance to ask him about it before they were heading for the tourney grounds. There was one thing she did notice though and that was the miserable look on Lord Edmure Tully’s face when he stormed off after said meeting.

One things for sure, she’d find out what those meetings were about, and she’d probably find out at the end of the day when she finally got chance to talk to him in private.

The polite applause around the stands broke her from her thoughts. She looked into the yard and noticed that the herald had finally stopped talking and had made his way out of the yard. After he’d announced the list of competitors, she kind of zoned out as she looked over the yard, noticing that Jon was nowhere to be seen in the northern stands. She didn't miss Lord Stark averting his gaze when they locked eyes with each other.

She knew that Aegon would be competing in today's joust but she had a feeling her other grandson would be too. She didn't even know if he was any good at the sport, the only thing she had to go on was his capability with a sword, and that didn't exactly translate into jousting prowess.

What would happen if they faced off against each other?

Jon had not been announced by the herald in the list of entries but with the absence of him in the crowd and the mention of a mystery knight, she was pretty sure he’d be competing today.
Though, if the mystery knight was Jon, she didn't know what the name “Ser Falconsbane” referred to. A strange name to give himself in her opinion, she wondered what it meant.

If it was her other grandson, then the both of them stood a decent chance of actually winning the entire thing. She knew beforehand, so when the announcement that the Kingsguard were sitting this one out, she wasn't surprised like some people were. And she had a good idea the reason why the Clegane brothers were absent from the list of competitors as well, positive that Lord Tywin had restricted them from competing after their conduct during the melee.

The herald’s horn almost made her jump as it was blown. As she turned her head, she noticed two mounted men making their way onto the yard. One of them was a lesser known knight from House Shett named Ser Uther, recognisable by the white gulls on the front of his shield.

The second man though garnered more attention from the crowd, and from her. She leaned forward to get a better look as she tried to look for any confirmation of the mystery knight’s identity. Her face stayed passive but inside she was smiling as she noticed those recognisable inky curls poking out from underneath the mystery knight’s plain helmet.

*What was he playing at? Ser Falconsbane? What was the story behind that name?*

The excitement of the crowd built as the horn was blown again, both competitors riding towards each other with their lances held true. A part of her wished she didn't know who the mystery knight was, because now she couldn't hold her wince in as the two collided.

Both men managed to hit each other’s shield as they passed, the difference between the two was the reaction to the strike, Jon sat strong and unmoving on the back of his chestnut mount, Ser Uther was affected a lot more though as he readjusted in his saddle and twisted his shoulder to ease the apparent pain the strike had caused.

The second pass came quickly since neither lance had broken on the first, this time Ser Uther managed to nick Jon on the shoulder as he passed while Jon only managed to hit the knight’s shield again. You wouldn't have thought it by the reactions of the two though, Ser Uther, who was really struggling to hold his shield up, seemed to have a much bigger problem than Jon, who just readjusted in his seat as he turned at the end of the yard.

*Come on Jon.* She thought to herself as she watched the two men charge towards each other for a third time, the crowd grew in volume as the action thickened.
She winced when Ser Uther caught her grandson on the shoulder again but it didn't last long as Jon caught the struggling Vale knight flush in the shield he could barely hold up, unseating the man and flipping him into the dirt with a dull thud.

The crowd erupted with applause and she let out a sigh of relief as her grandson rode around the end of the yard and back up it, seemingly glaring at the fallen knight as he passed by.

She didn't have much time to think much of it as the herald was announcing the winner of the match and names of the next two competitors. And it would seem that she wouldn't be getting a respite from her worry as her other grandson was up next.

Rhaenys

They’d been sat through at least a dozen matches already, in normal circumstances, she’d be pretty bored right about now. Hell, even the Kingsguard weren't competing today, that should've had her yawning into her goblet. But it wasn't the case, she’d tell anyone who asked, it was because her brother was competing, and doing quite well for himself she may add. But that just wasn't it, there was more to it, it was in the form of a mystery knight slamming a ser from House Frey in the shoulder with his lance and off of his horse.

A mystery knight she was pretty sure she knew the identity of.

She knew he wasn't in the crowd, she knew he wasn’t sat with his family, she’s checked a handful of times for crying out loud. At first she thought nothing of it, assumed he wasn't bothered about the joust and was off doing his own thing, but then the mystery knight came out for the first bout and after a very thorough visual check, she realised it was him. The general size of him, the way he sat his horse were clues to her theory but what confirmed it was those raven locks poking out the bottom of his helm.

When she’d come to that conclusion, she side eyed her grandmother to see if she’d worked it out herself yet. She knew there was something going on between her and Jon, something she honestly didn't know how to feel about, and she assumed she’d be able to work out the identity of the knight as well.

She wasn't disappointed as she saw her grandmother react. Blink and she would've missed it, a flicker passed her grandmother’s eyes and was gone as fast as it came.

She knew it was him as well.
The only thing that made her question whether or not it was him was the name, Ser Falconsbane? What in the world did that mean?

She was brought back to the present as her shoulder was tapped on, she looked to her right where Dany was looking at her with a raised eyebrow, humour swimming in her expressive eyes. Rhaenys saw how close Dany’s face was to hers and she couldn’t help but look down for a split second at her aunt’s pillowy lips. As she looked back up, she noticed a grin form on those same lips, a sign that she’d been caught. She couldn't for the life of her care.

*Her aunt was devastatingly beautiful, she was just admiring what was sat in front of her.*

“You look like you were in your own world just then, want to talk about it?” Dany asked as Jon rode out of the yard, the Frey knight slowly making his way out after. She couldn't help but let her eyes glance at Jon’s retreating back.

Something Daenerys caught as her own eyes flickered in the direction Rhae was looking in.

“Oh.” Her aunt said as she turned back to her “I suppose you’ve worked out who it is as well?” She said as she looked around to see if anybody was listening.

“What’s this?” She heard Margaery say from her left. She turned and looked at her sister-in-law, who was holding a napping Alysanne.

“Nothing, ignore her.” She replied as she looked back in the yard. As she turned her head, she noticed her father sneaking a look in their direction, it was something she’d caught him doing when he thought she wasn't looking ever since they’d sat down.

And with the numerous meetings he’d been having lately, she became rather anxious about his change in behaviour.

“Rhae has an eye on that mystery knight.” Dany said as she replied to Margaery’s question. She just sighed in response.

She sneak a look to see what her sister-in-law’s reaction to that was, noticing the trademark smirk
“Oh, is that so? From my observations, Rhae isn't the only one who’s eyes have been following him about, isn’t that right Daenerys?” Margaery replied. Rhae looked at Dany, noticing that she’d turned away from the conversation and was talking with her mother who was sat next to her.

She heard Marge chuckle “She’s not as subtle as she thinks she is.” She whispered to Rhae, that smirk still present on her face.

“I heard that.” Daenerys replied from her right without looking away from her mother. Her grandmother looked at her over her daughter’s shoulder, a look of amusement on her beautiful face.

“So...” Margaery said as they looked back at the yard as two more competitors entered, them both politely clapping, Margaery struggling a little while holding her daughter.

“Hmm?” She replied. She didn't look but she could tell that smirk was still on Marge’s face.

“Two Targaryen princesses showing an interest in the champion of the grand melee,” She casually said as Rhae’s eyes widened. She looked around to make sure nobody had heard what she had said. “I must say, the two of you do have good taste.” She continued.

Rhae side eyed her sister-in-law and glared at her in an attempt to shut her up before somebody unfortunate heard what she was saying. Marge, to her credit, moved closer to her ear to whisper. Unfortunately, Rhae wasn't near enough ready for what she was going to whisper to her.

“Maybe you’d be as good at riding him as he is riding his horse.” Margaery whispered, almost laughing as Rhae turned to her wide eyed.

Margaery looked back to the yard with a shit eating grin on her face. She shook her head and sighed as she mirrored Marge’s actions.

She squirmed in her seat.

*Brilliant, those were the last images she needed in her head right about now.*
Ned

“This is how it starts Eddard. One minute he’s wandering off with our children, the next he’s holding them hostage until he gets what he wants.” He heard Catelyn say from his left. Thankfully none of the children heard her, they were too busy watching a knight from House Waynwood trade blows with this mystery knight that everybody was whispering about.

A mystery knight both he and his wife had worked out the identity of. Obviously their reactions were totally different, while she was disinterested and annoyed that Jon was once again throwing himself into the limelight, he was confused as to why Jon had not only entered a competition posing as a mystery knight, but posed as one with such an unusual moniker.

Ser Falconsbane.

Jon didn't do this type of thing for no reason, and he definitely didn’t give himself names and titles like he’d done in this instance.

There was definitely a reason behind all of this, but since the competition had begun a couple of hours ago, he’d still not worked it out.

A poisonous voice in his head was whispering possibilities to him, one of which made him very anxious.

What if he wins?

What if he crowns one of the royal princesses? Or even the Queen?

He’s already spoken to his grandmother a couple of times. It’s not out of the realm of possibility that he would crown the woman who was currently welcoming him into that side of his family.

What happens after he’s crowned one of them?

Is that the moment the truth comes out to the world?
He shook his head, catching his wife looking at him with contempt as he did so.

*Jon wouldn’t do that to him.* He thought.

*He was sure of it.*

Besides, it pained him to think this way about his son…or nephew…or whatever the lad was to him now, but Jon wasn’t the most talented at jousting. Robb had always been the better jouster when they were younger, so much so that Jon had packed the whole sport in when he was twelve name days old, preferring to stick to his swordplay over, in his own words, an overrated prodding contest.

From what he’d seen in his previous rounds, Jon had spent little to no time at all honing his jousting skill in his years away. What did concern him though was the fact that Jon was not only a fiend on horseback, something he definitely got from his mother, but he was incredibly stubborn when he set his mind on something. That stubbornness was translating into sheer resilience on the back of that horse, he’d lost count how many times he winced as his sister’s son was struck with an opponents lance.

*The fact that he was concerned that Jon was doing well in this competition ashamed him. He was more interested in keeping the boy quiet than cheering him on to victory.*

He catches the moment the Waynwood knight is unseated from his horse, the knight audibly groaning as he rolled around the dirt. Not the only audible thing that could be heard, the crowd cheering the mystery knight along with his children, his wife sighing next to him.

He notices yet again, the way that Jon looks down at his opponent as he trots past them, the same way he stared down at the first knight he defeated.

*There’s a clear motive here.* He thought as he watched Jon move all the way down to the end of the yard. He notices, as Jon climbs off his horse, Arya giving him a hug near the tent before they both entered.

*At least he definitely knows where she is now, before it was just an assumption.*
He leans over and whispers to Cat “Arya is definitely with Jon, I’ve just seen her.”

Apart from sniffing, his wife ignored him as she looked over at the royal family. He sighed to himself and looked over at the Targaryens himself, looking away almost instantly when he notices the Queen mother looking at him coldly.

He had nowhere to look and nowhere to hide. He felt like a prisoner as the walls closed in on him, all he was doing now was waiting for his sentence.

He wondered how long this would last, how long the cold shoulder from his wife would last.

Probably however long he had left in this world.

Which at this rate, was looking shorter and shorter by the minute.

Daenerys

The whole family stood and clapped as Aegon managed to unseat Lord Edmure from his horse, the loudest of the applause coming from her left. Margaery and her daughter were clapping together as they watched their husband and father respectively wave to the crowd, the crown prince lap up the applause. Rhaenys was just as loud as her brother passed by, she had a reason it was more to do with Lord Edmure being defeated than her love for her brother.

But that was just her opinion.

She leaned in and lowered her voice as everybody sat down “Careful Rhae, someone might think you dislike Lord Edmure with the way you reacted.”

Her niece chuckled and shook her head “Wouldn't be the worst thing to happen.”

The claps and cheers began to build up again as the next two competitors moved on to the yard, the first being one Ser Harrold Hardyng who waved to the crowd and received polite applause back. She didn't miss the way he smiled towards Sansa Stark. The second of the knights received more of the applause as he was the brother of the future Queen, Ser Garlan waved to the crowd, the loudest applause coming from Margaery herself.
“Clap for uncle Garly Alys.” She heard Margaery say to her daughter as her brother moved around the yard soaking in the atmosphere. Alysanne, bless her little heart, tried her best to copy her mother as she clapped her chubby arms together.

_A heartless man would smile at the scene._

Unfortunately for Alysanne and her mother, as the bout went on and they reached round four, Ser Garlan visibly slipped in his saddle and Ser Harrold took advantage of it. Thankfully Margaery’s brother managed to land in the dirt without hurting himself, waving to the crowd and seemingly accepting the defeat with class.

“That’s a shame. At least he took it well.” She heard her mother say to her right. Dany turned and looked at her.

“Who are you rooting for out of the remaining competitors mother?” She asked as she took a sip from her wine. She knew what her answer would be but she wanted to find something out for herself.

Her mother scoffed “My grandson of course. Who else would I root for?”

She shrugged as she looked back to the yard, noticing two more competitors entering the yard “What about that mystery knight?” She asked.

She knew who it was, Rhae knew who it was, she wondered if her mother knew who it was.

“What about him.” Came her mother’s reply. She sneaked a look to see her reaction, noticing that her mother was looking back into the yard with her head held high.

_The mask is back on, no breaking that down._

The match got underway but she realised that during the conversation with her mother, she’d missed who was actually competing. She leaned in and whispered to Rhae.

“Who’s competing? I got distracted.” She said as her niece turned and looked at her. She caught her
glancing down at her lips again like she’d done earlier.

Did she have something wrong with her lips?

She licked her lips subconsciously, the action catching Rhæ’s attention. Dany cleared her throat and raised her eyebrows.

“Hmm?” Rhæ said as she look up at her eyes finally.

“The joust. Who’s competing?” She asked again. She turned to the yard and noticed the two men making their way to each end of the yard.

“Erm, Ser Gerold Dayne and Ser Jorah Mormont I believe.” She said. She nodded as she looked into the yard herself “Yeah, notice the shields. Ser Gerold has a star on a field of black, Ser Jorah has the bear on the field of green.” Rhæ explained. She just nodded as the horn was blown.

It ended up being a close match and at the end of it, Ser Gerold was the victor of the bout. Ser Jorah stood up from the dirt and held his hand out to shake his opponent’s but Ser Gerold just trotted past on the back of his horse completely ignoring the northerner.

“That man will never grow up.” She heard Ser Arthur say to her brother behind her. She turned and glanced at him, noticing the displeasure on the dornish knight’s face.

“Very rude of him. I don’t know why Viserys insists being around that man.” She heard her mother say. Dany just raised an eyebrow at her and grinned slightly as if to say “Really?”.

“Your brother is misunderstood that’s all. He’s actually been fairly well behaved during the tourney.” Her mother said as she looked across the yard towards the dornish section. Her brother was sat in between Arianne and Quentyn, but from the way he was sat, he looked more interested in talking to his brother-in-law than his wife.

“If you say so mother.” She replied. Her mother just sighed and shook her head. She looked at her and noticed the way she straighten up as the herald’s horn was blown.
She looked into the yard and realised why her mother had reacted the way she had. Jon, or Ser Falconsbane as he’d bizarrely named himself, entered the yard along with another knight from the Vale, this one belonging to the same house as one of the other competitors Jon had defeated. She only knew this because of the black wheel insignia of House Waynwood on the knight’s shield and not because she was taking more notice to his bouts than any of the others.

“J...this mystery knight will want to be careful with this bout, Ser Wallace will want revenge after his brother’s elimination.” Her mother said, quickly recovering from her slip up. It was too late though, Dany had heard it and it confirmed that her mother knew exactly who was under that helmet.

The crowd seemed infinitely more interested in Jon than they did with Ser Wallace, and who could blame them. Everybody enjoyed the mystery behind an unknown knight, a story of an underdog. It made them feel that if this unknown person could achieve glory like they were doing, then so could they when they put their mind to it.

She had other reasons to be more interested but she still appreciated the message the mystery knight brought.

Ser Wallace glowered at Jon from a distance before lowering the visor on his helm, he was handed his lance and got into position. Out the corner of her eye, she noticed her mother’s fingers drumming against her thigh. She put her hand on it and squeezed it in reassurance.

“Don’t worry mother, I’m sure Jon will be fine.” She assured with a small grin, noticing the way her mother’s knee stopped bouncing.

Both mother and daughter looked at each other dead in the eye, one daring the other to deny what had just been said, the other realising it wasn't worth insulting the other’s intelligence by doing so. The sound of galloping broke them from their stand off, the two of them turning towards the yard just in time to see Ser Wallace’s lance glance off of Jon’s shoulder.

Both mother and daughter didn’t even try to hide their wince from one another. She noticed that they were still holding each other’s hand when her mother squeezed it on the next pass, Jon managing to avoid Ser Wallace’s lance and scoring a hit against the man’s shield.

“C’mon.” She heard her mother whisper to herself. She wasn’t even trying to hide it now the cat was out of the bag. It was her turn to squeeze her mother’s hand as the third pass occurred, Jon managed to make Ser Wallace wobble in his saddle as his lance struck true, what made her squeeze her mother’s hand though was the fact that Jon took a pretty hefty blow to the shoulder for his troubles.
“He’s hurt.” She heard her mother say as they both watched Jon line up for the next pass. As she turned to look at her, she caught Rhaegar looking at them oddly.

“He’ll be fine, I’m sure of it.” She reassured her mother yet again, though she wasn't sure if she believed her own words or not.

*He’s strong, she’d seen the proof of that with what lied underneath all of that clothing.*

The two men began galloping towards each other and she realised that she was holding her breath as they got closer and closer.

*Come on Jon.*

The breath in her chest was released in relief as Jon’s lance collided with Ser Wallace’s shoulder, the scrape of the wood against steel as he hit his foe made her cringe but not as much as when she saw the way the Vale knight landed on his arm.

The bellowing cry as he collided with the ground made her believe that the man had broken something. Jon didn't even bother checking to see if the knight was alright, he just headed out of the yard to the applause of the crowd.

“He should’ve at least checked to see if Ser Wallace was okay.” She heard her mother say. She turned and looked at mother, noticing that she looked somewhat disappointed with Jon’s actions.

“Maybe he had a reason not to.” She replied, finding herself subconsciously defending Jon’s actions.

Her mother just hummed to herself as the herald walked back into the yard to announce the semi finals, something that genuinely surprised her when it was announced.

*Semi finals already?*

“There’ll be a short interval between now and the semi finals but as soon as that is over, you fine
people will witness the first bout of the final three matches, none other than the crown prince himself, his grace, Prince Aegon.” The herald announced to the cheers of the crowd “...going one on one with the Darkstar, Ser Gerold Dayne!” He finished, some of the crowd booing like he was a villain from some sort of mummers show.

The applause simmered down enough for the final two competitors to be announced, none of them noticing the way Jon fisted the air in front of him when he realised who he’d be facing.

“And the final match of the semi’s is the knight of mystery, your underdog, Ser Falconsbane!” The herald announced, the crowd showing almost the same excitement that they did for the crown prince.

“Against a knight of the Vale, Ser Harrold Hardyng, The Young Falcon!” Came the final announcement. The crowd reacting with decent applause.

It wasn't like Dany was taking much notice of the crowd now though, not when she realised something, something her mother clearly understood as well now.

*Ser Harrold Hardyng, The Young Falcon.*

*Jon Snow, Ser Falconsbane.*

*Falconsbane.*

*Now it made much more sense.*

The real question now though was what in the world had Harrold Hardyng done to invoke such a reaction out of Jon.

“That boy better not do anything stupid, I swear to all those bloody gods.” Her mother said as she sighed and shook her head.

Dany was confused, she couldn't gauge her mother’s feelings of Jon with some of the reactions she was witnessing from her. At first she thought it was sexual, something that she wasn't sure how to react to. A small part of her was honestly quite proud of her mother being able to catch the eye of a
younger man, problem was the man in question.

Her mother wasn't the only admirer.

Or so she thought at first.

Some of the reactions during the joust weren't the reactions of a secret lover, they were more familial, like she was worried for one of her children. Thinking about it now, they were similar to the reactions she had during Egg’s matches.

They were motherly.

She eyed her mother again, like she was trying to locate that final piece to a puzzle.

What is Jon to you, mother?

Rhaegar

“Enjoying yourself your grace?” He heard Arthur say from his right where the renowned knight was stood guard. He turned and gave his friend a lopsided smile.

“As best as I could be Arthur.” He replied.

And that was the truth, he was enjoying the contest to the best of abilities. His son was doing very well for himself, having only two matches to win to be crowned champion.

And that was a good thing, or so he told himself. However, it would seem that his mind had other things to be more interested in. Things like the meeting they’d just had with Lord Edmure, or his and Elia’s discussion about Rhaenys’ future, the odd behaviour his mother and sister were displaying with one another, the way his daughter’s eyes followed that mystery knight around with pin point intensity.

And who Ser Falconsbane really was.
With so many clues lying about, it wasn't the most difficult of mysteries he's had to decipher. Though witnessing the mystery knight face off against their foe had stirred up some locked away memories. The way his wife clutched his hand during one of the mystery knight’s bouts confirmed that he wasn't the only one who had been reminded of a similar joust almost eighteen years ago.

His mind had eventually been distracted from those thoughts though, when he caught the way his daughter looked at the unknown knight, and then shortly catching his mother looking on intently as well.

All it took was a quick glance towards the stands where the northern party were situated to realise that Jon Snow wasn't present amongst all those attendees. And as the pieces started to fall into place, he eventually noticed the tufts of hair poking out the back of the mystery knight’s helm.

Jon Snow was the mystery knight, and his daughter and mother had worked that out a while ago.

This young man, this bastard boy of the North had made quite a name for himself at this tourney. His mother was a fan, his daughter was a fan, if the way he caught his sister looking at him, she was a fan as well. Though he may have a problem on his hands if he’s not too careful, the last thing he wanted was an in house conflict over some northern boy.

‘Rich coming from you.’ Some might say to that. After all, wasn't a conflict started over “some northern girl” years ago.

He closed his eyes and shook his head. He needed to stop bringing these thoughts up.

Lyanna was gone, their child along with her.

He opened his eyes and looked towards his daughter, currently laughing at something his sister had said to her.

She looked so joyful in that moment, her smile as radiant as the sun on the banners of her mother’s house. There was no wonder she attracted attention so easily from men and even women alike.

Was it possible to make her happier though?
Would a union with the one she’s had her eye on make her so?

It made him and Elia happier eighteen years ago…

Stop. His mind cried.

He looked away from his daughter and into the empty yard, his mind was running again, the what-ifs, the whys. If everything went according to plan, his daughter would get the Stark that she wanted. But was he doing right by her? Was this the best union he could find for her? Some bastard boy who happened to be pretty and useful with a sword?

Or was he giving her what he’d lost? The young Stark met at a tourney at Harrenhal, who happens to catch the eye of one of the King’s children, and later goes on to pose as a mystery knight. It was like history was repeating itself.

He’d not really put up much of a fight when Elia had suggested the union, it was almost as if he had accepted it regardless of the circumstances.

But why?

He knew why, he just didn't want to admit it.

What would people think of their King if they found out he was living vicariously through his daughter? The Targaryen getting the Stark they wanted, marrying and falling in love, having many children and growing old together.

That’s what he should have had. That’s what he and Elia should have had.

But the gods were cruel and they took her away from them.

The gods took both of them away.
He felt a touch on his left hand, looking down he notices Elia placing her hand on top of his.

“Where’s your mind at my love?” His wife asks as she looks at him with slight concern. She was always perceptive of his moods.

He turned and gave her a smile “Don’t mind me my Queen, just thinking.” He vaguely answered.

“Careful, you might do yourself an injury.” She replied with a small smile on her face. He chuckled and shook his head.

He heard somebody clear their throat behind him, he turned and noticed Ser Arthur nodding towards the yard where his son and Gerold Dayne were entering the field. Aegon lifted his hand and waved which set the cheering off within the crowd.

He sniffed and kept a straight face as he spoke to his friend “This match up must be a difficult choice for you Ser Arthur, the prince you are vowed to protect or a knight from your own prestigious family. A tough decision for anybody wouldn’t you say?”

Arthur snorted “With all due respect your grace, and I say this as pleasantly as possible...I hope my cousin eats shit.”

Rhaegar bit his tongue to avoid causing a scene with his laughter but his wife had no such problem, laughing at the dornish knight’s vulgar response. Rhaenys turned around at the sound of her mother’s laughter, a small smile growing on her face seeing her parents happy.

The herald’s voice caught everybody’s attention as he announced the two competitors, his son getting a much more pleasant reaction compared to his competition.

“I think he’ll do just fine.” He heard Elia say as the two of them clapped. He looked at her for a moment and smiled.

“Me too.” He replied just in time before the horn was being blown signalling the two competitors to begin.
Thankfully, they were both right in their belief.

It was a very close bout, lasting four passes. And in that fourth pass, his son managed to pivot his body so deftly, that the Dayne knight completely missed his strike, leaving him open for his son’s taking.

The crowd cheered loudly along with both sides of Aegon’s family, the sound of his brother-in-law Oberyn stood in the stands cackling while grasping his goblet of wine was one of the more noticeable reactions to the bout, along with Arthur’s self pleased chuckle he heard not too far away.

He looked over all his family, all of them on their feet clapping away, he didn't miss the suggestive look Margaery gave his son as he winked at her before riding out of the yard. He wasn't the first to leave though, Ser Gerold was long gone.

“We might have another grandchild in nine months time if Aegon crowns his wife the Queen of love and beauty.” He heard Elia say amidst the quieting applause. He turned and saw her smiling as she sat back down in her seat.

He followed in her actions, taking his own seat “I guess I wasn't the only one who saw that then.” He said, ending with a little chuckle.

“Let’s hope Rhae is as happy as them two are when she eventually marries.” Elia whispered to him, making sure their daughter didn't hear what was being said.

He leaned in and whispered back “I hope so too. That’s if Lord Stark and his son are in agreement of such a union. Hopefully we’ll find out tonight before the farewell feast, I plan on talking to the two of them privately.”

Elia nodded “Indeed. But make sure to ask our daughter's opinion before anything is announced, the last thing I want is the possibility that I’ve misread her interest in the boy and her thrust into a marriage she didn't want.” She explained as a sad look took over her face. “We know how that plays out.” She added.

_That we do._

He gently placed his hand on top of hers “Don't worry, if Lord Stark is in agreement, I’ll call her in
after to see how she feels about such a union. No pressure of course.” He assured. His wife sighed as the tension left her body, her nod a sign of her agreement.

He saw Elia subtly nod her head in his sister’s direction before raising her eyebrow “And that just leaves one.” She whispered to him as she quickly nodded towards his sister again.

He huffed before taking a swig from his wine “Mother took over regarding my sister’s future endeavours, “a mother knows best” were her exact words.” He said as he placed his goblet down. “As far as I’m concerned, it’s in my mother’s hands. Whether she’s been successful or not, that is yet to be known.”

“That’s if she’s found the time to even work on that.” He muttered to himself, both of them knowing what he was referring to. His wife just rolled her eyes and shook her head.

The herald’s announcement of the next two competitors saved him from his wife’s reply to his pettiness. It was a small victory but a victory all the same.

The mention of the mystery knight and the following applause sent his thoughts back to that boy again, and his chances of advancing into the final.

It didn’t take a renowned knight to notice that Snow was nowhere near as good with the lance as he was with a sword. It was safe to say that the main thing that had fuelled him through his rounds was his true grit and determination, though with the way he was holding his shield, that grit was starting to waiver.

To be fair to the lad, he’d gotten further than expected. He assumed the boy’s shoulder was just about numb with all the impacts he’d received. He wasn’t a quitter that’s for sure.

*Just another tick on the boy’s character.*

“...and our mystery knight will be taking on our knight from the Vale, Ser Harrold Hardyng, The Young Falcon!” Came the herald’s final announcement of the semi finals.

It would seem he had that much on his mind, that it took a second mention of Ser Harrold’s nickname from the herald for it to click with him.
He’ll have to ask the boy later what Ser Harrold had done to cause such a moniker.

“Fingers crossed for our mystery knight.” Elia said as the applause died down and a hush grew around crowd. “It would be interesting to see how our son gets on with potentially his future brother-in-law.” She added.

He turned and looked at her startled “You know?” He asked.

Elia rolled her eyes and chuckled “That daughter of ours isn’t subtle at all.” She answered. He smiled at her as the horn went off signalling the start of the bout.

Jon

He grunted and gritted his teeth as he lifted his lance, he was struggling before the bout had even started, but after two passes against this cunt, his body was screaming.

He’d kept his armour on in between rounds, dreading to see the damage that had been done. He was fully expecting to pull his plate off later and be faced with his entire torso littered with black and blue bruises. Another part of him also didn’t want his sister to see the evidence of his stupidity.

Because that’s what it was, stupid. Stupid pettiness.

But then he’d see his sister’s face as it fell, the cruel remarks affecting her more than she’d admit. Again, if Arya hadn't been there and he’d heard what they were saying about her, he’d have blood on his hands.

Well, more blood than he currently had.

His horse moved into action as he readjusted in his saddle, his opponent springing into action shortly after. He’d already eliminated three of the four arseholes, with more effort than he’d like to admit. But this one, the organ grinder of the group, Harry the Arse he remembers Lady Myranda calling him, this one was the one he wanted most.
The two of them collided in the centre, both of them missing each of their strikes. He grumbled under his breath as his lance hit fresh air, the muttering from the crowd as both riders remained unscathed.

_They wanted blood, he wanted blood, he was providing them with entertainment._

_It was a win win for everybody._

Who was he kidding, if Master M was here, he’d think that his actions were petty, that his quest for some type of vengeance was a fools game.

_But Master M wasn't here right now so it didn't matter._

He looked across to the stands and noticed the royal family watching with interest, his grandmother looking in his direction with what looked like a mixture of worry and annoyance on her face.

_Shit, what would she say if she knew it was him? If she found out why he was doing what he was doing?_

From the few times he’s met up with her, he got the feeling that she wasn't a woman to be trifled with. The chances of him getting a clip around the back of his head were becoming bigger and bigger by the second.

And his grandmother was clearly an intelligent person, if she’d not worked out his motives then the off the cuff nickname he’d given himself had probably done the trick.

He charged towards Ser Arse again, this time scraping his lance across the face of the man’s chequered shield. It wasn't without cost though, his opponents lance glancing him in the shoulder.

_The pain is within his being, and he is the master of his being._

_The pain didn't dictate him, it was he who dictated how to process that pain._

_And he chose to ignore it._
...until later, when he has a little lie down.

The third pass came and went, this time he managed to lift his shield up enough to block the cunts strike. He was rewarded with a clear hit at Ser Harry’s shoulder, though he whiffed and clashed with his shield again instead.

*He’d not actually hit him yet.*

...*and it was pissing him off.*

He breathed heavily through his nose, taking a deep breath to steady himself. Uncle Aemon had told him that a calm mind prospered.

And it worked, in a way, this time the two of them trading blows, each with a strike each on the others shoulder. By the way the arse wobbled on his horse, he guessed that he’d dealt with it a lot worse than Jon did, his eyes closing as he grunted was his only reaction.

*My arm may fall off during the night.*

The crowd calmed down as the two horses turned at either end of the field, this was the fourth pass, the one where he got most of his wins. Ser Harrold was looking prime for the picking.

The heavy thud of the horses hooves filled the yard as the crowd went silent, people respecting that full concentration was needed.

Harrold looked very shaky as they approached and that was enough for Jon to go for the winning blow, right in the shoulder. The moment he felt his lance connect with the other man’s person, he realised that something was wrong. Yes he’d managed to unhorse the arsehole, but he was pretty sure he wasn't supposed to be staring up at the sky right now.

Unless he’d come off his horse at the same time.
He groaned as he stood up from the dirt, noticing Harrold doing the same thing. The crowd were cheering when they saw them get to their feet, and it almost distracted him from the sword strike that had been sent his way.

He rolled out of the way of the strike, gritting his teeth as he did so. He’d forgotten about this rule, because it wasn’t part of his plan really. A slow grin grew on his face as he realised that it was now one on one combat due to the double unseating. The blunted tourney sword was unsheathed from the old sword belt that came with the armour, the belt in question discarded to the side of the yard.

*Now he could play.*

He blocked the second strike from Harrold with ease, thanking Master M for his unorthodox lessons on fighting with two swords. If it wasn’t for said lessons, he’d be holding this sword with his prominent hand, and with the numb feeling in his right shoulder, he was pretty sure that the strike he’d just blocked would have knocked the blade right out of his hand.

Hardyng steeped back and steadied his stance, attempting to slowly circle him like a hunting wolf.

Honestly, he wanted to laugh. He’d sneaked a few looks at Hardyng’s sparring sessions, quietly learning, absorbing information.

*You can never have too much knowledge.* Master M would whisper to him during meditation lessons.

Hardyng was a capable swordsman, clean strikes and blocks were his bread and butter. But gods was he boring, no flair, no tricks, as predictable as the sun setting. That could sometimes be a good thing, but you had to be incredibly strong with your fundamentals to make up for it. Ser Barristan was a good example of that, he’d eyed the old knight during a spar with one of his brothers, noticing the same parries and strike patterns, but fuck, the man really lived up to the stories with his prowess, the way he used his superior skill to force his brother into a fight on his terms and not his opponents.

Ser Harrold Hardyng was not Ser Barristan, he was far from it.

Jon lazily held his sword as he turned on the spot, keeping an eye on the Vale knight. The hush of the crowd allowed him to clear his thoughts, making him realise why he was doing all of this in the first place.
Pain and humiliation was the name of the game, a game that dear Harrold here didn't even know he was playing.

“Let’s make this quick, I don't want to waste another minute with you.” He heard Harrold muffle from underneath his helm.

Jon poked his sword out swiftly, the idiot jumped backwards to avoid it but Jon managed to clip him on the wrist.

“I suppose you think your clever, walking around with a name like that.” Harry said as he tried to slash down at Jon. It was easily avoided as he rolled his good shoulder and moved out of the way.

“Knowing that I mean so much to you is so heart warming, it really brings a smile to my face.” He continued.

It was Jon’s turn to circle his opponent, though compared to Harry, Jon was very lax in his movement.

“At the end of the day, all you’ll be remembered for is the mystery knight that got beat by the man he was trying to taunt!” Harry growled out as he pivoted to his right and tried to catch Jon out with a side slash.

I don't think he knows who I am?

Jon avoided the strike by moving in close, just enough to avoid the hit and push Harry backwards with force. The arse only just managed to stay on his feet.

“You’re just delaying the inevitable! Yield so I can move on to the final and you can go back to wherever it is you’re from!” Harrold yelled from behind his helm.

He doesn't know it’s me.

Haha!

He dropped his shoulder and avoided another strike, behind Harrold’s visor, he could see the way his
eyes widened as Jon sprang forward, driving his mailed fist into the steel protecting little Harrold’s poor little throat.

He didn’t dint the steel but the impact it had on his throat was clear as day.

Harry flinched backwards and tried to grasp at his throat futilely. Distracted with his predicament, Jon took full advantage, cleaving Harry’s sword out of his hand with his own and driving his boot into his chest, sending him careening backwards and on to his arse.

He kicked Harry’s sword away that he was trying to grasp for and dropped a knee on his stomach, pushing him into the ground.

“Yield.” He said as he held his sword at the gap of Harry’s visor.

The poor sod looked like he was still trying to recover from the strike to his windpipe but eventually he nodded, not without glaring at him.

Before Jon could get up, Harrold decided to open his dumb mouth again.

“This isn’t over. I’ll get your name, and I’ll make sure to make your like a living hell.” He growls as he stupidly decided to threaten Jon.

Jon fought the urge to drive the blunted steel through the visor and into the cunt’s eye, instead resorting to a little threat of his own.

He lifted his visor up a bit, just enough so only Harrold could see. Jon could pinpoint the moment the idiot realised he’d fucked up just from the way his eyes widened with recognition.

He kept his voice low but still dangerous as he gave Harry a watertight promise “The next time you look or speak about my family is the day you forfeit your life to me, I beg you understand the severity of my promise.” He coldly warned the lord.

A look of anger came across the sad excuse for a knight “You think you can just threaten me without any repercussions? A bastard doesn’t get to threaten the heir to the Vale without punishment.”
Harrold answered back.

“You're not the heir, you're the heir’s heir.” He answered back.

Harrold almost snarled as he replied “More than you bastard. What are you, sixth...seventh in line to that frozen wasteland you call home? By the time me and that red headed sister of yours are married, you’ll be even further down that line. All it takes is a couple of children sired on her and you become truly irrelevant.” He claimed, a dirty smile at the end.

The heat of his blood boiling could be felt as his brow perspired, the beat of his pulse in his ears was prominent. He took more willpower than he’d like to admit to not rip the cunt’s helm off and pummel his face into mist.

Instead, he settled for one final warning “It doesn't matter anyway, my sister will never be able to marry you.”

Even with Jon’s knee pressing him into the ground, the idiot still tried to make out he had the higher ground on this conversation as he lifted his chin and grinned “And why is that?” He asked.

Jon lifted his knee from Harry and grabbed his arm, hauling him up to his feet abruptly. The crowd cheered as they realised who had won but Jon wasn't taking much notice of them, he was more interested in leaving Harrold one last warning.

“She can’t marry a dead man.” He replied, patting Harrold on the shoulder with more force than necessary and leaving him stood there. Jon would have stayed to see the man’s reaction but he was honestly scared that he would actually do something stupid if he made another snide remark.

He gave the crowd a wave or two as he walked to his horse before leaving the yard. He didn't catch the concerned look on both his uncle Ned or his grandmother as he walked out, he was too busy looking at the beaming smile his little sister was giving him as he approached their tent.

“You did it!” Arya exclaimed as he entered the tent. She hugged his side as he walked over to the bench, he smiled down at her in response.

A sigh of relief filled the tent as he pulled his helm off, Arya handing him a wet rag to wash over his face.
“What did you say to him just then?” She asked as he pulled off his gloves.

He shrugged his shoulders as grabbed his water skin, the water running down his throat soothed him, in more ways than one.

“Just said I’d kill him if he pisses me off again.” He replied. Arya looked down at the rag he’d handed back to her.

“Don't do that. You'll just get in trouble if you did.” She replied, much too miserably for Jon’s liking.

He patted the seat next to him and Arya understood his intentions as she sat down beside him. He put his arm around her shoulders and gave them a squeeze.

“Don't worry, it won’t come to that. I think Harry the Arse is much too spooked to do anything stupid.” He assured, not totally believing his own words if he was being honest with himself.

“I hope so.” She said. He squeezed her shoulder again and she looked up at him a smiled, the smile she gave him morphed into a grin after a few seconds. He looked at her, brow furrowed.

“Should I be concerned with this sudden change of mood?” He asked, slightly grinning himself at seeing his sister’s mood brighten.

She pulled a face and shook her head “No, I don't think so. Just wondering who you plan on crowning when you win.” She said as she side eyed him.

He just huffed and shook his head “That’s the last thing that’s been on my mind as of late.” He replied. Arya looked at him with sympathy.

“Is it weird?” She asked.

He looked at her and noticed the way she picked at her thumb “Is what weird?” He replied.
“You’ll be facing the crown prince in the final...your brother.” She said, the last bit almost whispered.

He sighed as he looked down at his hands in front of him “Sort of, I think the fact that I know and they don’t is what makes it surreal. It’s like they aren’t truly my family until I’ve met them and they know who I am.” He explained.

“Will they really be your family when they do know though? There’s family that are just bonded with blood and then there’s family that loves and cares for you and have done for years.” She said as she carried on looking down at her hands.

He knew what she was doing and he couldn’t blame her for it either, if anything, it soothed his heart to know that she was being protective.

“You’ll always be my sister, you know that right?” He reassured. Arya nodded as she looked at him.

He sighed as he looked back down at his hands again “Your father has really fucked up Arya, and the royal family will want blood for what he’s done.” He said. He felt Arya move in her seat.

“He did all those things to protect you, our family was destroyed in that war. He needed something in return after all that loss, and he did what he did because he loved his sister, just like you love me. You’d have done the same for me.” She said, doing her best not to shout as she became more and more emotional.

“I know all of this Arya, it’s all I can think about lately.” He said as he shook his head. “I’m in the middle of it all and I hate it. Whichever way it goes, I’m going to be accused of choosing sides or betraying someone. I’m going to come out the end of this a villain.”

“Then don’t tell them, please don’t tell them.” Arya pleaded as she looked at him. He didn’t even have to look at her to know that she was doing that thing where she makes her eyes bigger.

“They already know Arya, it’s too late.” He told her, a look of horror and betrayal appeared on her face.

It gutted him.
“You told them? Why?” She answered back in anger.

“I didn’t tell them Arya, the dowager Queen worked it out all by herself!” He snapped back, instant regret when he saw her reaction.

She looked away from him and he saw her sigh. The way she jumped as he put his arm around her shoulders made him feel even worse.

“I’m sorry I snapped at you Arya, it wasn’t fair.” He said.

He felt her shrug her shoulders underneath his arm and he squeezed them in comfort.

“Father is going to be punished isn’t he? And you’re going to leave again.” She said in a small voice. She seemed resigned to the outcome of the situation.

“I don’t know what will happen Arya.” He admitted. And that was the truth, he really didn’t know what was going to happen when the truth finally came out to the King.

_His father._ His mind whispered to him. He’d still not come to terms with that fact, so much so, he purposefully avoided looking at him in the stands.

“They’re going to take you and father away from me.” Arya whispered before sniffing. He closed his eyes and kissed the top of her head.

“I’m not going to let them take your father away from you.” He said as he tried to reassure her. Deep down, it felt like an empty promise though.

The flap of their tent was opened abruptly, the herald letting himself in like he owned the place.

“The final bout is soon, make sure you are rea...”
“Fuck. Off.” Jon growled out as he held his upset sister. The man made the wise decision to nod and leave the tent without another word.

“You better get ready, don't want to keep them waiting.” His sister said as she removed herself from underneath his arm.

“Arya...”

The herald poked his head through the tent flap “We really can’t wait any longer.” He said as he looked at the two of them with undisguised intrigue.

He huffed and stood from his seat “I’m coming, for fuck sake.” He said as the herald nodded and left.

He took a large swig from his water skin before pouring some of it over his face. Unfortunately, it didn't wash away the sense of guilt he was feeling.

He pulled on his gloves and held his hand out for Arya to take, she did so almost instantly. It wasn't the most intimate hug he’d given her due to the layer of steel between them but the fact that she was even receptive was enough for Jon.

“Wish me luck little wolf. We'll talk more about this when I’m done out there.” Jon assured. He felt her nod her head in response before letting go.

“Good luck.” She said with a tiny smile. He looked down at her and smiled back before lifting his helm back on his head. He had to put it on with one hand since the pain in his right shoulder was starting to really flair up.

The difference in sound between the inside of the tent and the yard was like night and day, the excitement in the stands was obvious from the way the crowd was clapping and cheering.

Arya eventually followed him out of the tent, walking to his horse and untying it from the hitching post. She brought the horse across to where he was stood and gave him a little smile as he clapped her on the shoulder.
It was rather difficult mounting his steed with one arm but he managed it anyway, the lance and the shield being handed to him by his sister shortly after.

*The quicker this is over the better.*

It had a *leave the best till last* feel to it as the herald announced him first, the nickname that he’d given himself pretty much redundant now. The cheers weren't as loud as they were before since most people were supporting the prince over him.

*If only they knew.*

He sat there on the back of his horse looking across at the heir to the Iron Throne, the son of the King, his brother. Seated on his black stallion and decked out in polished black steel with gold and ruby trimmings.

It still hadn't sunk in that he was facing off with his brother, it still hadn't sunk in that the Targaryens were his family. The only one that felt anything close to family was his grandmother, and that’s probably because she was the closest thing to a mother that he’s ever had.

The herald’s horn blowing signalled the start of the bout and the beginning of his conundrum.

*How does he deal with this?*

Does he go all out for the win? He wasn't sure. He did know that the only thing fuelling him was petty male pride at this point, the main reason for even entering the joust in the first place being fulfilled.

If he threw the bout, some people may notice it and try to convince people that the crown prince bribed him, essentially paying to win. At the end of the day though, it didn't matter.

He’d been that distracted with his conundrum that he didn't even see the lance crashing into his shoulder, but he did feel the wind being knocked out of him as his back connected with the dirt.

He released a long wheeze as he laid there. At least the joust was over now, he could close his eyes
and take a quick nap.

Yeah, that felt like the best plan right about now.

Chapter End Notes

Again, next chapter should be out if you are reading this, just a quick reload of the page will make it pop up :)
Gasps filled the yard as the mystery knight was knocked from his horse on the first pass, an almost unbelievable feeling taking hold of the crowd. Everybody was on their feet as they watched her son approach the end of the yard and turn around, the herald’s horn signalling the end of the bout not long after it’d began.

The applause came shortly after when everybody realised what had happened, the crowd cheering for their crown prince. The stand that they were sat in and the dornish section were the loudest, clapping for their kin. The dim clouds of the late afternoon eclipsed the light of the sun as she looked on proudly at her son, waving back at the crowd. The loudest applause came from her son’s wife and daughter, something that Elia couldn’t help but smile at seeing her granddaughter clap her little arms together whilst giggling.

She looked down at her daughter to catch her reaction, she knew it would be interesting with who was involved in the bout. Rhaenys was clapping politely as her brother trotted around the yard, soaking up all of the attention. But her eyes, her eyes were on the downed knight in the middle of the yard. And when she looked at the knight herself, she realised why.

“He’s not moving.” She heard Rhaella say to nobody in particular. To Elia, she sound panicked.

The distant rumble of thunder could be heard from above, the overcast promised rain and it would seem it had held off just long enough for the last event of the day to conclude.

“Grandmother’s right, he isn't moving.” He heard her daughter say as she stopped clapping. She looked around the stand and eventually locked eyes with Elia. Fear was the only thing behind Rhaenys’ eyes.

Across from her, she noticed Lord Stark moving through the northern stand and to the fence close to the yard, the look on his face mirrored her daughters. It would seem that the Warden of the North
had worked out who the mystery knight was as well.

A huge rumble of thunder sounded from above, a lot of the people in attendance slowing in their applause to look up at the darkening clouds.

“He’ll be helped Elia, don't look so worried. I think we need to get this crowning ceremony done and out of the way before the heavens open, don't you?” Rhaegar said from where he was stood next to her. She turned and saw a little smile on his face, no doubt proud at their son’s victory.

She nodded as mumbling overcame the crown in attendance, the reason for it was currently sprinting down the yard as fast as her little legs could carry her.

“Isn't that Lord Stark’s daughter?” She heard Margaery say to Rhaenys as the little girl eventually arrived at her brother’s unresponsive body. Seeing little Arya Stark shake her brother’s shoulders made something lurch inside her heart.

“Why has nobody come out to help him?” She heard Dany seethe, an even louder rumble of thunder met everybody’s ears.

“Arya! Get away from him!” She heard Lady Stark cry from across the yard, the girl in question ignoring her mother as she carried on shaking her brother’s shoulders.

Far in the distance, a small black speck emerged from the cover of the overcast, vapours trails following it in it's wake.

Nothing but a bird, her mind mumbled. Her gut telling her otherwise.

The herald’s horn blew and the man in question walked on to the yard, announcing the winner of the bout before handing the floor over to his King.

“Thank you.” Rhaegar said as the herald nodded in reverence before leaving. She didn't miss the way Rhaenys, Dany and Rhaella turned around and glared at her husband.

Oblivious to Elia, the black speck in the sky grew in size.
Rhaegar smiled as their son was handed a crown of white roses, the arrangement being placed on the end of his lance by a steward.

“A hand, for the winner of this momentous joust, and my son, Prince Aegon Targ...” Rhaegar announced before being interrupted by an even louder crack of thunder than the last.

He chuckled as it subsided, the rest of the crowd included, them all feeling a little weary of the vicinity of the thunder. It sounded like it was right on top of them.

“It would seem like the gods grow restless for the crowning.” Her husband japed, a few courteous chuckles emerging from the people. Inside the yard, Arya Stark was still trying to rouse her brother.

“Regardless, over to you, the victor!” Rhaegar said as he motioned for their son to proceed with the crowning.

Aegon trotted down the main stand where the royal family was sat, everybody knew who he was going to crown, even thought there was a small voice in her head worrying he would do something silly. Her fears were for nought though as he stopped his horse in front of his wife and daughter and lifted his lance towards them.

Margaery smiled as she took the crown of white roses off the lance and placed it on top of her head, that smile growing as she look on at her husband.

“With this crown I pronounce you my Queen of love and beauty.” Her son said with a charming smile. Alysanne started clapping and giggling to everybody’s amusement. That all changed when she carried on giggling before pointing up at the sky.

“Birdy!” Little Alys shouted, and it was the last thing anybody heard before a soul shaking roar erupted from the heavens.

Rhaegar

He covered his ears, closed his eyes and clutched his head as the horrible sound echoed around the yard, he could faintly hear his granddaughter crying. He opened his eyes as soon as the horrific sound subsided, and it was like his world had just been turned upside down.
Along with the yard.

Masses of attendants were scattering from the stands, screaming and shouting as they fled, a few of them pointing at what had caused such a reaction.

Rhaegar would run with them, like Ser Arthur was urging to do. But he couldn't, he felt glued to the ground as he looked on at what was landing in the middle of the yard, taking out a couple of stands that were thankfully scarce of people, all of which had wisely fled.

*It was terrifyingly beautiful.*

The wings battering gusts of air against the ground as it landed were extraordinary, a canopy of crystal and flesh. The same crystal like deposits were all over this creature, making up a good majority of it’s being. And what an impressive being it was, practically the same size as the royal fleet’s flagship.

“We need to go your grace!” Arthur shouted as he pulled at his arm. In front of him, the rest of his family was being escorted out of the stands, none of them able to take their eyes off the impossible creature in front of them.

“Get off of me this instant.” He heard his mother yell as Ser Oswell removed his hand from her arm. His mother moved over to the fence and shouted in the direction of the creature.

“Jon! You have to get up!” She yelled, a frenzied look on her face as Ser Oswell grabbed her before she could climb the fence. In the yard, the creature made a growling sound, making the ground underneath them vibrate.

Aegon had already moved to the outer edge of the yard, he kept a good hold on his spooked horse’s reigns. He looked like he wanted to do something stupid as he eyed the creature in front of him in awe before looking underneath it at the two figures that were in the worst place possible.

Little Arya Stark was sat next to her brother’s unmoving body looking up at the creature that was stood over them. At that moment, he felt for Lord Stark, he was sure to be experiencing more loss in his life.
Or he would’ve been if the creature was attacking them. To Rhaegar and a few other people who were muttering around him, this beast looked to be defensive where it stood. It’s long neck and large head scanned the stands that were left intact, like it was daring somebody to attack.

“Aegon don't!” He heard his wife shout as their son moved closer to the creature. He could see what his son wanted to do, but it was a suicide mission trying to help Lord Stark’s children at the moment.

“Stay back!” He yelled at Egg, his son listening to his instructions as he moved his horse back, said horse looking relieved at doing so.

Everybody braced as the creature moved it's massive limbs, everybody gasping as it weirdly nudged Lord Stark’s daughter gently out of the way before placing one of it’s huge feet on top of Jon.

“Jon!” He heard multiple people yell as the claws of the beast gripped the limp body of the bastard of Winterfell. The beast ignored Arya Stark’s futile attempts at helping her brother, boldly thumping away at the creature’s claw before it was lifting off into the air with a few flaps of it’s colossal wings. Everybody seemed to hold their breath in shock as debris flew across the yard before the beast was airborne, Jon Snow firmly clutched in one of it’s four claws.

Everybody stood there in a state of disbelief as they watched the creature fly away, everybody bar Arya Stark, who was being restrained by her father who had made it to his daughter as soon as the beast had become airborne.

“It’s got Jon! We need to help him!” He heard Arya Stark cry before being hugged by her father. It broke his heart knowing that their chances were very slim.

“What course of action do you advise, your grace?” He heard Arthur say to him as he watched his daughter and sister embrace, leaning into each other’s shoulders. His mother lashed out and slapped Ser Oswell across the face, pointing at him before climbing over the fence and into the yard. The few people that hadn't ran earlier witnessed the Queen mother order Lord Stark and his family back to the castle, a mixture of emotions on her face as she did so.

“Everybody is to convene in the great hall at once, get the word out Ser Arthur.” He ordered, his friend nodding before calling over a servant.

Him and his family were quickly ushered back into the safety of the castle, though if history had anything to say about it, Harrenhal wasn't the safest of places when dealing with a dragon.
Because that’s what it was, a dragon. He’d read countless passages in books and scrolls to know the basic biology of such a creature. The realisation that a dragon roamed the skies of Westeros both awed and terrified him.

_The rumours were right._

Lord Tywin had sent a raven a month or so ago, letting the council know that sailors around Lannisport had spotted something, but him and the rest of his small council had swept it to the side like it was a waste of time.

_He may see the old lion smile for once when he is proven right._

The journey back up to the castle was quiet, everybody clearly shocked at what had just transpired. Elia was currently walking with Rhae and Dany, an arm around their daughter’s shoulders. The sight of Jon Snow or anyone being lifted into the sky by such a monstrous creature would cause some individuals to act out in shock and distress.

And it was clear with the face that his daughter was displaying, and somewhat his sister as well, that this had affected them greatly.

_Did his sister share the same feelings as his daughter over this man?_

He sighed and shook his head as they finally reached the courtyard of the castle.

_Suppose it didn't really matter now._ He thought with regret. The chances of the boy’s survival being rather slim.

“Everybody up to Rhaegar’s solar.” He heard his mother say as she walked side to side with Viserys, his brother had been retrieved from the dornish stands as soon as Arthur had put the word out.

“Is there a reason why mother?” He asked as the family stopped in the entrance hall, all looking at the Dowager Queen’s emotion filled appearance.
Resigned, his mother shook her head and looked at him. The pain and anger behind her violet eyes was jarring to see.

“Just do it Rhaegar, this needs to end, now.” She said to him, determined in tone.

“What needs to end? The lords of the realm will be waiting for us in the great hall pretty soon, all desperate to know what in the world is going on.” He replied. “Can it not wait until after?” He continued as he eyed the determined look on his mother.

“No, it cannot. The lords can wait for the King.” Was all that she said before walking in the direction of his solar, quickly turning around and speaking to Ser Barristan.

“Fetch Lord Stark, Ser Barristan. He’ll already know why he’s being summoned.” She ordered before carrying on towards his solar. Ser Barristan went of to complete his task.

*He felt more like his younger self than the King he was in that very moment.*

He looked at the rest of the family, all seemingly waiting to see what he was going to do. With a shrug of his shoulders, he followed his mother’s path, the rest of his family following suit.

His mother didn’t wait for him to enter the solar first, letting herself in and heading straight for his decanter of Arbour Gold. The whole family had a slight look of concern as they watched her finish an entire goblet before refilling it again. His mother wasn't known for partaking in the “*devil’s nectar*” as Lord Varys would sometimes put it, so seeing her not even blink in her rapid consumption was bizarre behaviour to anyone who knew her.

“What is this about mother?” He heard his sister say as he made his way around the desk before taking his seat. He noticed Elia and the girls taking a seat together on the burgundy coloured sofa at the side of the room, Alysanne had quietened down in her mother’s arms after what must have been a traumatic thing to go through as a young child. His brother and son were standing in the corner of the room, Aegon looking anxious his arms crossed and Viserys with an unusual look on his face.

*He almost looked... concerned?*

His mother, who was still stood next to the small cabinet that housed his wine, looked towards the door before looking at her daughter.
“All will be explained when Lord Stark is present.” She answered before walking around the desk and standing in front of him.

“Stand.” She said, a look that denied any arguments.

He slowly stood up, still looking at her in confusion “This is all very odd mother.” He said as he grinned. It betrayed the concerned feeling he was feeling.

His confusion grew when she reached around his hip and pulled the valyrian steel dagger that he always had on his person from it’s sheath before walking back to the side of the room with it.

Now he was confused and annoyed.

“Care to explain or will it all be revealed when Lord Stark is present?” He asked sarcastically as he eyed his mother. She looked back at him like she was fed up with his behaviour.

A knock on the door saved them from any argument, he didn't miss the deep breath his mother took as he acknowledged the knock.

Ser Barristan entered the room followed closely by Lord Stark and to his surprise, his youngest daughter. The two of them looked both sad and sceptical as they entered the room, though a little fire was present behind the young girls eyes as she looked at his mother.

“Lord Stark.” He greeted as he walked around the desk. He held his hand out and the man hesitantly shook it before looking at his mother. “We are so sorry for what has happened to your son. Rest assured, we’ll have our best men out looking for him as soon as the meeting with the rest of the lords has concluded.” He said as he looked down at Lady Arya with a small smile, one that was wasted when he noticed she was still looking at his mother.

“Thank you, your grace.” Lord Stark replied. The man looked more and more tired every second that passed.

He nodded in response before looking at his mother, who was looking at Lord Stark rather oddly.
“Now that Lord Stark is here, why don't you enlighten us as to what all of this is about.” He said to his mother before moving to lean against the edge of his desk.

His mother sniffed as she placed her goblet of wine of the side cabinet, the look of sheer loathing she fired in Lord Stark’s direction was jarring, so much so that he had to look around the rest of the room to see if everybody else was seeing it. Mixed looks of confusion and concern made up most of the room, Ser Arthur, the only Kingsguard present at the moment, looked stoic.

“He’s here to talk about Jon Snow.” She said as she folded her arms across her chest. He noticed out the corner of his eye, the way his daughter and sister glanced up when that was said.

“As I said a few moments ago, the issue of Lord Stark’s son will be brought up after the meeting with the rest of the lords.” He said as he looked back at his mother “If that is what this is about, then I think the best course of action is to get this meeting with these lords over and done with. The quicker it is over with, the quicker we can dispatch a group in search of Lord Stark’s son.” He said as he stood up from the desk he was leaning against.

“That’s not what this is about my son, isn't that right Lord Stark?” His mother said from where she was stood. The way her chest lifted her folded arms up and down betrayed the cold mask that she’d put on, it was clear to anybody who knew her that she was fuming.

*What in the world was going on? What had caused such a reaction from her?*

His mother wasn't one to show emotions to anyone but her family, so it was odd to see this sort of behaviour in front of one of his lords.

Lord Stark closed his eyes and nodded his head, to his right, his daughter was looking paler by the second, and almost on the verge of tears.

*Made sense with what had just occurred to her brother.*

A couple of screams were heard from the window, making everybody in the room glance at it in worry. Rhaegar moved across the room and looked to see what it was, Ser Arthur advising him against it as he did so.
It was too late though as Rhaegar peeped through the window, instantly noticing the fleeing smallfolk and the cause of such a reaction.

*It’s back.*

“What is it your grace?” Ser Arthur asked as he moved from the door and stood next to him. A loud, toe-curling roar answering his question.

The entire family was back on their feet as soon as the roar was heard, little Alysanne began to whimper but was quietened down as Margaery rocked her in her arms.

“We need to move your grace, the cellar may be the safest place in the castle. If we’re quick we...” Ser Arthur exclaimed before quieting down as his King held his hand out.

His eyes were wide, with mixed emotions running through him as he saw the dragon land just outside the castle, he felt it land with the impact it made with the ground. What shocked him the most though was seeing it lower its wing to the ground, giving the figure on its back a safe dismount.

“Jon Snow has returned.” Was all he said as he watched in a daze, the youth walk into the courtyard and towards the castle, as people stared at him with a mixture of awe and fear.

He was jostled as his mother moved next to him to see for herself, just in time to see the dragon take off again and the young man enter the main entrance to the castle.

The reaction in the room to his declaration was explosive.

Rhaenys and Daenerys were straight to their feet, looking at him and his mother almost daring them to lie about such a thing. Lord Stark was sighing with relief which was very understandable considering the situation, his daughter almost mirroring her father’s actions.

Ser Arthur poked his head out the door before shutting it and looking at him with a nod, an order already taken without even opening his mouth.

He nodded to his friend, relieved to know that the Kingsguard were already on their way to
retrieving the young man.

The noise in the room grew and grew as everybody talked over each other, his mother was speaking to him about sending someone to go fetch the boy, almost volunteering herself for the task.

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, he needed silence if he was going to sort through these wandering thoughts that were running through his head. The silence came when a voice was heard through the other side of the door.

“...the fuck off me. I'm not your prisoner.” Everybody heard somebody say before the door rattled on it’s hinges.

Ser Arthur was the first to the door but his mother wasn't too far behind, just in time for the door to be opened revealing Ser Oswell being pushed away by the man of the hour.

“Jon!” His mother said as the door widened, revealing the commotion to the room. He didn't miss the way Aegon moved across the room to stand next to his wife and child.

“Jon!” Another cry came as Lord Stark’s daughter darted across the room, colliding into the side of her brother. Jon eventually turned away from the Kingsguard, his scowl morphing into a smile as he held his arm around his sister. He looked up from his little sister, an odd look on his face as his eyes fell on the Dowager Queen.

If anyone were to ask him what kind of smile Jon gave his mother, he would call it sad, especially when he noticed his father in the middle of the room.

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This should be a happy occasion, shouldn't it?

“Give the man some space would you, he probably doesn't know what is happening.” He said as Jon eventually looked at him after he’d scanned the room, a hesitant look on his face.

His mother moved away from the boy, shooting Lord Stark an odd look as she walked back to the side of the room. Lord Stark’s daughter did no such thing though, as she clutched to the side of her brother.
A deep breath in the silence that took over the room grounded him and prepared him for what was to come next.

“I think I speak for everybody here when I ask this question Jon Snow, how in the world are you standing there after what we’ve all just witnessed?” He asked as he looked at the young man. The pieces of armour were still intact on the lad, all but the entirety of his right arm and shoulder, his helm was also discarded, allowing his mane of raven curls to run free.

**Handsome lad. That hair of his all Stark...very similar to...**

“I was brought back.” The young man answered simply as he looked at him dead in the eyes.

“By the dragon?” Daenerys asked, a look of relief on her face.

Jon nodded as he looked at her “By **Kireina**, yes.” He answered, making all eyes in the room land on him.

“Kireina?” Elia asked slowly, a sceptical look on her face as she looked at the young lad. Jon nodded at her question. “The dragon? The dragon is called Kireina?” She further asked to which she received a nod again in answer. Arya Stark looked up at her brother gobsmacked.

In the corner of the room, a quiet scoff was heard, his brother shaking his head in disbelief with an incredulous look on his face.

“Naming it now are we? You’ll be claiming it in the name of House Stark next, won’t you?” Viserys said with a chuckle.

“**Viserys.**” His mother growled, a warning if he’d ever heard one.

“What? Do you expect any of us to believe this tripe this idiot is coming out with?” Viserys answered back. His brother hadn’t worded it in a way he would choose, but it still rang true.

*Were they expected to believe this?*
Snow closed his eyes for a few seconds before opening them to look back at Viserys, his hand raised up in front of him, each finger spread out. Arthur’s hand was firmly on the hilt of his sword, Viserys was many things, but he was still a member of the royal family, and it was his duty to protect them.

Viserys and Jon locked eyes before the fingers on Jon’s hand started to countdown. As soon as the last finger on his hand closed, a mighty roar echoed in the distance, shocking everybody in the room.

Rhaegar stood there in utter disbelief, the roar was on cue with the boy’s countdown. There was no way it was a coincidence, definitely more to it, like the boy had an affinity with the beast.

He looked at the lad as he turned back around from Viserys, his brother looking as stunned as he was, as stunned as the rest of the room was. His eyes locking with the unrelenting steel of the man in front of him, eyes just like his aunt’s, the eyes of the Starks.

*From the many books and scrolls he’d read years ago on prophecies and magic, the Starks had a history of skinchangers, the ability to jump into the mind of a creature and essentially take over if they wished.*

*If this was all true, House Stark just became the most powerful and feared house in Westeros.*

He looked around the room, noticing the same expression on everybody’s face, shock with a hint of fear, fully understand the consequences of what they’d just learnt. Little Alysanne whimpered in her mother’s arms again due to the loud noise of the roar, her mother looking at Aegon with slight concern.

His son had a different look on his face, he could almost see the wheels turning in his mind as he looked between him and Jon.

“So that’s who Kireina is?” Lord Stark said to his son. He shook his head as he looked at the ground. “Why didn't you tell any of us the truth?” He further spoke. Rhaegar couldn't help but notice the way the Warden of the North cringed as he finished speaking.

Before Jon could answer with what looked like a rather angry reply if his face was anything to go on, the girl pressed into the side of the young man intervened.
“Can you ride it?” She asked. There was still an odd look on her face as she asked but he could spot childlike wonder when it was in front of him.

Jon pulled his steely gaze away from his father, softening as he looked at his sister. “She. Kireina is a she.” He replied.

“How do you know?” Elia asked from her seat next to her daughter and sister-in-law. Both girls unsurprisingly looking at the lad with mixed emotions.

Jon looked at his Queen “I can’t describe it that well but the best way to put it is that she sounds feminine when we communicate through our bond. I asked her once but she didn't have an answer, I just assumed she didn't know.” He answered like it was the most normal thing in the world to say. Behind Jon, he noticed Viserys huff and shake his head in disbelief.

“Your bond?” Rhaenys asked. Unlike Viserys, there was a look on her face that looked like she wanted to believe him.

Jon nodded as he looked at her, a small grin growing on his face “The bond that binds us together. She can sometime feel what I’m feeling, I can sometimes feel what she’s feeling though in very rare instances. We can communicate through thought, that’s how I told her to roar just then.” He replied. To the side of the room, he notices his son shaking his head in the same manner as Viserys did. Either they didn't believe him, or they were coming to grips with the situation.

House Stark just became the powerhouse of the country, all they lacked were crowns.

...crowns they could claim if they really wanted to.

His eyes connected with Elia’s, her face made it clear that she was thinking the exact same thing as he was.

“Yeah but you didn't answer my question,” Lord Stark’s daughter asked as she looked up at her brother “…can you ride her?” She asked. The whole room wanted...no...needed to know if he had full control of this dragon, this war machine, this King maker.

A nod from him was all that was needed to confirm their fears.
Jon Snow just became the most eligible bachelor in the country, the circumstances of his birth were an afterthought when a dragon was involved.

_It made Elia’s proposition earlier all that more attractive...and necessary. The only dragon in Westeros, and it wasn't tied to House Targaryen, the realm would whisper._

He just hoped his daughter realised the necessity of such a union, though with the looks she was sneaking at the young man, the chances of her having a problem were slowly diminishing.

Movement made him snap back from his thoughts, just in time to catch Arya Stark shove her brother a little before scowling up at him.

“Why didn't you tell me you had a dragon? God’s Jon...a dragon! How can you keep that a secret?” She asked. For the first time, Jon didn't look softly at his sister, a stern look on his face as he glanced away from her and around the room before his gaze eventually settled back on her.

“This,” He said as he nodded around the room. Everybody looked confused as they looked at each other “...the attention, the fear, the hunger. I see it in everybody’s eyes in this room, they either want me or fear me.” He said as he looked back around the room. Elia looked down at her lap when his gaze passed over her, Rhaenys and Daenerys having similar reactions.

His gaze feel back on his sister “It would have stayed a secret too if certain things hadn't occurred.” He said as he shook his head “Due to my own stupidity, I ended up getting hurt, and Kireina knew it. It’s the reason she turned up, inadvertently revealing herself to the world.”

It honestly felt like a dream to Rhaegar, some of the things he’d seen or heard today had been surreal. The shocks and surprises just kept coming and coming today.

His mother stepped forward and in front of the young man, nobody knew what was going to be said, but he knew nobody expected her to clip the boy around the ear before bringing him into a hug. He looked around the room to see everybody’s reaction, them all showing just how confused he was feeling.

“Stupid boy.” He heard her say as she disengaged from their embrace. Jon in that moment looked like a ten year old Aegon when he’d caught him playing around with a steel sword without any supervision.
He looked like a child being told off by a parent.

*He couldn't for the life of him gauge the type of relationship these two had. Maybe it was time for him to find out, whether his mother liked it or not.*

He cleared his throat as he looked at his mother, the mask was well and truly on as she looked back at him, chin held high. She then turned and looked at Lord Stark who had moved to the side of the room, he too turned to look at the man and instantly noticed the man’s mask slipping, a slight sheen to his brow.

*That’s it…*

“Enough! Enough of these little looks, the sneaking around, the secrets.” He said as his raised voice made a few of the room’s inhabitants look at him in surprise. He didn't shout very often but his ire was building, he could tell when he was being played with and his mother was definitely playing games.

“We don’t leave this room until I find out what this is all about.” He said as he pointed in between his mother, who was stood in front of a resigned looking young man, and Lord Stark, who was looking paler by the second.

The stoic Lord of Winterfell letting his mask slip to show this type of behaviour implied that something was wrong, very very wrong.

Lord Stark’s daughter moved across the room to her father, dragging a reluctant looking Jon Snow with her. His mother shot Jon an odd look before turning back to him.

“Yes,” She said as she walked back to the side of the room where she was stood before, his valyrian steel dagger was picked back up from where it was laid. It was an odd thing seeing his mother wield a knife like that, even with the knowledge he had that she carried one on her person at all times now.

*Something he couldn't blame her for considering her past…*

“...you’re right. It’s time.” She said as she looked across the room at Jon. He turned and noticed the
lad had his eyes closed, his sister gripping him like she wanted to crush the steel vambrace around his arm. Lord Stark closed his eyes and took a deep breath before opening his eyes and looking at his mother before nodding.

“Don’t nod like you have a choice in this Lord Stark.” His mother snapped, her tone making the room look at her startled. Snapping at her family when they’d done something they shouldn’t have in the privacy of their home was rare, snapping at the Warden of the North like that made Rhaegar nervous.

“Mother, what’s happened?” Daenerys asked as she looked on worried, eyes darting between her mother and the collective group of Starks across the room.

His mother folded her arms, that fiery look still on her face as she nodded in the Stark’s direction “Lord Stark will explain it all, won’t you Lord Eddard?” She said. Everybody turned and looked at the northern lord who had closed his eyes against his mother’s temper. Lady Arya had found her way to her father’s side, clutching his arm as hard as she’d gripped her brother’s. Speaking of Jon Snow, the young man had a look of clear annoyance on his face, and it was aimed right at his mother.

“Aye, you have the right of it.” Lord Stark said as he looked around the room before his eyes settled on Jon, his son turning around to look at him, staring into each other’s eyes as if they were having a non-verbal conversation. They both must have come to an agreement because Jon nodded before his father did the same.

Lord Stark closed his eyes and sighed, Rhaegar grew anxious, something was about to happen. He sneaked a look in Arthur’s direction to make sure he was still there, a reassurance for him.

“Just pull the arrow out.” Jon said to his father “We’ll deal with consequences after.” He continued. Lord Stark nodded at him, a sad smile growing on his face.

He almost jumped when he felt his mother move to his side and wrap her arm around his own, a hand slipping into his and clutching it tight. He looked at her and noticed that she had an odd look on her face, she was trying to smile at him but it wasn’t happening for her. She looked away from him as Lord Stark opened his mouth again, his eyes turning back to the man.

“Jon isn’t my son,” He said, looking like he was struggling with his sentence “…he’s my sister’s.” He almost muttered as he looked at his mother before reluctantly looking into his eyes.
Nothing.

Nothing happened, nobody moved, nobody spoke, they just looked at Lord Stark in disbelief, eyes bouncing back and forth between the apparent uncle and nephe…

…

…

…

…

How?

…

How had he not realised what had just been said?

He looked down at nothing, his mind racing, hastily filling in the blanks that he didn't want filling.

If they were filled, it made it all true. And his heart wouldn't be able to recover if this wasn't real.

Not my son, he’s my sister’s.

Lord Stark only ever had one sister…

Lyanna…

Lyanna’s son…
He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, his emotions were starting to flare up, and the last thing he needed right now was to become emotional. There was an explanation to all of this, Lord Stark was there for such a reason.

*Lyanna’s son.*

He opened his eyes and looked at Lord Stark, specifically Lord Stark. He couldn't look at Jon Snow right now, it was impossible to not search his face for her.

*And if he found anything, it made this all real.*

His mother gripped his hand as he looked at the Warden of the North “I’m sure there’s an explanation to all of this Lord Stark. I mean, I think we are the last people you would lie...”

He shook his head, his eyes fused shut. He couldn't pretend, regardless of how loud his mind was screaming at him to stay calm. The emotions were winning as his pulse grew in tempo, the heat of his rapidly moving blood warmed his entire being.

*Lyanna’s son.*

His eyes stayed shut, desperately trying and failing to calm himself, at this point, the chances of him doing something regretful were growing by the millisecond. The thumping of his heartbeat in his ears was loud, but not loud enough to cover the sound of his wife being held back by their son as she threw vitriol in Lord Stark’s direction.

*Held back by their son...*

*Which son?* His mind whispered, like it was trying to make him snap.

His eyes still closed, he felt his mother’s hand leave his own, calming words muttered in Elia’s direction as she went to help his fiery dornish wife. As soon as the hand released from his arm, it felt like the chain had come off, the cage door left unwisely left open, the dragon awoken from it’s slumber.
Lyanna’s son.

His eyes snapped open, the edge of his vision dim and out of focus, aimed right at it’s target.

Lyanna’s son.

Your son.

No.

Yes. His mind replied.

It made no sense, Lord Stark wouldn't do that, why would Lord Stark do that?

He owes you nothing. Jon Snow is his nephew, why wouldn't he take him back north with him?

He owed him everything, he took his son.

That’s all he thought as he moved forward.

Rhaella

Elia was a strong woman, she found out. It wasn't the thing she should be thinking right now given the situation but she couldn't help but thank her grandson as he held on to his mother.

Grandson.

It was a simple word but it was enough to remind her of what was happening in that room at the moment.
The secret was out, and there was barely a moment of explanation as all hell broke loose. And Elia was the first to snap, that dornish temper emerging, one that she knew her daughter-in-law normally had a good hold of.

She’d reacted a lot sooner than her son, that’s for sure.

Her eyes widened at the thought of her son, she’d tried her best to ease the impact of the bombardment of secrets and truths that were going to come his way, and confiscated his personal dagger from him knowing that having that at hand would really cause problems.

Her eyes turned back to her son, she noticed him moving forward towards the Starks. The dagger that she’d taken from him was thankfully still laid on the cabinet behind him, she’d forgotten to grab it as she came to help Egg, clearly her son had forgotten about it too as he approached Lord Stark, fists held tight enough to turn his knuckles white.

He’s gonna hit him. She realised as she watched him storm across the room, a look on his face she’d not seen in years, not since the Greyjoy rebellion.

“Rhaegar stop.” She said in a futile attempt to prevent what was going to happen. And it was a futile attempt as her son snapped his right arm out, aimed right at the Lord of Winterfell.

Her breath stifled as the fist connected with flesh and bone, but unfortunately for her and most of the people in the room, it didn’t hit it’s target. It instead hit the cheek of Jon Snow, who had stepped in between his father and uncle.

“Jon!” She shouted across the room as she let go of Elia, the woman seemed to have stopped her struggle against her son. Rhaegar stepped back from where he was stood and looked shocked at what he’d just done. Ser Arthur had moved across the room swiftly to stand behind his King, hand firmly on the hilt of his sword and a glare aimed at both Lord Stark and Jon Snow.

She knew that his King was his priority but this was getting ridiculous.

“Step down Ser Arthur, I won’t have steel drawn in my presence, especially when there’s children.” She ordered as she moved across the room and stood in front of Jon. Rhaegar had caught him well with that strike, the top of his cheek right under his left eye split open, a small trickle of blood making it’s way into his beard. She framed his face with her hands to take a closer look, his eyes wouldn’t look at her though, they were too trained in on Rhaegar, a look of annoyance and slight anger behind
those eyes.

*Please don’t do anything stupid.*

“*Don’t you dare.*” She whispered to him as she pulled her handkerchief from her sleeve and dabbed the flow of blood from his face. He looked down at her and frowned, eventually closing his eyes and sighing.

“Are you okay Jon?” She heard Jon’s little sister, cousin, asked him as she looked up at him in concern. It gave Rhaella a chance to look at Lord Stark, his shoulders were slumped with a look of guilt on his face.

He knew this was mainly his fault, a little of the blame falling on her son.

She felt Jon nod at the question, breaking the connection her hands had on his face. She turned and looked to see how Rhaegar was fairing, he still looked angry, so much so that Ser Arthur had placed a steady hand on his shoulder. Any other Kingsguard wouldn't be able to get away with placing their hand on the King but because this was Arthur, Rhaegar’s best friend, nobody blinked an eyelid.

That anger her son held had something else present as well, his eyes switching between Lord Stark and Jon. His brow creased up as his eyes fell on Jon’s face, fighting off the look of regret to save face, Lord Stark needed to know how enraged he was.

She looked around the room, noticing everybody watching with baited breath to see what was going to happen next. Unfortunately for them, nothing was going to get said or done while there was an audience, so she made a snap decision.

“Right, everybody out. Wait in your rooms, we’ll get you when we are done.” She said as she looked around the room. From the look on everybody’s, nobody wanted to leave and miss what was said.

“Rhaella...” Elia said before she was interrupted.

“You’re obviously staying my dear, everybody else, leave.” She said with no room for arguments, arguments she could see nearly every single one of them wanted to have with her.
“Aegon,” She said as her grandson looked at her “...will you make sure that everybody makes it safely to their rooms? I’m trusting the crown prince with this responsibility.” She asked, receiving a reluctant nod in reply.

“Good.” She said as they all slowly made their way out of the room, every single one of them glancing backwards before leaving.

The door closed with a click, the only people left in the room were her, the King and Queen, Ser Arthur and the three Starks.

Two Starks.

Jon isn't a Stark.

She looked down at Lord Stark’s daughter and was looked back at resolutely, if it weren't for the situation they were in, she’d chuckle at the girls boldness.

And because of the situation they were in, it wasn't suitable for her to be here either.

“Ser Arthur,” She said, the Dayne knight looked at her from her son’s side. “Would you so kindly escort Lady Arya back to her family please.” She said, not ask.

“I’m not going anywhere!” The girls snapped back as she stood in front of her father like a protective she-wolf. Because that’s what she was in this situation, protection, a buffer between her father and the King. She didn't know if it was done on purpose or if the girl had come on her own accord but clearly somebody thought that her son would be calmer when a young girl was thrown in the middle.

“It’s fine Arya,” Jon spoke as he looked down at the girl. The cut under his eye started to slowly dribble blood so she handed him her handkerchief. He gave her a confused look before realising what it was for, a small smile in thanks as he wiped his cheek.

“No it’s not, some...something is going to happen.” She replied back as her eyes bounced between Jon and her father. Rhaella couldn't help but notice the way the girl manipulated the size of her eyes.
“Daenerys did that at her age.”

“Go Arya, I’ll see you after, okay?” Jon said as he slowly moved her towards the door. Ser Arthur looked at his King and received a nod, getting the permission he needed to carry out her order.

“You promise?” She heard the girl say as they made it to the door.

“I swear it.” Was all Jon said as she was ushered out of the room, Ser Arthur following suit.

The room was thick with silence as she watched her grandson comb a hand through his dark hair. He stared at the floor where he stood before moving across the room and pouring himself a large goblet of wine.

“Sit!” She heard her son growl, her head turning just in time to see Lord Stark nod and take the seat in front of the desk her son was pointing at. Elia was still stood in place watching Jon drink his wine, it was like she was searching for something.

She knew what she was searching for, searching for the traces of Lyanna.

Rhaegar moved around the desk and braced his weight against it, leaning over it and in Lord Stark’s direction. The look on his face was still present as he took a deep breath before sitting down.

Silence took over the room again as she moved over to the side of the room where Jon was stood nursing his goblet. She grabbed it out of his hand and put it on the cabinet away from it, slightly shaking her head at him as he looked at her.

“That won’t solve anything.” She whispered to him. The fact that he didn't try to argue with her showed just how much was on his mind.

Rhaegar had his chin supported under his hand as he leaned his elbow on the desk and looked out of the window. Rhaella had seen that face before, her son was in full processing mode. Elia had moved back to the sofa she’d been sat on earlier, still looking at Jon like he was a watering hole in the middle of a desert. She noticed Jon trying to avoid eye contact with the Queen, probably uncomfortable with the staring.
Speaking of somebody being uncomfortable, Lord Stark sat in his chair, leaned forward with his eyes trained on the wood of the desk in front of him.

“Start talking Lord Stark, you don’t leave this room until I know everything.” Her son said in a cold tone as he carried on staring out of the window. Ever since he’d punched Jon, he’d not once look at him again. Rhaella knew when her son was ashamed of his actions, avoiding eye contact was always the first thing she noticed.

Lord Stark started talking, every little secret and truth that came out made her more and more agitated by the second, and she’d heard all of this before. She couldn’t imagine what was going through her son and Elia’s heads right now. She kept looking to see Rhaegar’s reaction to every little detail that he was being told, surprised to see him still resolutely looking out the window, not once looking in Lord Stark’s direction. Elia was more reactive to the truths that were being shared, eyes closed, her head lowered and shaking left to right with every word Lord Stark uttered.

She grabbed Jon’s arm in the hopes of comforting him as his uncle dug his grave deeper and deeper with every word, releasing him instantly when he audibly winced. She looked at him in confusion, he just shook his head and took a deep breath in return.

“Do you realise what you have done Lord Stark?” Rhaegar finally said as he turned to the Lord of Winterfell. Lord Stark sat up in his chair and locked eyes with the King resolutely.

“I did what was best for my family. In honour of my wife’s house words, “Family, Duty, Honour”, I stand behind my choice. I will never regret protecting my family over my duty or my honour.” Lord Stark replied back with conviction.

It was enough to make her son snap.

“YOU STOLE MY SON!” Rhaegar snapped as he stood from his chair, rage permeated around him. The moments spent looking out the window trying to calm himself were seemingly for nought.

Lord Stark rose from his seat in return, a defensive stance as he replied to the King of the Seven Kingdoms.

“I returned my sister’s son back where he belonged, in the north. Not in the south where Starks are lynched and burnt!” Lord Stark replied as he raised his voice, that cold anger the Starks were known
for finally rearing it’s head.

She sighed deeply and closed her eyes momentarily at the mention of what that monster did in the past to Lord Stark’s family.

“Ohhh, now I see what this is,” Her son said as he paced back and forth behind his desk, nodding his head like he’d come to some sort of revelation “…payback.” He said as he looked back at Lord Stark “Payback for what my father did. Your twisted way of punishing me, punishing US!” He answered back, pointing back and forth between him and Elia. The Queen still had her eyes closed, still shaking her head, still in disbelief at what was being said.

“Payback!? You think this was about getting one up on you? On your family?” Lord Stark answered back incredulously “This was about MY family. That fucking war that your piece of shit father started cost House Stark nearly everything, cost me everything!” He said as he shook his head “And what did it cost House Targaryen eh? What was the cost of plunging the realm into war? Nothing, that’s what. If anything, you profited, one less madman to deal with and a more stable head of the family taking over the crown.” He almost snapped.

“Tread carefully Lord Stark.” Rhaegar growled “I won’t have my family name tarnished by the likes of you.”

There was a quiet knock on the door before it opened up, revealing the head of Ser Jaime, an ashen look on his face as he looked around the room, eyes locking with Jon momentarily before looking at his King.

“Is everything alright your grace?” He asked as he looked back at Jon, waiting for her son’s reply.

“Everything is fine Ser Jaime, return to your post.” Rhaegar replied without looking at the knight. Ser Jaime nodded in return, giving Jon one last look before shutting the door behind him.

_He knows._

With the raised voices, there was no way he couldn't know at this point.

_The news is going to spread like wildfire._
“Everything isn't alright though, is it?” She said, her son looked at her, allowing his gaze to shift to Jon briefly before landing on her.

Longing. That’s what was behind those indigo eyes of his, she could see how much he wanted to speak, embrace and love his long lost son.

“No, it’s not. I will have your head for this Lord Stark.” Rhaegar replied as he looked back at Lord Stark with disgust.

“No you won’t.” A new voice to the conversation said. Jon stood up straight from where he was leant against the wall. She knew this was coming, the conversation she’d had with him a few days leaned towards him trying to stop his uncle from being executed.

She understood why he would want to save Lord Stark’s head, the father to his loved siblings, the father he thought he had for seventeen years. He didn’t want to be the reason his little sister had her father’s head chopped off.

But he must know that her son couldn’t just turn a blind eye to this severe injustice.

Treason is treason.

“Jon...” She said as she placed a hand on his arm. To her shock, he shrugged it off and looked at her coldly.

“No.” He said as he moved towards the desk and stood in between the two other men in the room. She couldn't help but notice that he was the tallest of the three but only just, her son a couple of inches shorter.

No wonder some people whispered about him being Brandon Stark’s son.

“No?” Her son slowly replied, a raised eyebrow on his face.
“No.” Jon repeated as he looked from Lord Stark to Rhaegar. “I won’t let you kill my family.” He said as he looked on coldly.

“He’s not trying to kill your family Jon, he’s trying to punish a man for his treason.” Elia spoke up as she looked at Jon, trying to get him to understand.

Jon turned to Elia, his look softening as he looked at the Queen “He plans to kill my uncle, my uncle is part of my family. I can’t let him do that.” He replied back to the Queen of the Seven Kingdoms with conviction. Elia sighed and shook her head as she looked at her husband for help.

“Lord Stark has committed treason against the crown, as the King of the Seven Kingdoms, and since Lord Stark has admitted to his treason in this very room, I have the authority to pass the sentence. The punishment for treason is death.” Her son said in his authoritative tone. He shook his head and closed his eyes before looking back at Jon “I’m sorry Jon, this is my decision. Know that I’m not doing this to hurt you, it’s the last thing I want to do. What I really want to do is get to know you and welcome you into your family.”

“By killing my uncle.” Jon replied, resolutely looking at the King of Westeros. She shook her head, the boy was foolhardy and stubborn.

Rhaegar sighed “I’m sorry Jon, there’s no other way.” He said as he looked on at his son with regret.

Jon nodded and turned to his uncle, a mixture of emotions on his face “And I’m sorry too,” He said before turning to his father again “…but it just isn't going to happen. Whether you like it or not, the fact that I have an actual dragon gives me some semblance of power. I will use that power to protect my family.” He said defiantly.

That sounded like a threat.

Which meant this was going too far.

“First of all, you can stop talking like that. You think I’ll have my family warring with each other, you’ve got another thing coming.” She said as she raised her voice, the three men in the room looking at her, all with different looks on their faces.

“Second of all, It’s clear to me that the only way this is going to get settled is with compromise.” She
“Compromise!? You do realise what he has done?” Rhaegar said as he pointed at Lord Stark.

“Of course I do, we all do, so does Jon.” She said as she looked at her grandson, daring him to argue back with her “…but if we don't settle this right now, it will become something none of us want, especially with the less than subtle promise of war.” She said as she looked at Jon sternly. He had the decency to look somewhat regretful of his outburst.

Rhaegar looked at her like she’d gone mad. She knew that he wanted blood, she could fully understand that, but if Jon was adamant about what he said, they could very easily end up starting a war over this, a war over an executed Stark and a stolen Prince.

She couldn't and wouldn't allow her family be torn apart by the very members stood in this room.

She nodded to Jon, it was his idea that he came up with when he suggested it to her a few days ago. She disagreed with it in all senses, fully expecting Lord Stark to be punished for his actions. She believed that humouring her grandson’s plan was the only thing that kept him talking to her.

“Explain this plan, the one you told me about a few days ago.” She said. Her son looked at her in disbelief, whether it was the fact that there was a plan or that she'd known about his son’s existence for so long without telling him.

Jon cleared his throat and looked from his uncle before looking his father in the eyes “A story.” He said.

Rhaegar pulled his eyes away from her and looked at Jon, he motioned for him to continue “A story?” He said “I’m gonna need a bit more than just a story, I can’t do much with that.” He answered.

Jon ran his hand through his hair “We can spin a story for the public...”

“You want us to lie? Why would we do that Jon?” Elia said from her seat. The way her knuckle turned pale, she could see how hard her daughter-in-law was gripping the arm of her seat.
“For me.” He said in a soft voice “So I don't have to watch my uncle be executed.” He continued.

“Jon...” Elia started but was cut off by him.

“What? Can you really blame me for trying to prevent a death in my family? Am I really a bad person for trying?” He asked, gone was the cold exterior, now more akin to a melancholy child realising what the world was all about.

Her son sighed and eyed his own son, she could tell he really wanted to grant Jon his wishes, it would instantly put him in the boy’s good books, something she could tell both King and Queen were really hoping for right now.

But she knew her son couldn't compromise on this decision.

“No Jon, you’re not a bad person. From what I’ve seen, you’re far from it.” Her son said before his eyes moved across to Lord Stark, who had kept quiet the whole conversation “But...” He said before sighing and shaking his head “…listen. Maybe...maybe execution isn't necessary.”

Everybody looked at the King with mixed emotions, her and Elia looked at Rhaegar with disbelief and Jon and his uncle looked at the King with suspicion.

“What do you mean?” Elia said as she looked at her husband, shock still on her face.

Rhaegar linked his fingers together in front of him on the desk and looked Lord Stark in eyes, the King’s royal mask back in place “My son believes that your actions were in goodwill for his welfare, I do not.” He said as Lord Stark’s head turned and looked at Jon, her grandson stood there listening on.

“I don’t want to ever be compared to my sire, in personality or rule. Therefore, in gesture of goodwill to my long lost son, I grant his wish for you to keep your head.” He said to the surprise of everybody in the room.

Jon looked at his uncle in relief, Elia looked at her husband almost betrayed, and Rhaella looked at her son with a mixture of confusion and pride, proud that he was able to temper that anger enough so it didn't fuel any hasty decisions.
He’ll never be his father.

The King raised his hand to quell any sort of questions that may come his way, he looked at Lord Stark again “You won’t be executed for this crime Lord Stark. But you will be sentenced to join the Night’s Watch.”

“What!?” Jon snapped but her son carried on speaking.

“There you will take your vows, forfeiting any lands and titles, you will take no wife and father no more children.” He said. Lord Stark had his head lowered as he spoke.

“You can’t do this!” Jon said again.

He can, he’s the King.

“The title of Lord of Winterfell will be passed down to your heir, Lord Robb Stark. In the coming months I will require him to journey down to King’s Landing where he will swear his allegiance to the crown, where on completion, he will become my new Warden of the North. I hope he has been taught well in the art of leadership.” Her son declared.

The room went quiet as soon as he was done, the only thing to be heard was her grandson breathing through his nose, a look of undisguised anger on his face. Elia for her part, sat back in her seat, a look of resignation on her face, at peace with the decision it would seem.

“This isn’t a compromise, you’ll still be taking him away from my siblings!” Jon growled. He needed to be careful, Jon may have a dragon, but Rhaegar was still King, and talking to a King like that was not suggested.

“Cousins, they’re your cousins. Your real siblings have been living in King’s Landing most of their life.” Rhaegar corrected.

“My point still stands.” Jon replied.
“And so does mine. I want Lord Stark executed as punishment for his treason, you want him pardoned so you don’t have to feel guilty when he loses his head. A compromise is Lord Stark still being punished while still respecting your wishes of no execution, the Night’s Watch is that compromise.” He explained, almost as if he was explaining it to a child.

Her son had to be careful, she’d seen Jon’s quick temper, treating him like a lesser person was a sure fire way of triggering it.

“He’s not on trial, you can’t just order him to take the black, it won’t stand.” Jon replied, but it seemed like he was fighting a losing battle. She feared the consequences of this meeting.

“I can assure you if he was on trial, he would have been sentenced to death as soon as his story had finished. You’re welcome to call for a trial but I’m actively trying to prevent bloodshed, the very thing you asked for.” Her son explained. The anger was gone from him, now he was in his element, the mood he took on when speaking to nobles.

Jon looked at his uncle, the cogs turning behind his mind before looking back resolutely at the King “He demands trial by combat.” Came those cursed words.

“Jon...” Lord Stark said, a resigned tone if she’d ever heard one.

“Shut up.” He replied as he stared down his father.

She shook her head and looked down, the desperation was coming out now. It tore her heart apart seeing her grandson defend his uncle with such steadfast loyalty, even after everything that had happened.

Rhaegar sighed and looked at his son, there was admiration behind those eyes of his as he watched him defend his uncle unwaveringly “I’m sorry Jon, but Lord Stark has admitted to his crime, his guilt was confirmed by the accused himself. The option of trial by combat is nullified in the eyes of the gods.” He explained.

“Fuck the gods! Those shits haven’t done anything for anyone.” Jon snapped as he shook his head. He turned and locked eyes with her for a split second before looking back at his father.

“I’ll beg. You think I’m too prideful to do such a thing. I’ll get on my knees right where I stand.” Jon
said, the fight slowly fading from him.

“You’ll do no such thing. I won’t have my grandson on his hands and knees for a criminal.” She said as Jon looked at her before shaking his head.

“You can’t send him to the Night’s Watch,” He said again as he leaned over the desk to get eye to eye with his father “...he’s not raped anybody or killed somebody he shouldn’t have.” He said as he turned and looked at his uncle “Have you?” He asked, fully expecting him to shake his head. Lord Stark seemed reluctant to answer.

“Have you?” Jon asked again.

Lord Stark eyed the Queen momentarily before taking a deep breath and looking at the King.

Now what?

“Prince Lewyn Martell was an unfortunate casualty during my mission to save my sister, I’m sorry.” Lord Stark admitted as he closed his eyes and lowered his head.

She couldn’t believe there was more to this mess.

Jon sighed and closed his eyes, he seemed to deflate as soon as his uncle had finished his confession.

“I WANT HIS HEAD!” Elia cried as she stood up from her seat, fists balled and a murderous gaze aimed at Lord Stark. Rhaella moved quick, enough to grab hold of her daughter-in-laws shoulders to prevent her from doing something stupid.

“Is this true Lord Stark?” Rhaegar asked, the northerner nodding in confirmation. Jon stood up, moved towards the window and stared out of it, shaking his head. His patience seemingly at it’s end with his uncle.

Rhaegar nodded, a longing look at his son’s back before looking back at Lord Stark “The punishment still stands, you will take the black.” He declared.
“Rhaegar...” Elia said within Rhaella’s clutch.

“The Crown will also require a ward. One of your children will journey down to King’s Landing with us when we depart, do you understand?” He asked. Lord Stark looked back at Jon before nodding at his King.

“It’s not enough.” Elia said to her husband as she sagged in her arms.

“It’s over my Queen. Lord Stark will renounce his titles and join the Night’s Watch and my son will journey back with us to King’s Landing, along with one of his cousins. My word is final.” He declared, no room for arguments.

Jon looked over his shoulder when he was mentioned, a mix of emotions on his face when he heard he’d be going home with them.

“Lord Stark will be escorted by Ser Jaime to say his goodbye’s to his family before he’s escorted up to Castle Black by a dozen of our household guard. The news will be announced to the Lord’s and Ladies waiting for us in the great hall, both the existence of my son and Lord Stark’s crimes, both pieces of news will be sent by raven to your son back in Winterfell. Some will see it as weakness letting you live, but they’ll be assured that this was a gesture of good faith towards my son’s wishes. They will also be reminded of the existence of my son’s dragon, the complete opposite of what I would describe as weakness.” He finished as he looked at his son’s back with pride.

It felt like this whole mess was finally coming to it’s conclusion, she really hoped it was. All she wanted to do now is go home with her family, all her family, Jon very much included in that.

“Ser Jaime!” Her son shouted, the Kingsguard knight opening the door and entering the room. The look on his face was of somebody who couldn't believe what he’d just heard.

“Your grace.” He said as he bowed, eyes sneaking a look at the back of her grandson.

“Escort Lord Stark to his family, they should be in the great hall. When you get there, escort them to the library, there Lord Stark can use the privacy to explain what is happening.” He said as the Lannister knight nodded at his instructions “Make sure they don’t leave the library until one of your brother’s arrives and relieves you of your duty.” Her son instructed to which the knight bowed in answer.
“C’mon Lord Stark...” Ser Jaime said as Jon’s uncle stood from his chair and headed for the door, one last look behind him at his nephew.

Jon started walking to the door as well “I’m going with him.” He said, not once looking to see what his father said.

“You’re not...” Rhaegar said but Jon was already out of the door before he could finish his sentence. He huffed and shook his head before speaking up.

“Keep an eye on him Ser Jaime, make sure nothing happens to him.” He ordered.

“She turned and looked at her son, Elia had left her grasp and moved around the desk. Rhaegar had his face in his hands but must have detected her presence.

“I’m so sorry my love. I didn't know what else to do, I execute his uncle and we never get to accept Lya’s son into our family. He’d hate me too much.” He said as his wife placed a hand on his back.

She sighed “I’m not going to pretend that I don't hate what you did, but I will accept you did it so we could bring our son home.” She said as she rested her chin on his shoulder.

He chuckled to himself as he pulled his hands away from his face “He’s a stubborn one isn't he? I know I can be stubborn sometimes but nothing like that.” He finished as he shook his head, a small smile on his face. She couldn't help but smile herself.

“Remind you of someone?” Elia said as she smiled at her husband.

He nodded as he looked up at his queen “Imagine if she was with us still, the two of them together
would have been impossible to work with.” He smiled.

She scoffed, both the King and Queen looking up at her “She still is with us my son, she lives on in that boy who’s just walked out of that door.” She explained, almost crying herself as she saw the moisture build in her son’s eyes.

“All on to more pressing matters.” She said a few moments later. Elia quirked an eyebrow at her as Rhaegar wiped his eyes on the back of his hands.

“Which are?” The Queen said.

“A bloody dragon roaming our skies.” She said none too seriously, both monarchs chuckling at her humoured declaration.

*Dragons had returned…*

*And they were now back together.*

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**The Fledgling**

He scrambled through the halls of the manse, the marble under his feet was shaded from the blistering sunlight, keeping it cool. The coolness almost made him moan in pleasure, the day had been a particularly hot one, and a hard one to get through.

He rushed towards his destination, a quiet room at the back of the building, passing several stoic Unsullied soldiers that lined the hallways. In his arms were several linens that had been requested.

*Ordered.*

*Please don’t kill me, I’m just doing as I was told.*

He rounded the corner, the doorway to the room guarded by two Unsullied. The door was bolted shut, there was still blood on the handle from where his master had previously entered.
He kept his head down as he slowly walked to the door, the Unsullied didn't even bother to look down at him as he grabbed hold of the handle and twisted, the strong smell of iron instantly hitting his nostrils as he hesitantly entered.

He bolted up right as a hammer was held at his face, the head and the majority of the handle dripping in blood. He looked up, his heart beating out of his chest as he looked fearfully into the eyes of the worst man he'd ever met.

“People knock for a reason, the next time you anger me, you’ll feel the matter fall out of your skull.” The deep voice warned as he pulled the hammer away from his face.

He nodded vigorously as he looked to the ground in reverence, the fact that he’d even been given a second chance was a miracle. He jumped as the hammer that had been pointed at his face was casually tossed into the corner of the dark room, the loud clash of the bloody tool hitting the marble almost made him whimper.

Two thick hands were thrust in front of him, caked in grime and blood “Clean.” Was the order given to him and he snapped to attention, wrapping the powerful limbs in a linen and wiping them as clean as he could.

*Don’t clean the blood from under his nails, he likes to remember.* He reminded himself as he rubbed the hands of the cruel man.

*Don't even think that, idiot. He might hear it.*

The man thankfully pulled his hands away, just in time to miss the way his hands started shaking, the anxiety building in him as he looked up and around the room.

The Chamber.

That’s what the man liked to call it.

“Urghh...” He heard, a tired voice in the back of the room.
“Quit your whining. You’re lucky I didn’t leave the hammer in your head.” The cruel man said as he walked to the side of the room and poured himself a cup on water. He drank a full cup before refilling it, the contents of it hurled at the face of the man chained up in a chair across from him.

“Please…A…Ae…”

“No. You don't get to plead with me now, you forfeited that ability when you decided to share my secrets.” The cruel man interrupted.

“I’m...It’s to help…to help you.” The chained man replied, blood running down his brow, fingers mangled on each of his hands.

“SILENCE!” The cruel man yelled as he grabbed the chained man by the throat, a small whimper left his mouth as tears began to slowly run down his bloody cheeks. He didn't want to watch this. But unfortunately he had to, he had to know.

He had to know…

“I think it’s time.” The cruel man said as he released the prisoner from his clutch.

He slowly backed up into the corner of the room, the collision with the wall making him jump.

“Please...don’t...” The chained man begged.

“Have a bit of self respect and die like a man.” The cruel man said as he grabbed the greatsword that was leaning against the wall. He held it in both hands like it didn't weigh anything.

“No...” The chained man whimpered “I promised her...”

“I know you did, and for that I thank you.” The cruel man replied as he took stance in front of the
prisoner.

“Don’t do this…I...love you, please...”

“And I loved you, goodbye father.” The cruel man softly replied before lifting the huge sword over his head and cleaving his apparent father straight down the middle, from head to belly. The wooden chair collapsed under the strike, leaving a pile of flesh, guts, and rotten wood.

He threw up.

He recovered quick enough to clutch the hand that was lifting him up against the wall, the linens in his hand forgotten.

“I know who you are,” The cruel man spat as he looked at him. He clutched at the huge arms of the man to ease the pressure on his neck.

Fear ran cold down his spine when he realised what had just been said.

“LOOK AT IT!” The cruel man screamed as he pointed at the sickening remains of his own father “…tell your little friend what you’ve seen. I will be very interested to see what they have to say.” He said before releasing him. He dropped to his hands and knees, his left hand pressed into a puddle of his own vomit, the right clutching his aching throat.

He looked up at the cruel man, this monster who just murdered his own father without even blinking. They connected eyes and the look he was given was enough for him to cower away from his gaze.

He stood on shaky legs and realised that he was being dismissed, he didn't know whether to be grateful or terrified of the repercussions.

He scurried towards the closed door, desperate to be out of this place, the further away the better. Qarth was a port city, it wouldn't take him much to acquire passage to the free cities. From there, he could relay what had happened.

“Oh, and before you go...” The cruel man said from behind him. He turned as quick as he could,
desperate to get this over and done with.

It wasn't quick enough to avoid the hammer that smashed and embedded itself into the front of his skull, the world already blackening around him.

The last thing he saw as he laid unmoving on the floor was the contents of his skull slowly dripping on to the cool floor.

The threat from earlier truly forgotten as he departed the living.

End of Act 3

Chapter End Notes

And breathe.

I genuinely hope I haven't just messed the story up for some people, as much as Jon and some readers wanted Ned to be left unpunished, it just wasn't an option for the story.

The dragon has shown it's face :) And don't worry, they'll be more reactions in the next chapter, to that and Jon's parentage reveal. I'm not gonna leave you hanging unlike some people...

Jon uniting with the Valyrian side of his family was never going to be a smooth transition, angst was all but promised really. A bit of time is what he needs for him to get used to it :)  

And before anybody asks, no I haven't forgotten about Clarissa and no, i haven't forgotten about Jon still having Blackfyre either. All in good time :)  

Next chapter will be out when it's out, not next weekend but probably the one after.

Till the next one...
Jon

He’d walked through the hallways of the newly renovated Harrenhal a few times in the past few days, they’d never felt as narrow as they did right now as he walked ahead of his uncle and Ser Jaime. He could feel how Kireina felt about the whole situation, she wanted him out of this building and away from it all.

Part of him wanted to take her up on that offer, but the situation was a true mess, a mess that would get even worse if he ran away from it.

*I wish I could pack up and leave, but I’d just be delaying the inevitable.*

He had to face the music.

The overcast that promised rain followed through with it’s promise, fat drops of rain slowly dripping down the windows of Harrenhal as he walked past them. The rain was always peaceful and never failed to calm him down, but in this instance, his emotions were all over the place, and a little downpour wasn't going to prevent the simmering rage that had been brewing inside him ever since he stepped inside that solar.

*He’d failed.*

He’d told himself, over and over again that he would try his very best to prevent his siblings from losing a parent, and he’d tried to do that, even going as far as threatening war.

It was a bluff obviously, he had no intension of waging war across Westeros, especially when he’d be the reason behind it. Unfortunately, his grandmother was in the room at the time and she seemed to have a good grasp on the kind of person he was.

The King didn't know him that much but his grandmother did, and she saw right through his bluff. As soon as the King realised that war wasn’t a threat Jon was going to follow through with, his chances of preventing the man from taking his uncle’s head grew less and less.
“Jon.” Came his uncle’s voice. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath as they carried on walking through the corridors of the castle.

“Jon, listen to me.” Came his uncle’s voice again a few moments later.

“What!?” He snapped as he turned on his heel and looked at the man. Both him and Ser Jaime stopped as they saw the look on his face, he must have looked a picture if his uncle visibly swallowing a lump in his throat was anything to go by.

His uncle side eyed Ser Jaime before looking at him, he seemed hesitant in whatever it was he wanted to say to him.

He huffed “Please,” He said as he shook his head “...he probably heard everything said in that room, didn't you Ser Jaime?” He asked the Kingsguard knight. The man raised his brow for half a second before reluctantly nodding at Jon’s question.

“I heard enough, your grac...”

“Don’t you fucking dare!” He interrupted, that was the last thing he wanted to hear right now.

Ser Jaime looked hesitant before he nodded, he looked at Jon in understanding but still had words on his lips.

“It’s something you’ll have to get used to when the news comes out. You won’t hear the end of it, especially with the fact that you’re the first dragonrider Westeros has seen in over a century.” Ser Jaime explained.

_He hated how right the Lannister knight was._

Out the corner of his eye, he could see that his uncle was still waiting to talk to him.

He sighed and looked to Ser Jaime “I need to speak with my uncle, we’ll meet you in the library.”
He said, the Kingsguard looking back and forth sceptically between him and Lord Stark.

“His grace told me to retrieve and escort all of Lord Stark’s family to the library.” Ser Jaime said.

“And you will, me and Lord Stark will wait for you in the library.” Jon replied, not really having the patience to be having this conversation.

Ser Jaime looked at the pair of them again, it looked like he was deciding whether or not to accept Jon’s statement.

“Calm down, we’re not going to run away Ser Jaime. Are we Lord Stark?” He said as he looked at his uncle. Ned shook his head.

“My whole family is currently housed in this castle. If I run, they immediately become hostages. So no, I’m not going to run away.” His uncle explained, an explanation that seemed to be acceptable to the Lannister knight.

Ser Jaime sighed and turned his head to see if anybody else was in the corridor before looking back at him.

“Fine. The library is just around the corner, please be there when I return.” He said, still looking reluctant to leave them both.

“Go. The sooner you leave, the sooner you can return to see if we really have ran away.” He japed, hoping that it calmed the man down somewhat.

“Don’t joke, the King will have my head if I manage to lose you. I won’t be long.” He said as he walked, practically jogged down the corridor towards the great hall.

He looked at his uncle one last time before turning around and walking towards the library, not even turning to check to see if the man was following him.

He heard his uncle jog to catch up with him “Jon.” Ned said as they approached the library, two large oak doors at the end of the corridor facing them.
He opened one of the doors and entered, a quick scan of the room confirming that there wasn't anybody present. As soon as he did so, he returned to the tables near the entrance to the room, his uncle having just closed the library door behind him.

He pulled one of the chairs out, the scrape of the wood against the floor filled the awkward silence of the room. His uncle took a chair at the opposite side of the table and looked at him.

He looked back at him, a deep breath needed to not reach across the table for him.

“I appreciate what you did in there for me.” His uncle eventually said.

“I didn't do it for you, I did it so Bran and Arya and Rickon didn't grow up without a father. Something I still failed to do.” He answered back. He was a genuine mess of emotions at the moment and the prospect of flying off on the back of Kireina and disappearing for a week sounded so wonderful right now.

“You still tried though, it's more than I deserved given the circumstances.” Ned replied as he gave him a tired smile.

“And those are?” He asked.

“That even though I still believe I did the right thing, I still lied to you all your life, I still refused to tell you about your mother for years whenever you asked, I wasn't able to keep a hold on Cat’s behaviour against you.” His uncle listed off.

“You're wife is a pretentious bitch.” He replied back, not a single bit of regret as he looked the man in front of him right in the eyes.

Ned sighed “Whatever you think of her Jon, she’s still my wife. I won’t have you being disrespectful.” His uncle replied back. He tried to act stern but it sounded more tired than anything.

He shook his head, a small bloom of sympathy in his heart for the man “I’m so sorry for you.” He said, his uncle looking back at him in mild confusion “I've met the woman you should’ve married all those years ago.” He continued, a sign of recognition behind his uncles eyes. “She hates you by the
way.” He finished.

Ned shook his head “I found out the hard way that most things in life that we wish for are impossible in the world we live in.” His uncle tried to explain.

Jon narrowed his eyes “Impossible in the world we live in? I’ve flown thousands of miles on the back of a dragon, I’ve seen more of this world in the past two years than you have your whole life. These impossible things you speak of aren't impossible, you just didn't try hard enough, you settled.” He replied.

His uncle looked at him coldly, it was easy to antagonise the man in the state he was currently in “It’s not that simple Jon.” He said, almost growling in response “If I could have married Ashara I would have, but we were at war, my hands were tied. Cat’s father required me to marry his daughter in return for their support, support I needed to save your mother.” He explained, a little sweat on his brow from the frustration Jon could see coursing through the man.

“And at any point did you tell Ashara this? Or did you leave her to come up with her own conclusions?” He asked, his uncle momentarily breaking eye contact with him.

He sighed “I never got the opportunity to speak with her after Harrenhal and my life was later consumed by the rebellion. I dishonoured her and to my shame, couldn't bear to face her when the war was over.” His uncle admitted as he lowered his head. “We promised to marry, I couldn't bear to see the disappointment and hurt on her face when she found out I was married already. It’s one of my biggest regrets.” He finished.

Jon looked at the man coolly, but couldn't help but feel a bit of sympathy for him. His uncle wasn't evil, he was far from it. He’d just made a myriad of avoidable mistakes that had piled up and eventually bit him on the arse.

“You should’ve married her before you decided to sleep with her, that’s how us bastards are created when you decide otherwise.” He said to him, a little anger growing when he thought of Clarissa.

Ned shook his head as he looked at him “You’re not a bastard Jon, Rhaegar and your mother were wed according to the King and Queen.”

He looked at his uncle annoyed “And you think that fixes everything?” He said, Ned looking back at him a little confused “I’m a bastard, I’ll always be a bastard, that shit has had seventeen years to
brand itself on my mind and soul.” He explained. His uncle just looked at him and sighed.

Suddenly, the library door opened, Ser Jaime entering with a relieved look on his face when he saw that him and Ned were where they said they’d be.

He stood up along with his uncle from his seat, moving around the table to stand next to the man as the whole Stark family entered the room, even Theon had turned up, probably nosy about the dragon more than anything.

He moved close to his uncle and whispered in his ear “You need to talk to Lady Ashara before it’s too late.” His uncle looked at him nervously but didn’t get to reply as Rickon was running past Ser Jaime and colliding into Jon’s side.

“Woah.” He said as he placed his arm over Rickon’s shoulders “Careful or you might take off.” He said as he ruffled his hair.

“Rickon come here.” He heard Lady Stark say as she walked into the room. His little...brother gave him a small smile before moving back to his mother.

“I’ll just be outside y...Jon.” Ser Jaime said, catching himself before he said something that would truly set Lady Stark off.

He nodded as the knight closed the door behind himself. Jon took a deep breath as he moved around the room and sat back down on the chair he was previously sat on.

“Are you okay Jon? I feared the worst when that monster took you.” Sansa asked in a concerned tone. His uncle retook his seat and the family followed suit, only Theon was stood still, arms crossed and looking at him weirdly.

_How the fuck was this going to play out?_ He thought to himself as Arya took a seat on his side of the table next to him.

“I’m fine Sansa, thanks for your concern. And she isn’t a monster, she’s a dragon.” He corrected with a small smile. Sansa reluctantly nodded but he could see there were more questions she wanted to ask on the matter.
“Her name’s Kireina and she’s Jon’s dragon.” Arya blurted out to her sister across the table. The looks of disbelief on the other side of the table promised numerous questions.

“That..that thing is yours!?” Catelyn said to him, a look of disbelief and anger on her face. Sansa put her hand over her mother’s hand that was rested on top of the table, to Jon, it looked more like a closed fist.

It would seem that his mind had already made up it’s decision on how to deal with this whole situation, a cold stare aimed right at his uncle’s wife. He opened his mouth and headed towards the point of no return.

“That “thing” as you so eloquently put it, is one of the main reasons why your husband isn't losing his fucking head!” He snapped. Worried looks were shared around the room as they looked between him and Lord Stark. His wife...well...his wife seemed hell-bent on making Jon the villain in this situation as she looked back at him in outrage and disgust.

Maybe he should just roll with it and be the villain she is so desperate for him to be.

“You dare...” She began to say before Jon was darting up to his feet, a sharp pain shooting up his arm as he banged his fist on the table. He was sure that he masked the distress he was in well as he glared back at the matriarch of House Stark.

The look on Rickon’s face as Jon glared at his mother was enough to cease the cold look he was sending her way. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath before moving away from the table, instead of retaking his seat, he moved to the wall next to the door and leaned against it.

He felt like a caged animal, wanting nothing but this to be over so he could escape the confines of this bloody castle.

Kireina was still close, he could feel his thoughts bouncing off of her mind.

And she wasn't best pleased with the state of mind he was currently in.

“What is Jon talking about father?” He heard Bran ask, he didn't see if he was still being looked at
since his eyes were still closed. It was the only thing somewhat calming him right now.

His uncle explained everything that had happened not too long ago in that solar, Jon didn't see the facial expressions of any of them as their father struggled his way through explaining that he was going to be taking the black for what he’d done.

He did eventually open his eyes when the final verdict was explained to them though, Lady Catelyn shouting “What!?” as she rose from her chair, the legs of her seat scrapping against the floor as she did so.

And it begins.

“You can’t,” Arya pleaded with her father before turning to look at him, a look of betrayal on her face. “...you promised.” She said to him in a small voice. All he could do was look away from her, he couldn't stand the way she was looking at him.

Lord Stark sighed “He tried his best Arya, but short of starting a war for me using that dragon of his, there was nothing else he could do.” His uncle explained. He reluctantly felt a little appreciation for his uncle in that moment, his explanation enough to draw Arya’s betrayed gaze away from him and down to the table, full of thought and sadness.

“And why wouldn't he fight for you, fight for us, for his family? They are trying to exile you Ned,” Catelyn said as her gaze eventually fell onto him, a look of loathing that Jon was quiet frankly, coming to his wits end of seeing “...instead he just stands there, doing nothing, nothing for the only family he has known. I knew I was right about him.” She growled as she shook her head, eventually looking back at her husband.

“This is how he repays you.” Was the last thing she said before Jon saw red.

“REPAY YOU!?” He shouted as he pushed himself away from the wall, Catelyn did well to mask the shock of him snapping at her.

“Repay you for what? The years of scorn and hatred that’s oozed from your mouth from the moment I could understand what words meant!?” He stated, moving around the table to confront her. His uncle stood abruptly to hold him off as Jon pointed at his wife.
Catelyn looked at him coldly whilst the rest of the room looked at him worryingly. Well, not everybody, Theon seemed to be loving every second of it if his small smile was anything to go by.

“What? Did you not expect me to talk to you like this in front of your husband and children? Isn’t this what you wanted? Make everybody see what the real Jon Snow is, what the Jon Snow that only you see really is?” He said as he backed up from his uncle, Lord Stark looking at him in concern as he held both hands against Jon’s chest to stop him from advancing.

He batted his uncle’s arm away and turned around in a huff, a hand combed through his hair as he attempted to reign his ire in. Catelyn had other plans.

“Within a few months of returning, you’ve managed to destroy this family. We were moving on, living our lives like we should have been, but then you decided to return. And now my husband is being sentenced to live a life at the wall and my children will live the rest of their lives without a father. And you expect me to be anything but angry towards you? Are you truly that naive boy?” Catelyn spat as his uncle turned around and copied what he’d done with Jon by holding her away from him as she pointed a finger in his direction.

He let out a humourless chuckle as he looked at the Trout of Winterfell.

“Me naive? Did you of all people just call somebody else naive?” He said in disbelief with a smile on his face. He shook his head and chuckled “That is so rich coming from the likes of you, from somebody who follows some sort of ‘rulebook of life’ that was crafted by imaginary deities. When was the last time you had an independent thought that wasn’t fuelled by the “Teachings” of your precious gods you hateful bitch.” He ranted, making the woman sputter her speech.

“Jon!” His uncle snapped. The man’s weak attempts to reprimand him fell on death ears yet again. His uncle was trying to play peacekeeper between him and his wife, but peace was the last thing Jon wanted with this woman.

The door to the library opened as he turned away from his uncle’s gaze, Ser Jaime popping his head through the door and scanning the room before his eyes eventually landed on him.

“Is everything alright your grace?” The Lannister man said, forgetting what Jon had told him not too long ago.

He nodded at the knight “Everything is fine, I'll call you otherwise.” He said, Ser Jaime nodding
before closing the door behind him.

“Your grace!? Are you serious!?” He heard his uncle’s wife cry. He knew as soon as he was referred to in such a way that she’d blow her top. To be honest, he couldn't tell if Ser Jaime had done it on purpose or not.

He turned and looked at her, her face full of fury as her eyes darted back and forth between him and her husband.

He sniffed, he felt like playing up to this whole royalty thing “You seemed shocked.” He began as he held his hands behind his back and straightened his back “Isn't that the etiquette when speaking with a member of the royal family?” He continued. Inside he was howling with laughter at the face Lady Catelyn was pulling, some might even say she looked ill.

He carried on with his little mummers act, even if the looks he was getting from his siblings were bothering him. Most of them looked like they didn't even know him any more, Rickon just seemed confused about everything that was being said.

“A member of the royal family?” Lady Stark quietly growled, Sansa looking at her mother in concern. “If you think for a second that I’ll ever refer to some jumped up bastard like you as royalt...”

“Catelyn!” His uncle snapped, a tired look on his face as he looked between the two of them. “Stop it, the pair of you. This isn't accomplishing anything is it?” He said as he looked back and forth between him and his wife, who still had a furious look on her face as she sat back down in her chair. He chose to stay standing, he felt caged sat in that chair.

“We need to get through this like civilised people, wouldn't you agree?” His uncle asked with a raised eyebrow as he looked at the pair of them.

“What is there to get through?” He asked as he leaned on the table, both palms face down as he looked back at his uncle. “They know everything now, as much as I hate what it has come to, the King has spoken and his word is apparently final.” He explained, looking around the table at his siblings, no doubt cousins after this.

They’ll never forgive him for this.
“War it is then.” Lady Catelyn said as her eyes left her husband’s defeated face and locked on him, the most determined look he’d ever seen on the woman.

He sighed and shook his head, it wasn’t registering with the woman “For the last fucking time, if you think I’m just going to use that dragon to not only start a war, but to fight one, against my own flesh and blood no less, then you are insane. It’s not happening whether you like it or not.” He vowed, the princely act well and truly gone and in it’s place, the determined bastard.

A small chuckle was heard from his uncle’s wife, it was incredibly bizarre to hear that woman make any sort of noise that sound joyous.

“Who said anything about you starting a war?” Came her question, and with the tiny, barely there grin on her face, she knew something he had clearly missed.

“Cat...” His uncle growled as he tried to calm the situation, but he was interrupted by his wife.

“Do you really think the northern houses will allow their liege lord to be exiled for this? Do you think Lord Arryn, my sister’s husband and liege lord of the Vale will allow a man he considers a son to be sent to the end of the world? Do you think my father, the liege lord of the Riverlands, the very lands you are currently stood in, do you think he will allow his daughter’s husband and the father of his grandchildren be sentenced to a life guarding a wall amongst the rapists and murderers? Hmm?” Lady Catelyn explained, point after point, her smile growing with each one.

He shook his head and sighed “I don't know.” He replied before looking at his uncle “But I don't think we will ever find out.” He further said, his uncle understanding the point he was getting at.

The one vital detail Lord Stark had forgot to mention when he’d told them the punishment he would recieve.

The smile that had grown on Lady Catelyn’s face was still present as she turned and looked at her husband, the slightly furrowed brow was new though.

“What is he talking about Ned?” She asked, the smile dropping by the second as her eyes bounced back and forth between uncle and nephew.

“Ned!” She snapped, making nobody but her own children jump.
A look morphed on his uncle’s face, a cold look he’d never in his life seen aimed at his own wife “I advise you remember who I am, who you are talking to my lady.” He said, ice gripping to each individual word. Lady Catelyn hid her shock well as the angry look on her face stayed put.

“What is he talking about?” She asked again, this time in a more calm manner.

Lord Stark looked to him then back to his wife “The crown requires a ward, and I assume it’s so the very thing you just suggested doesn’t happen.” He said, his wife blinking and shaking her head as she looked away from her husband and looked around the table at her children, her gaze finally resting on him, a defeated look on her face.

“What’s a ward?” Rickon asked as he looked between both of his parents. Jon’s eyes subconsciously looked over at Theon for a split second before looking back.

He sighed, he’d just this second realised that one of them was not only losing their father, but also losing their mother as well. She was an unbearable person in his opinion but still their mother.

“A hostage.” Lady Catelyn said as she carried on looking at him, a devastated look on her face.

*If she was trying to make him feel sorry for her, she was wasting her time.*

He’d never feel sorry for Catelyn Stark.

“You can’t take them from me, I won’t allow it.” She said as she carried on staring at him.

“It’s done Cat, the crown requires a ward to keep the peace. Nobody likes it, I Hate it, but at the end of the day, I’ve only got myself to blame. All I can do is apologise to whoever it is who has to go to that wretched city.” His uncle said.

“Ned...” Catelyn said but her husband interrupted.

“I’m sorry Cat.”
A lone tear ran down the cheek of the current lady of Winterfell, Jon did his best not to let it affect him.

“You can’t just expect me to just be okay with them taking one of my babies.” She said as she shook her husband’s arm. Lord Stark let out a heavy sigh and looked down.

Three loud knocks echoed through the room before the library door was being pushed open, Ser Jaime entering the room.

“Sorry to disturb,” He said, something Jon didn't for one second believe “...but his grace has assigned Ser Barristan here to take over my duties of watching Lord Stark and to bring his son to the great hall.” He finished, his little sister sat beside him gripping his bad arm. He covered his wince as he gave her a sorrowful look before squeezing her hand and rising to his feet.

“I’m sorry that it came to this, it’s not at all how I wanted this to be resolved.” He said as he looked around the table. His eyes locked with Lady Catelyn’s “You may hate me Lady Stark, you may even wish me dead, but I can promise you this, as long as I’m breathing, these four people,” He said as he pointed to each individual Stark child “...and the one back in Winterfell will always have my love and protection. Always.” He finished before giving Lord Stark one final nod, one that was returned.

It broke his heart as he walked out through the door, not wanting to catch another glimpse of their disappointed or upset looks aimed at him. Ser Barristan nodded at him, the man seemingly changing his personal feelings towards him now that he probably knew who he was.

*The news was spreading thick and fast.*

He didn't even reprimand the man as he referred to him as “Your grace”, he just walked down the corridor in a daze, Ser Jaime keeping up with his brisk pace.

The Lannister knight probably thought he was keen to just get it over and done with but Jon had other ideas. After what had just occurred, he needed some time to himself, he needed to think. He took a left at the end of the corridor, fully aware that the great hall was down the corridor to the right.

“My Prince!” Ser Jaime said as he stood waiting at the corridor they should’ve have been going down “Where are you going? It’s this way to the great hall.” He said.
“Tell them to start without me, I have no intention of standing around like some prized cattle waiting to be auctioned.” He said as he walked away from the white knight. “And stop calling me a Prince.” He added.

“I can’t let you go alone.” Ser Jaime said as he began to follow him down the corridor. Jon just wanted to get out of this castle, get this fucking armour off and have some time to himself before he ran somebody through.

_That reminded him, he should go back to his tent and retrieve his swords, Ghost will surely appreciate his relief of guard duty._

“I suggest you rethink that Ser Jaime, unless you plan on mounting a dragon? I can tell you for a fact that she wouldn't appreciate your efforts.” He warned, not even waiting for a reply as he made it to the side door of the castle, the guard on duty giving him a nod as he passed.

It would seem that Ser Jaime had took his warning, a low curse heard from the man as the door was closed behind him. The fresh air almost made him moan at how lovely it felt, the steady downpour washing over his face as he looked up and closed his eyes for a few seconds. He opened his eyes a few moments later, in the distance he could just about see Kireina kiting around lazily, a simple nudge with his mind had her approaching the castle.

He upped his pace, his walk morphing into a simple jog, the weight of the steel plate preventing him breaking out into a full sprint. The plate clunking noisily as he approached the jousting grounds, the mess Kireina had made with her entrance evident for all to see. Broken stands, ripped up earth and discarded equipment laid scattered everywhere, a piece of which caught his eye.

He knelled down a picked up the discarded shield, his own shield from the joust no less. His brow furrowed as he wiped the excess dirt way from the face of it, the rain cleaning it naturally, revealing the same white paint as before, except this time, there was more. Underneath the cracked white paint revealed the blood red leaves of a weirwood tree, and on the pale trunk of said tree was a face, a smiling face.

_Some would even call it a laughing face._

He stood up from where he was crouched and carried the shield under his arm as he walked back to his tent, already looking forward to relieving himself of his armour and giving Ghost a well deserved embrace. All of this was done before he was tying his harness for his swords to his back, mounting
Kireina and flying off, hoping the so called gods had mercy on the soul of the person who decided to disturb him.

Ashara

“I hope Jon is okay.” She heard her daughter say from her left, the pair of them stood in the great hall with most of the lords and ladies were that were currently in attendance for the tournament.

She feared for the boy, she wasn't going to lie, although, the whisperings that were spreading through the hall eased her somewhat. Jon had apparently been spotted entering the castle not too long ago, some people even saying that they saw him being escorted directly to the King’s solar.

Like her and surely everybody else in this room, the King must have a million questions for him, like how in the world had he survived such an attack.

By a dragon nonetheless.

A real life dragon, both beautiful and terrifying in equal measure. Seeing Jon’s limp body being carried away by this impossible creature was not something she would like to see again, and she was sure his family would rather that didn't happen either.

That included her daughter, and his sister, who was looking at her for a response to a question she was pretty sure she’d missed.

“What sorry?” She said as she looked at her only child, the spitting image of her when she was that age, everything from her height, the curve of her nose and the dark tresses that were tied up in a braid. The only thing that wasn't hers was the colour of her eye’s.

They were like her father's, all Stark.

Clarissa huffed as she gave her an unimpressed look “What do you think the King is going to say?” She asked before looking back around the hall, checking to see how everybody else was handling the situation.
She’d like to see how the Stark’s are handling the situation but they were escorted away by one of the Kingsguard.

She shook her head “I don't think I can answer that question sweetheart, none of us ever thought we’d see a living dragon ever again, never mind know how to deal with one.”

Clarissa nodded in response whilst looking towards Oberyn’s little group that consisted of him, his wife and his many daughter’s, one of which smiled back at her daughter.

“I think we are about to find out.” She said as she spotted a line of Kingsguard ushering in the King and Queen into the room, the rest of the royal family following them up to the head table and standing behind it. Every single one of them looked serious as they took their seats, everybody else in the room waiting with bated breath to see what the monarchs had to say.

As soon as the royal family had taken their seats, the King was almost instantly rising to his feat to address the large group of nobles in front of him.

He cleared his throat “Thank you, my lords and ladies for swiftly convening inside this great hall. Like we did, I’m sure you have many questions about the incident that occurred a few moments ago on the jousting yard.” He said. She realised that this was the first time she’d seen Rhaegar look this uncomfortable in years, Elia looking almost identical to her husband as she sat and listened, eyes scanning the room.

A humourless laugh sounded not too far away from her, turning, she could see Lady Olenna Tyrell stood with her son and his wife, Lord Mace and Lady Alerie, and two of her grandson’s, Lord Willas and Lord Garlan.

“I think I speak for everybody in this room when I say we’ve got a very big problem on our hands your grace. One that I assume has been spoken about in length with the Starks?” The suitably named The Queen of Thorns said to their King.

The King faintly smiled at the older woman “You would be correct with your assumption, Lady Olenna. We’ve been speaking with our Warden of the North in great detail, some things have been brought to light and we’re hear to impart this information on everybody in this room.”

“The boy.” A voice spoke, everybody turning and noticing the Warden of the West, Lord Tywin Lannister, looking up coolly at the King “He has been located?” He asked, a few surprised faces
popping up in the crowd.

*Lord Tywin shouldn't care. From what she's heard, he barely cares about his own children, why would he care about somebody else's?*

Rhaegar gave the older man a curt nod, murmurs erupted around the room as the head of House Lannister nodded back. Either her eyes were playing tricks on her but she was pretty sure she saw a small grin appear on the stern lord. Her go to emotion seeing the famously serious warden smile was concern.

“And is he in one piece?” Another voice sounded out, more familiar to her. This time it came from the dornish group in the room, Prince Oberyn more specifically. The King nodded again at yet another enquiry about Jon. To her left, she heard her daughter sigh in relief. She placed her arm around her shoulders and squeezed, Clarissa giving her a smile in return.

“Brilliant, fantastic, the boy is fine, let’s have a feast,” Lord Edmure spoke out in the most sarcastic tone she’d ever heard from a man in a while “…are we not forgetting about that bloody creature…thing roaming around our skies!? I was nearly crushed inside my tent, barely making it out as one of the stands fell on top of it.” He said, a furious look aimed at the King.

*Shame...* She heard Oberyn mutter, a few people heard it as well, doing well to hold in their laughter as to not offend the heir to the Riverlands.

A stern look grew across the King’s face, aimed directly at the Tully man. What was said had clearly not impressed Rhaegar “No, we haven’t forgot about the creature that is currently roaming around our skies Lord Edmure, and that *thing* you so eloquently put it, happens to be a symbol of House Targaryen.” He explained. A few people knew what it was, it vaguely matched descriptions of the dragons of old, but the news didn’t stop a few gasps of shock here and there.

“A dragon? how can you be so sure your grace?” Prince Oberyn asked as the rest of the room waited for the King’s answer.

“I was told it was a dragon, by it’s rider as it happens.” The King answered. the murmuring in the room grew as people started to get a little restless, especially with the mention of the dragon having an actual rider.

If this was true, the kingdom had a problem on their hands. although, by the way the King was
somewhat smiling to himself, Rhaegar didn't believe that they had a problem on their hands at all.

_He knew something they didn't know._

Before the King could carry on explaining in detail what he meant, the side door of the great hall was slowly opening, in walking Ser Jaime with a bit of a nervous look on his face. The Lannister knight walked behind the high table and whispered something into the King's ear. The King didn't look all that pleased at what had been said to him.

The information that have been whispered into the King's ear soon spread across the high Table and shared with the fellow royalties, the dowager Queen didn't look best pleased at what she was hearing, a heavy frown growing on her face as she shook her head.

“My Lords.” The King said as he looked across the hall, holding his hands up to try and quieten the crowd, the murmurings came to a standstill as they all looked to their King, waiting for what he had to say. The head of the royal family glanced across the hall towards the northern contingent, quite nervously if someone was to ask her.

“A new piece of information has come to light,” the King said as the hall listened on, desperate for a suitable explanation for what was happening. It was safe to say that the room was full of an odd mixture of fear and excitement. Nobody knew how a dragon, especially one that had a rider, was going to be dealt with.

To her side, Clarissa nudged her with her arm, she turned to see her daughter looking at her in shock.

“You don't think?” She said quietly, but before Ashara could say anything back to her, the king was carrying on with what he was saying.

“As some of you may have noticed, House Stark are currently absent from this meeting. There’s a very good explanation for this.” the King said as the murmurings started to grow again. Rhaegar soldiered on through his speech however, something he looked to be having great difficulty with.

She noticed the way the King's mother squeezed her son's hand as he carried on with his speech. _Something had happened_, the looks that the royal family shared made her believe something of a great distress had occurred... or was going to occur.
Her daughter's words rang in her head again.

*You don't think?*

*Think what?*

And then it hit her, the whisperings around the hall all about Jon Snow returning, the sudden mention of a dragon rider.

*You don't think?* That simple sentence playing through her mind like a prayer.

*Was Jon the dragonrider?*

Surely not.

*If not him then who?*

She saw it with her own eyes, she saw the way Jon’s body was carried away. How in the world would he have survived or even returned from something like that at?

She knew how.

Jon was the dragonrider.

And Ashara’s beliefs were confirmed when the King explained to the whole room that Jon snow had returned, mounted on the back of the dragon no less.

*A dragon, real life dragon, and it belonged to Jon.*

The response inside the great hall was exactly what she expected, murmurs evolved into shouting, but it was the quiet ones you had to look out for, both Lord Tywin and Lady Olenna silently
scanning the room, deep in thought. She didn't miss the way that Lord Tywin whispered into his daughter’s ear.

In the corner of the room, the bellowing laughter of Lord Umber could be heard, a few northern Lords joining in with him, clearly elated by the news that one of their own was now in the possession of such a creature. She had to admit, it was a massive boon to the northern kingdom.

“I can't believe it.” Her daughter said, Clarissa had always been fascinated with dragons and now finding out that her brother rode one must have been a dream come true.

She was destined to ask for a ride, and that terrified Ashara.

Still, it didn’t explain the reason why the Stark family were still absent from this meeting, and with the way the King looked, there was more to this story than meets the eye.

The crowd managed to control themselves as the King motioned for them to be quiet, silence eventually reigning again. The King seemed to steel himself as he took a deep breath and explaining exactly the thing that was on her mind.

Where were the Starks? Where was Jon snow?

“As I said before, there’s a reason the Starks are currently not here right now, I would appreciate it if everyone could stay silent and respectful as I explain why.” Rhaegar said, again looking like he was struggling to get the words out of his mouth. Ashara noticed that it was Elia’s turn to sneak a look at the northern lords, and it had been a while since she’d seen her best friend look this nervous.

And she found out why a few moments later, stood there in a daze as the King of the Seven Kingdoms told a truly unbelievable story to the Lords and Ladies of Westeros. A story of lies and treason, a story of a deceitful Lord and a hidden prince, a son of the King disguised as a northern bastard. The further the story was explained the more and more it became outrageous, especially her confusing thoughts on Lord Stark in particular.

Jon wasn’t Eddard’s bastard, he was a Prince of the realm.

And that also meant that Ned hadn't fathered a bastard on a random woman, one of the main things that fuelled her disdain for the man, the man that she used to love.
It was all a lie.

The emotions running through her were overwhelming, as she looked to her right, she noticed that her own daughter was having the same trouble. Finding out that her father wasn't as terrible as she was led to believe.

But he was terrible. Her mind whispered.

He kidnapped a Prince of the realm, the King’s son, and hidden him away for over seventeen years.

Now she understood why the Starks weren't there, treason had been committed and a punishment had been dealt. This was something the northern Lords worked out almost as soon as she had.

And it explained why the King and Queen were looking at the northern Lords nervously earlier.

They’re scared of rebellion, due to the punishment they’d delivered to the Lord that had committed treason against them.

The outrage and shouting came thick and fast from the northerners, the loudest of the bunch was, to nobody's surprise, Lord Umber as he pointed and shouted at his King.

“By the old gods, I hope you’re not doing what I think you’re going to do!” The lord of Last Hearth bellowed out, a fury amplified by the man’s sheer size.

Her brother stepped forward from where he was stood in front of the royal family and stared down the large northerner with his hand on the hilt of Dawn.

“I’ll remind you who you are speaking to my lord.” Arthur said as the pair of them stared each other down. The last thing anybody wanted was this getting more out of hand than it was already getting.

“Aye, I know exactly who I’m talking to, I’m talking to a man who wants to take my lord’s head!” The great lord raged as he looked away from her brother and pointed towards their King. Following
‘Aye’s’ from fellow northern lords could be heard as one side of the great hall became increasingly hostile.

“Where is he? Where’s Lord Stark? Where’s Jon Snow?” Lord Umber shouted again, he seemed to be the spearhead of the northerners.

The King attempted to calm the giant lord as he answered him “Peace Lord Umber, your lord is currently with his family, and I have no plans to take Lord Stark’s head.” He said, a genuine sense of shock felt around the room as the murmurings started again. She honestly thought Eddard would be losing his head, something she was grateful wasn’t happening.

*For Clarissa’s sake.* She told herself.

The King didn’t smile or look relieved as he carried on looking at Lord Umber. The northerner, along with the rest of the northern lords, started to relax with the news that their lord wasn't being executed. Out the corner of her eye, she noticed Cersei Baratheon whispering into her daughter’s ear as she looked at the King.

It made her think of her own daughter, and whether it was now a good time to see if she wanted to meet Lord Stark...to meet her father. She’d explained to Clarissa years ago the reason why she didn’t tell him about her, and afterwards, she too agreed that her good for nothing father didn't deserve to know about her as well.

That was all before she found out that he wasn't the man she believed him to be, a liar who had pretended to be somebody he wasn't, all just to bed her. No, he was a man who had his hands tied behind his back, almost forced to marry a woman, just so he had the support to save his sister. And he’d taken his dying sister’s son and claimed him as his own, a boy she thought was the evidence of the man’s true colours turned out to be evidence of a man loving his sister enough to besmirch his own name for the sake of his orphan nephew.

*Except he wasn't an orphan. He was the King’s son.*

*Oh Ned...*

Hiding a child away from their actual parent seemed like such a twisted thing to do, but she refused to believe there wasn't a reason for doing such a dangerous thing.
She had a reason for doing it, surely he did too.

Chapter End Notes

So, the Starks now know of the punishment.

Jon is fed up with it all.

Everybody knows who Jon really is now, which means people are getting ideas.

Everybody knows that Jon is a dragonrider, which means even more ideas floating around people's heads.

The northern lords are clearly more loyal than they were in the final few seasons of the TV show.

And Ashara is having an internal struggle.

Expect more reactions from different POVs next chapter :)

Not entirely sure when the next chapter will be out, I normally try to get one out every 2 weeks, but with me going on holiday for a week starting next Saturday, your guesses are as good as mine.

I'll be sure to post updates in the comments as to not leave you in the dark :)

Hope you enjoyed the chapter.
Rhaenys

The mood of the hall was awkward, but she was barely taking notice of it, her own mind was too busy having a crisis to care about anything else. How was she supposed to listen to anything that was being said after what had just happened in her father's solar?

The man, who she'd managed to generate an unhealthy obsession with, was actually in fact her brother, her long-lost brother.

Who wouldn't be freaking out right now?

She was currently sat in between her mother and Dany, and she could feel the tension they shared as they looked out into the crowd of people. The news they'd been told earlier about Lord Stark and the type of punishment he'd be getting had surprised none of them, although Viserys thought his brother was being too soft on the northern lord.

The people occupying the room weren't aware of that punishment yet, her father had told them, mainly the angry northern lords, that Lord Stark wouldn't be losing his head. But she feared that he'd made a mistake, the northern lords looked relaxed now that they believed their liege lord seemed safe from any form of punishment.

That was far from the truth, and it now made telling them a lot more problematic.

She fiddled with the ring on her finger under the table as she cast her gaze around the room, everybody seemed to be engrossed in their own conversations. The northerners were more upbeat for now, the Tyrells looked somewhat tentative to the news they'd been given, but it was the Lannisters that gave cause for concern. Lord Tywin asking about Jon was as much of a shock to her than it seemed to everybody else, the fact that the famously cold Lord showed any sort of emotion towards somebody other than his own family was bizarre.

His attitude was nowhere near as bad as his daughter’s though, Cersei Baratheon looking almost predatory as she gazed up at the head table with a small grin on her face and her daughter’s arm clutched within her own.
She wasn’t stupid, she knew what the woman was thinking. The plotting had already begun, and Jon was the prize.

*Over my dead body.*

She sighed as she closed her eyes, Jon was her brother, and he wasn't hers to control. If he wanted to marry Cersei’s daughter then what possible excuse could she come up with to stop him?

Jon’s her brother now, she shouldn't care who he wants to marry.

*Then why did she? Even with the knowledge of their relation, she still cared. It shouldn't but it did.*

Was this her blood taking over? She knew her Targaryen side of the family practised incest, but the word was dirty and the act even more so. She’d never thought it would be something for her to worry about, she’d not once had sordid thoughts about Egg or Viserys.

*So why didn't she feel guilty or disgusted when she thought of Jon the way she did?*

*Was it Targaryen madness? Was this the beginning of the end for her? Destined to go on a rage filled murder spree the moment she’s rejected by him?*

She shook her head, that was stupid, this was all stupid. Jon is her brother and nothing more, cross a line under it and be done with it.

*Easier said than done.*

She looked down the table, space had been made for Jon to sit with them, but he’d disappeared instead. She wanted to be annoyed with him, but she couldn't, she’s unsure how she’d be behaving if she was in his position.

*“Jon has gone to clear his head, Ser Jaime was unable to follow him due to the dragon.”*

That one sentence whispered to her as the information was shared was still a hard thing to grasp.
The Dragon.

She’d still not gotten over the sheer size of the creature or the fact that Jon was actually in fact it’s rider. She’s not sure if she’ll ever get over seeing something so incredible and impossible.

*How had he ever kept something like that a secret?*

She shook her head, *how had Lord Stark kept something like that a secret?*

Part of her knew that the northerner didn't have evil intentions, no plots to take the crown away from her family and use Jon as a means to do that. No, he seemed to have his reasons, reasons she could kind of see if she was being understanding, but at the end of the day, Lord Stark had taken her brother away from them, they’d lost seventeen years with him, years they could never get back.

*Would she have the same feelings for him if they’d grown up together?*

When she really thought about it, he wouldn't be the Jon she’d quietly admired if he’d grown up in King’s Landing, hell, he wouldn't be the dragonrider that he is today.

In a twisted way, a small voice in her head was thanking Lord Stark for taking him. If it wasn't for him, Jon wouldn't have grown up to be the man he is today.

*And he wouldn't have a dragon either...*

She was nudged underneath the table, looking to her right, she caught Dany’s gaze. Her aunt lowered her voice and spoke.

“Why isn't he telling them?” She said as her aunt looked worryingly at her brother. She turned and noticed her father looking out to the crowd of people, a look of contemplation on his face. Her mother didn't look too different either.

She turned back to Dany “Telling them what?” She asked.
Dany looked back at her like she was slow “What do you think?” She whispered back at her, a hint of harshness in her tone “He hasn't told them about Lord Stark’s punishment.” She continued.

She turned back to look at her father, Dany was right, she’d been too caught up with her own thoughts to realise that her father hadn’t explained to the lords and ladies what Lord Stark’s punishment actually was yet.

“What’s he waiting for?” She heard Dany whisper as she carried on looking between her mother and father.

“He must be waiting for the right time to tell them that’s all.” She whispered back. Dany must have accepted her excuse since she went quiet.

_He is going to tell them, isn't he?_

Out the corner of her eye, she noticed Lady Olenna making her way to the front of the crowd, helped by her grandson’s paving a way through the masses for her. The crowd seemed to quieten naturally as they spotted The Queen of Thorns make her way to the forefront.

Everybody in the room seemed to hold their breath as the head of House Tyrell opened her mouth. It seemed weird regarding the woman as head of her house but everybody knew the truth, there was no way her son was the boss in that family.

“And this beast that we’ve all been well acquainted with, what is to be done to keep it in check, your grace? We’ve already seen what it’s capable of and something tells me it’s capable of a whole lot more.” The older woman asked. Lady Olenna Tyrell was well known for not mincing her words.

The inhabitants of the room looked up at her father, she followed their gaze to see his reaction for herself.

_He still needs to tell them about Lord Stark…_

“That beast, you so pleasantly put it, is a symbol of House Targaryen my lady. Rest assured the dragon will be none of your concern.” Her father answered. By the look on Lady Olenna’s face, she
wasn't assured in the slightest.

“And how can you assure us of such a thing your grace? You’re as new to this creature as we all are, how can you be so sure that we won’t be fried in the middle of our sleep?” She replied. It was clear to anybody that the Queen of Thorns wasn't backing down from this topic.

“My son has assured me that he is in full control of the dragon my lady.” Her father said.

_He did?_

Lady Olenna’s eyes drifted towards Aegon and then back to her father with a raised eyebrow.

She heard her father sigh “My...other son.” He replied back.

“And how do you know that this other son of yours can be trusted? I mean by the sounds of it, you've only just met him yourself.” Lady Olenna replied without any thought. She wanted to be careful, she was entering dangerous territory.

Her Father weighed up his response but it was clear to her that he was getting rather annoyed with the questioning.

“I know I can trust him Lady Olenna because he's my son. I've seen the type of man that he is, the type of man he’s become.” Her father answered back resolutely.

The Queen of Thorns seemed to reluctantly take the King's answer, nodding before turning back to the crowd and disappearing into it, her grandson’s following suit. She knew though, along with her mother and her father that that conversation was far from over. She turned and her eyes connected with Margaery, by the tired smile she gave her, even she knew that there was more to that conversation coming at a later date.

The chatter in the room started to build again, everybody having their own little conversations with each other.

Her father still had to tell the room about Lord Starks actual punishment, but the perfect time to do so
seemed to have sailed a long time ago. What was already going to be a hard thing to explain to this rowdy crowd had just become a lot harder.

“You need to tell them soon Rhaegar.” She heard her mother whisper into her father’s ear, he closed his eyes and nodded before opening them to look over the occupants of the room.

He took a deep breath before nodding over to Ser Arthur, the loyal friend of her father’s grabbing an empty mug from the table and banging it on the surface until the room quietened down for his King to speak.

“Order!” Ser Arthur shouted as the last of the mutterings in the room disappeared. Her father giving the famous dornish knight a grateful smile before putting on his royal mask, fully prepared for the battle he was about to enter.

Mainly with the northerners.

“Thank you.” Her father said as he looked around the room, his gaze holding strong as it passed over the northern lords.

“I’m afraid I found myself interrupted earlier as I was speaking to you, mainly to the northern lords, about the repercussions of Lord Stark’s actions.” Her father began. Not the best start, but she honestly couldn't think of a nice way of telling a group of boisterous northerners that their liege lord was taking the black.

“Repercussions? We were told there were none.” A northern lord answered, for once it wasn't Lord Umber, although the giant lord was easy to spot, a clear frown on his face.

“Unfortunately, that isn’t the case Lord Harrion, I lost the opportunity to inform the room of Lord Stark’s punishment. Something I am now rectifying.” Her father replied. The northern lords and ladies had now started looking at each other, every single one of them had a frown on their face. The rest of the room muttering to themselves.

Be careful father.

“What sort of punishment are we talking here? Tax inflation? A fine?” Another lord asked, this time it looked to be Lord Karstark.
It was now or never.

Her father sniffed before looking at Lord Karstark in the eye and answering his question.

“Lord Stark will be taking the black for his crimes against the crown my lord.” Her father replied, in a tone that denied any sort of argument. An argument they all knew was coming.

“YOU BLOODY WHAT!?” Lord Umber bellowed out at the top of his voice, a furious look on his face.

Please return soon Jon.

Jon

The rain hadn't let up as he and Kireina left Harrenhal, if anything, it had gotten heavier. They’d been flying for only ten minutes but enough distance had been made from the castle for Kireina to land and let him off. The rain was relentless as he dismounted, the dirt softened by the weather was just right enough for him to avoid any injury as he landed, the only thing giving him trouble being his shoulder.

They’d travelled up river away from his problems, some would say ran away but he didn’t care, and to be honest, he was finding it increasingly difficult to care about anybody’s opinion of him lately.

Ghost had decided to stay behind in his tent, he didn't seem too interested with the wet weather they were experiencing, and seeing him snuggled up his makeshift bed, he couldn't blame him.

The riverbank they’d landed on was well out of the way of any main roads but he’d still be surprised if nobody saw Kireina land like she did, almost knocking a tree down with her bulk.

He walked towards one of the trees near the water edge, the sound of the rain hitting the river’s surface was pleasant to the ear. The canopy of the tree had managed to keep the grass around the base of the trunk dry, he leaned his back against it as he sat down. He released a heavy sigh and closed his eyes, the last thing he saw was Kireina making herself comfortable with the little space
that was around them.

The best thing he could do right now was to just sit there and let the sound of nature calm his emotions, but the fact that he could feel Kireina gazing at him intently, that wasn't going to happen.

*It felt like she was waiting for him to talk, and the stubborn part of him was delaying such a thing.*

He kept her waiting for a few minutes but eventually relented when he felt a hot gust of wind hit his face, the huff of her breath evident in the air around them. His eyes narrowed as he opened them, Kireina averting her gaze away from him and across the river into the distance. Another rumbling huff confirmed to him that she was pleased with herself.

He sat there, waiting to see what she was going to say, and only after a few minutes did she decide to let him know her thoughts.

“The little person struck me.” Kireina said to him through their bond, and it was the last thing he expected to hear her say.

He cocked his head and looked at her in confusion, temporarily distracted by the way the rain trickled down the scales and crystals of her back, creating a prism of colour not too dissimilar to the colours of a rainbow.

“Eh?” He replied, not quite sure what she was talking about. He was expecting her to comfort him or tell him he’s being stupid, not that she’d been attacked.

“The little one, the one that seems to follow you a lot. It struck me.” Kireina answered. He realised who she was talking about almost instantly.

“Arya? Arya hit you? When?” He said, chuckling whilst doing so. The way Kireina huffed implied she didn't find it as funny as he did.

“When I took you away from that place. I picked you up and it attacked me.” Kireina answered.

He shook his head and smiled “One, Arya isn't an *it*, she’s a girl. And two, she’s never even seen
you before. She was probably scared that you were going to eat me or something.” He answered, the smile still on his face. He couldn't believe that Arya had gone as far as to attack a dragon, all for his sake.

*It made him feel even worse for what he was putting her and the rest of his siblings through.*

Kireina readjusted in the spot she was laid in, the scrape of her bulk against the dirt sounded like a rumbling stampede.

“She still shouldn't have attacked me.” Kireina replied through their bond. It sounded almost like a mutter, like she was telling herself that.

“Aww, did she hurt you?” He asked, a laugh bubbling in his gut at the ridiculous notion of a small girl managing to annoy an actual dragon with something so trivial.

“No, but I could’ve hurt her if you weren't my priority.” She replied back as her head swung round to look at him, those mesmerizing eyes that looked like sparkling sapphires baring down on him.

It was like a bucket of ice water over him when he realised that she was right, Arya had nearly gotten herself killed for him. She was unaware that Kireina and him were bonded like they were, she didn't know what would happen if she attacked a creature like Kireina, but she’d done it anyway.

All because of him.

He looked down at his lap, the sword he’d brought with him from his tent laid across it. He preferred the terrifying simplicity of his own swords but he’d be lying if he said that the valyrian steel he was currently in possession of wasn’t beautiful.

He rubbed a thumb over the ruby pommel, using the edge of his tunic to rid the smudge that it left on the surface. This wasn't his to play with really, it belonged to House Targaryen and for some reason, he’d still not found the right moment to give it to them.

In the back of his mind, he could hear whispers telling him it was already in House Targaryen’s possession, but deep down he knew that wasn't the case. He felt more like a Stark than a Targaryen, and even that had waned after what had just happened back at Harrenhal.
If he wasn't a Stark, and he wasn't a Targaryen, what was he?

He knew exactly what he was, what he’s been for his entire life.

He was a Snow.

To most people, that’d be a source of shame or ridicule, a target above their head for the trueborn arseholes to poke at. But to Jon, it’d become somewhat of a game to him, almost hoping for somebody to make a point of his last name.

It gave him an excuse to retaliate, and he almost craved the confrontation. It was like some twisted form of entertainment to him, watching somebody’s face morph as they realised that he was going to give as good as he got and then some.

He knew he was very lucky in the position he was in, not everybody had years of intense training and teachings under their belt, or backup in the form of the creature laid in front of him right now. Not everybody had the power to stand up for themselves.

But he did, and he took pleasure when he did so, a sick satisfaction when the target of his ire would realise that Jon was better than them in every way and that the only thing they had on him was a single word.

Snow.

The feeling was like the moment the warmth of a hot bath seeped into his muscles, an itch that couldn't be reached finally being scratched, cracking his back after a full day of riding.

“Jon?” Kireina said to him through their bond, his eyes blinking as he looked up at the she-dragon craning over him, looking at him in quiet contemplation.

“Hmm?” He answered back, a hand combing through his hair as he cleared his mind in the hopes that Kireina didn't pick up on any of it.
She looked at him for a few seconds before speaking again, the only thing heard was the flow of the river and her deep breathing.

“What are you going to do?” She asked, he couldn't help but let out a humourless chuckle at her question.

He looked out towards the river, the rain seemed to be picking up in pace.

“What are you going to do? If that wasn't a loaded question, he didn't know what was.

“There’s not much I can do.” He replied after a moment. Kireina carried on looking at him intensely, something that was starting to make him uncomfortable. It was like she was waiting for him to come to some sort of realisation.

“What do you mean?” She replied back.

“Well apart from threatening to go to war with my own family, what else could I do? I’m not a warmonger Kireina.” He told her.

“I never said you were.” She replied back simply. He huffed, he was hoping that she’d have some sort of idea as to how he was supposed to fix this mess.

He looked up through the canopy of the tree he was sat under, fat beads of rain were managing to get through the gaps of the leaves and branches. The sky was getting darker, the rain was getting even heavier and he couldn't tell if it was Kireina’s breathing or heavy rumblings of thunder in the distance.

He was stuck between a rock and a hard place, stay out in the pissing cold rain or go back to the castle and face the music.

*They all know who I am now more than likely, they’ll be no hiding from anybody any more.*

So much for clearing his head he thought as he slowly got up to his feet. Kireina craned her head backwards and looked at him intently.
“Remember who you are Jon,” She said to him as she lowered her wing for him to climb “...and remember who I am.” Was the last thing she said before spreading her wings and taking off, the gust of her powerful wings sending a huge wave of water across the river.

*Remember who you are Jon.*

He was starting to forget in all honesty, he needed someone like Master M or Gerion to remind him.

The rain battered his face as Kireina upped her pace back towards the castle.

*Remember who I am.*

That sounded like a threat in all honesty.

*Aegon*

As soon as his father had told the room of Lord Stark’s punishment, all hell had broken loose, the northern contingent of the room being the main culprits to nobody’s surprise. His father was trying to get a grip on the situation but the proud northern lords were having none of it, Lord Umber being the figurehead of their retaliation.

Next to him, Margaery was trying to keep Alysanne calm, shushing her as she rocked her. He gave her hand a supportive squeeze as they locked eyes, a slight undertone of worry in the smile she gave him back.

He shook his head as he carried on watching the Lord of Last Hearth froth at the mouth, sending word after word towards his father in a clear act of fury.

*And in all honesty, he couldn't blame the man.*

*His father had made an absolute mess of the whole situation, the reveal of Lord Stark's punishment being handled with as much care as a drunkard carrying a pot of wildfire.*
Trouble was indeed promised.

“Where is he? Where’s Jon?” Lord Umber asked as he paced back and forth in front of the high table, the look of fury still very present on his face “...I know the lad, there’s more to this story than you’re telling us. He’ll tell me like it is, none of these flowery words you’re feeding us.” He demanded, a few northern lords nodding in agreement.

Jon.

He still couldn’t believe it, everything that had happened today still refused to process in his head.

Jon Snow...

His brother...

...And he had a fucking dragon.

The situation was mad.

The first thing he felt when he found out that he had a brother was sheer glee, he already had a sister, two if he counted Dany who he’d grown up with all his life. But a brother? No, he had nothing like that. Some would say Viserys was like a brother to him but he’d have to commission the biggest handkerchief in existence to be made for him to wipe the tears of laughter from his eyes.

Viserys wasn’t his brother, he wasn’t anybody’s brother.

Viserys was just...Viserys, a perpetually unpleasant person to be around.

How Arianne hasn’t caused a war by murdering him in his sleep he doesn’t know.

After the glee, came the worry, two different sources for said worry. The first being that his new
brother would want nothing to do with him, that he wouldn't even get a chance to be a brother to him. The second source of worry came when he realised that Jon was in control of the greatest war asset Westeros has seen since the dragons died out.

And if he really wanted to, he could take whatever he wanted, including the lives of his loved ones.

The different emotions carried on circling through his mind earlier as he followed through with his grandmother’s orders and escorted everyone to one of the rooms on the family wing. Talk between Rhae, Dany and Marge was plentiful, but him, along with Viserys, stayed silent, too busy thinking things over in their head to join in the conversation.

He hadn't missed the fact that Viserys was quiet either, something to worry about at a later date.

“My son is currently busy Lord Umber, if we could all just calm down, we can talk about this like rational adults.” His father said to the giant lord. In his opinion, he’d just made things worse by telling the emotional lord to calm down.

“Calm down? CALM DOWN!? Don’t tell me to calm down you bloody swine!” The Lord of Last Hearth snapped back, pointing towards his father with undisguised rage.

Ser Arthur stepped forward and stared down the larger man, his hand gripping the hilt of his famous sword “Do you need reminding of who you are speaking to my lord?” He said, threatened really.

Lord Umber got close to Ser Arthur “Aye, why not. And while you’re at it, you can leave the steel where it is, let’s sort this out the old fashioned way.” The large lord said as he started rolling one of his sleeves up.

Most of the occupants in the room had moved to the sides to distance themselves from whatever was about to transpire.

However, before anything bad could happen, the scrape of a chair being abruptly moved filled the room, the source of such noise being his grandmother as she stared down at the two men.

“Stand down, the pair of you!” His grandmother said, her raised voice echoing through the room. “The both of you are acting like bloody imbeciles!” She continued as she gazed at the arguing men.
“One of you is regarded as one of the most respected lords in the entire North, the other is one of the most gifted knights to ever wear the legendary white cloak.” She added as she looked back and forth between the two men, her royal mask fully in place with a hint of the Targaryen rage behind those violet eyes.

“Act like it!” She finished.

The two men carried on looking at each other, Ser Arthur looked calm as he followed the instructions he’d been given. Lord Umber was now breathing heavily as he carried on looking at the Dayne knight, eventually huffing as he turned away.

The room seemed to let out a collective breath, who knew what would’ve happened if the two men had decided to ignore the Dowager Queen. A few people turned their head towards the high windows of the hall, the heavy rain battering the glass.

*Jon’s out there in that.* He thought to himself.

“I demand to see Ned.” Lord Umber said as he turned back around to look at his father, the room looking up to their King to see what his response would be.

“My lord...” His father started, but was quickly interrupted.

“Piss on whatever excuse you are about to give me.” Lord Umber said, a few murmurs around the room at the sheer audacity of the northern lord.

“I need to hear it from his mouth and in his words what it is that he’s done.” The lord continued “I need to know that we aren’t being fooled here.” He finished as he looked up at the King with a stern facade.

His father looked at the Lord of Last Hearth for a few seconds with a blank look on his, eventually leaning his head towards his Queen.

“Let him talk to Lord Stark, it might save us a lot of hassle.” He heard his mother say to the King, his father kept his eyes on Lord Umber as he seemed to reluctantly nod to his Queen’s suggestion.
“Alright.” His father said as he carried on nodding “Alright...I’ll allow it.” He said, both him and Lord Umber looking at each other sternly.

Before anybody could move into action, a piercing roar erupted from outside, everybody in the room flinching from the shock of it. Some people turned and looked at the windows, some people looked towards their King for guidance.

Personally, he wanted to go outside and see if his brother had returned along with the dragon, and so did a few other people as chairs next to him scraped against the ground.

Another roar came a few seconds later, this time it sounded closer. His father held his hands up in the air in the hopes of calming people down, a few of them starting to show signs of panic.

“Everybody stay calm!” His father shouted, a few people listening to their King as he continued “The dragon means you no harm!”

*He hopes.*

*If Jon wasn't in control…*

He took a slow breath, even he was starting to get a little anxious all of a sudden.

“How can you be so sure?” Someone in the crowd of people shouted towards his father, a few murmurs of agreement.

Before his father could answer, the main door to the great hall was opening, one of House Whent’s guards stepping in. The majority of the room’s occupants turned and looked at the guard, the damp looking man squirming under the attention.

“Your grace!” The man shouted, his father motioning for the man to approach.

“The dragon your grace, it’s landed outside the castle walls.” The guard declared.
“Was there somebody mounted on it’s back?” His father asked eagerly.

“I think so your grace, it’s a little difficult to see much out there with all that rain.” The guard answered back.

Another roar erupted from outside, he turned to his side and saw his daughter clutching his wife tightly, her face buried in her mother’s shoulder.

What is happening out there?

His father moved from his spot at the table and whispered a few words to Ser Jaime as he passed him. Whatever was said had the Lannister knight nodding before moving in the opposite direction.

He stood up from his seat shortly after, if his father was going out there then he was going with him. The King only made it half way through the hall before a commotion near the hall door was noticed.

He father stopped in his tracks as Jon squeezed past the Whent guard and entered the room. The guard in question was quick to grab hold of the hilt of his sheathed sword but with one word, his father halted whatever the man planned on doing to his brother.

His brother.

He was still coming to terms with that idea.

“Stop!” His father shouted to the guard, the poor man looked so confused as his eyes back and forth between the King and the drenched man who’s just walked in on them.

The entire room was staring at his brother, the weather clearly as bad as it sounded as drops of water dripped from the tips of his hair. The wound where his father had accidentally struck him had stopped bleeding but the rain had clearly gotten to it as one side of his face was damp with a mixture of water and blood.
To somebody who didn't know what had happened, they would think Jon had killed a man.

Both his father and brother looked at each other, neither of them moving a muscle. Whispers heard from each corner of the room, Jon the subject of every single one of them.

Before Jon or his father could open their mouth, the hulking presence of Lord Umber was making his way towards the pair. He had his back to Aegon but with the way that he walked, he could tell the man was far from pleased.

“Jon!” The lord barked as he made his way past his father and approached his brother. He didn't miss the way Ser Arthur readjusted the grip on his sheathed sword as the larger man passed.

“Lord Umber.” His brother replied as he held his hand out for the bigger man to shake. It was at this point he noticed the scabbard Jon moved underneath his arm as he went in for the handshake.

*He’s already got two swords on his back, why does he need three?*

*It just seemed excessive.*

“Is it true?” Lord Umber said as he pointed to the King without looking at him, eyes still locked with his brother “What he’s saying, is it the truth or is this all some big ruse?” The agitated lord continued.

Jon looked towards the King, momentarily looking over his shoulders and locking eyes with him before looking back towards his apparent friend. At this point, the whole room was getting front row seats to the juiciest gossip in the realm.

*Lord Varys will be livid that he wasn't here to witness this, the nosy bastard.*

“It depends on what he’s said.” His brother simply answered back as he looked Lord Umber right in the eyes. It was at this point he realised how big his brother was as he stood next the giant lord. He was still smaller than the older man but the *Greatjon* wasn't dwarfing his brother, far from it.

*He’s a threat.* His subconscious whispered to him in the back of his mind but he chose to ignore it.
Listening to any voices in his head was a sure fire way of breeding madness, something he was very aware of being a bit of a problem with some of his relatives in the past.

“He’s trying to claim that Ned isn’t your father and that you’re his bloody son of all things!” Lord Umber explained, ending with a humourless chuckle like he still didn’t believe it himself.

Jon looked towards their father again, then looked around the room, his eyes drifting around the different lords and ladies currently watching before looking back at Lord Umber.

“Aye, the man speaks no lies.” Jon answered back, an odd feeling of pride swelled in his chest seeing his brother defend his father’s word.

Lord Umber looked struck as he looked at his brother, his face morphing into a look of anger. He wasn’t the only one to see it either, both Ser Arthur and Ser Gerold, who had been escorting his father, looking to be getting into position in case they had to defend Jon.

Who to them, was primarily the King’s son and a Prince of the realm.

Lord Umber’s face morphed into an angry scowl as he replied to his brother.

“I see you’ve chosen sides then, from bastard to prince in a day. Meanwhile, your actual father, the man who brought you up, is being punished for refusing to leave you with this lot.” The man growled as he nodded his head towards his father. He had the instant urge to go down there and defend his family from being bad mouthed by an angry northerner.

He didn't get chance to though, if it wasn't his mother holding his arm down to stop him from standing, it was definitely the headbutt his brother sent right into the face of Lord Umber.

That was when all hell broke loose.

Gasps mixed in with shouting as his brother and Lord Umber started to scrap with each other, Jon grabbing the old man by his head and holding on to him in a headlock.
"You fuckin’..." He heard Lord Umber growl as he tried to get his brother off of him.

“I didn't choose sides you cunt.” Jon replied back as he struggled to keep a hold on the bigger man. The fight didn't go very far though as his father was pulling Jon off of Lord Umber and Ser Arthur and Ser Gerold were restraining the Lord of Last Hearth.

He turned and looked to see the northerners reaction to all of this, surprised to see a few disappointed faces looking on. One of the lords was being held back by Ser Oswell, and with how big he was, it was most probably Lord Umber’s son.

*He didn't understand, did most of the northern lords want to see Jon and Lord Umber fight?*

“This stops! Now!” His father declared as he let go of Jon, his brother straightening his surcoat.

“Let go of him.” The King said to his two Kingsguard, the two men reluctantly releasing the bigger man, giving him chance to wipe the blood away from his nose where Jon had cracked him, staring daggers at his brother as he did so.

Whilst that was happening, his father bent down and picked up the dropped scabbard and sword that Jon had released during the confrontation, an odd look on his father’s face as he inspected it.

“Everybody out! Return to your camps please!” His father all of a sudden announced, men and women looking at each other in confusion at the declaration. His father had not torn his eyes away from the sword in his hands.

“Did the King stutter? You heard him, out!” Ser Gerold shouted as the room seemed to get the message.

“He stays.” His father said as he nodded in Lord Umber’s direction “I told him he can see Lord Stark, I’m a man of my word if nothing else.”. A few northern lords patted the giant lord on the back as they passed him on the way out, a couple of them sending his brother odd looks as the exited the hall.

It wasn't long before the only people left in the room were his family, the Kingsguard and Lord Umber.
It was quiet for a moment or two, nobody knowing how to proceed after all that had just happened. Then all of a sudden, his father looked up at his brother with a shocked look on his face.

“How do you have this?” He said, his voice hard to hear with the amount of awe that was in it.

Now what? He wondered as he looked on. It was safe to say that his days wouldn’t be boring with Jon in them.

Daenerys

What was happening?

She’d never seen her brother look the way he did right now, he looked, dare she say it, childlike with the look of awe on his face as he looked at her nephew.

Nephew.

How had that happened?

One minute he’s Lord Stark’s bastard son, making a name for himself in and around the tournament grounds, the next, he’s her long lost nephew and probably regarded now as one of the most important people in realm, in the world even.

A long lost member of the royal family, a Targaryen prince of the realm.

A very capable warrior, proven in front of the most important people in the realm, something that will demand respect regardless of ones personal feelings of him.

Charming in his own way and easily liked if the way people acted around him were anything to go by.
The first and only dragonrider Westeros has seen in over a century, his mount truly the most wonderful thing she has ever seen in her life.

All that…

...and he’s unmarried, the most eligible bachelor that all the unmarried ladies of the country will be foaming at the mouth with the idea of sinking their or their daughter’s claws into him.

He’s also nice to look at. She supposed or whatever.

The same person who was in her thoughts was now slowly unsheathing the sword that he’d just taken off her brother. As soon as the sword was out of its scabbard he said one word to him.

“Blackfyre.”

She heard a few gasps around the room, mainly from the table the rest of the family was sat at. Aegon, who seemed very restless earlier, didn’t waste any time at all as he stood up from his chair and moved around the table. Like some unknown force, the rest of the family rose to their feet too, everybody following Egg around the table and towards the King and his long lost son.

“Where did you get this?” The King asked as Jon handed him the sword, her brother gripping the hilt like it was made of glass.

“Gerion Lannister.” Jon replied, his eyes catching the large group of them walking towards him and his father.

“So the rumours were true, I was going to broach the subject with Lord Tywin but I refrained in case I was making an error bringing up such a sensitive topic.” Her brother replied. She’d heard those rumours too and nearly asked Ser Jaime about them but for the same reasons her brother had, she’d stopped herself.

Their group eventually made it to her brother and Jon, the latter’s eyes roving across them all, taking in all their faces. The silence was particularly awkward.
“Come here.” Her mother said as she moved towards Jon, one of her handkerchiefs in hand as she wiped the mixture of blood and rainwater off of his cheek. The face he pulled as her mother cleaned his face almost made her giggle, she’d seen Alysanne pull the same type of face when she was having her dinner wiped from around her mouth.

“Alright mother. I think he’s capable of doing that sort of thing himself.” Rhaegar said as he handed the sword, which was apparently the long lost sword of House Targaryen, over to Aegon. Her nephew handled the precious heirloom the same way his father did, and when she caught a glimpse of it, she knew why. She wasn’t much into swords or that sort of thing but even she could see how truly beautiful the piece was.

“Never too old for a grandmother’s love.” She replied as she finished her work, Jon’s face clear of any blood. The mark that was the source of it had clotted up and seemed to have stopped bleeding.

_I bet Rhaegar feels really bad about that._

Her brother sighed as he looked past her mother and Jon towards the waiting Lord Umber who she’d honestly forgot was still in the room with them.

“Right, a promise is a promise. Let’s go and see Lord Stark, he should still be in the library with his family.” Her brother said, Lord Umber grunting in reply, seemingly sick of the sight of what was happening in front of him.

“You might need this, for your nose.” Her mother said to the large lord as she held the handkerchief she’d just used on Jon out for him. The man reluctantly took the piece of cloth, eyeing Jon as he wiped his nose clean of the small stream of blood coming from it.

“Lucky hit boy, next time will be a different story.” He said as he finished wiping his nose. She eyed Jon to see what his reaction to that veiled threat was, all he did was look at Lord Umber.

“There won’t be a next time, this whole mess will be concluded today or by your old god’s and the new I’ll start swinging for people as well.” Her mother intervened, thoroughly surprising Lord Umber with her statement.

“I think the last thing people want to see is you threatening people mother.” Rhaegar said as the group started moving out of the hall and towards the library, she didn’t miss the way Ser Arthur and Ser Gerold stuck to Lord Umber like glue, almost daring him to try something.
“I’d like to see that.” Jon said as he walked side by side with her mother “I’ll even teach you some useful moves if you like?” He continued.

She’d noticed that since arriving, he’d barely looked in anybody’s direction other than her mother, her brother and Lord Umber.

*Maybe he’s shy.*

She knew she would be if she was in his situation, thrust into a family of people she’d barely met and expected to act like everything was normal.

She wasn’t worried though, they’d all soon rectify that problem, all of them happy to welcome him into his family.

*Some more than others.*

“Who says I need to learn some new moves? Your grandmother isn’t as delicate as you think she is.” Her mother replied, a raised eyebrow aimed at her grandson as they walked down the same hall the library was situated in. A small grin appeared on her nephew’s face in response to her mother’s reply.

*She ignored how much she enjoyed seeing it.*

All of a sudden, her brother stopped and turned to look at them, everybody stopping themselves. Just ahead, she could see Ser Barristan and Ser Jaime waiting outside of the library, guarding the door.

“Me and Lord Umber are the only ones who need to go any further, the Queen shall escort everybody to my solar, you can wait for me there.” Her brother said, something she was honestly expecting. This situation really didn't need an audience.

“I’m coming with you.” Jon said as he stepped forward.
“Jon...” Her brother started to say but Jon was already walking past him and approaching the library doors. Her brother just sighed and shook his head, she just gave him a supportive smile when he looked at her. He was definitely going to be a handful, that’s for sure.

“He being Lyanna’s son is making more and more sense in hindsight.” Lord Umber said to nobody in particular. She saw Elia lower her head, her brother turned around and followed Jon before she could see how he’d reacted.

Rhaegar, Jon and Lord Umber eventually entered the library leaving the rest of them stood in the hallway.

“C’mon,” Her mother said as they all turned to make their way to her brother’s solar “...I need a cup of wine and a sit down.”

That sounded like a brilliant idea.

Chapter End Notes

Couple more reactions in this chapter, a bit of a slow one in my opinion but definitely needed.

In the next one, the story will be finally leaving Harrenhal and heading to King’s Landing, they’ll be more reactions to the news as well.

On to the next one :)


Ned

Seeing Jon Umber walk through the library door was as much of a surprise as seeing the King and Jon being with him too. The look on his face was both annoyed and concerned as he looked at him, along with what looked to be a swollen nose.

Who’s he been fighting now?

The look on Jon’s face was blank as his eyes fell on him, his face softening as he gazed towards his children. The King also had a blank look on his face as he looked around the room, closely followed through the door by Ser Jaime, the Lannister man looking at him like he was quietly judging him.

Let him. The only judgement he cared about was his children’s at this point.

He just hoped they could one day forgive him.

“Ned!” Lord Umber said as the library door closed behind him, his friend patted a bear paw of a hand on his shoulder before looking at the rest of his family and nodding.

“Jon, what are you doing here?” He asked his friend, he caught his nephew looking at him, until he realised that the question wasn’t aimed at him.

“I’ve come to hear it from the horse’s mouth Ned. I’ve heard it from him,” He said as he pointed at the King without even looking at him “...but more importantly, I need to hear it from you.”

“Address the King how he should be addressed my lord.” Ser Jaime said as he stepped forward. Rhaegar held a hand out to stop the knight from advancing any further.

“Shut it, Lannister. I haven't got the patience to deal with you as well.” Lord Umber said as he kept his eyes on him, waiting to hear what he had to say.
He sighed as he momentarily looked at Jon, the lad taking a seat opposite him in the spare chair that was next to Arya “I don't know what you’ve been told Jon.” He said.

As brash as ever, the Greatjon nodded in Jon’s direction “That he’s Lyanna’s lad and you’re being sent to the wall.”

He nodded, Lord Umber letting out a heavy sigh as he deflated in the chair he was sat in.

“Your grace?” Catelyn said from the other end of the table. He turned just in time to see her standing up before giving the King a small curtsy.

“Lady Catelyn.” The King answered.

“Your grace,” She said again “…surely you can reconsider the punishment you are handing to my husband? We’ve been nothing but loyal servants to the crown ever since you claimed the throne.” She said as she then reluctantly turned and looked at Jon. To her credit, she managed to leave out that ever lying undertone of annoyance she had whenever she looked at the boy “The boy has grown up to be a strong and healthy young man, a man that numerous ladies would have dreamed of taking as a husband even before his parentage was revealed. Surely the care and upbringing of your...son counts for something?” His wife said in an attempt to help him that he himself thought was futile.

He knew that every word that came out of her mouth about Jon was horseshit, and unsurprisingly, so did Jon. If he could weaponise the look he was giving Catelyn, this entire castle would have been levelled.

“My lady,” The King began “…I understand your need to defend your husband and his actions but his punishment was already reconsidered in the first place. Originally, your husband would’ve been punished for high treason, the sentence being death. But because of certain circumstances, mainly in the form of Jon here pleading his case,” He said as he motioned towards Jon, who was still looking at Catelyn like he couldn't believe what he’d just heard her say “…the sentence was reduced to a mandatory duty within the Night’s Watch.” The King explained in a diplomatic tone, surprising Ned as he was certain the man still wanted to rip his head off.

“Surely you can look past this your grace.” Catelyn asked, almost pleading. “I mean, if the stories are true, my husband is your brother by law, he’s family! Would you really send a member of your
His wife was playing a dangerous game. He didn't know whether or not to be thankful with her attempts at guilt tripping the King.

Before the King could respond, Jon scoffed and shook his head.

“I am in awe, do you know that?” He said as he looked at Catelyn.

And it begins.

His wife sniffed “I’m not quiet sure what you are referring to your grace.”

Now that shocked him, until he realised what she was doing.

It wouldn't look well treating the son of the King like she normally did while the King was actually in the same room as them.

“Keep going. I’m intrigued to see how far you can go with this before your real colours shine through.” Jon responded as he stared at Cat in mild disgust.

His wife looked confused and seemed to look at the King for some help.

What is she playing at?

“Don’t look at him, you're talking to me right now.” Jon said as he folded his arms and lent back in his chair.

Oh, she didn't like that.

Catelyn turned and looked at Jon, he could tell she wanted to say something, the way her face
hardened momentarily before feigning respect for his nephew.

“Of course your grace.” Catelyn replied as she bowed her head.

_He couldn't believe what he was seeing._

Jon just sat there with his arms folded, head cocked to one side, that cold look on his face that he’d become accustomed to in recent months.

“You can’t stand this, can you?” Jon said, a small grin upon his face. He turned and caught his wife blinking rapidly, her mask showing slowly cracking.

“You can’t stand me, can you?” Came Jon’s next question. The way Catelyn was fidgeting suggested that Jon was slowly getting to her.

“I’m not sure what you mean.” She replied in a feeble attempt to regain her footing in this conversation. It was in vain though, everybody in the room was now seeing how Jon’s words were affecting her.

“You can’t stand it, can’t stand that I’ve won.” Jon said, smiling in victory as they all saw his wife stand abruptly from her seat with a look of pure anger on her face.

_She’d walked right into his trap._

Catelyn stood their almost vibrating on the spot as she looked down at his grinning nephew. The flare of her nostrils really spoke of how worked up she was getting.

“Lady Stark!” The King said as he, like the rest of them, watched the entire thing unfold. His wife turned to Rhaegar, her face still showing that look of loathing that was aimed at Jon “Control yourself or you will be dismissed.”

It looked like she was about to say something she was going to regret but she caught herself just in time. With a plastered on smile, she looked at the King and spoke.
“My apologies your grace, it’s been an awfully long day, I imagine you can understand.” She said before pushing her chair back under the table.

“I think me and the children will retire back to camp. It’s getting late and we still haven’t eaten our evening meal.” She continued as she motioned for the children to follow suit, something they seemed to reluctantly do as their eyes bounced between him and Jon.

“I’m afraid that won’t be happening my Lady.” The King said, that made both Ned and Jon look towards him.

“Your grace?” He said, an anxiousness brewing in the pit of his stomach.

The King looked to him “You and your family will be housed within the castle tonight, given appropriate rooms for your nights stay. You have to realise that we have to keep a close eye on you given the situation.” He explained.

“You’d imprison children!?” Lord Umber said in that booming voice of his.

“Lord Umber, I’m not imprisoning them, I’m merely keeping a close eye on them.” The King said “...and prisoners don’t normally get feather beds and servants.”

“Just because you give them a fancy bed doesn't mean they aren't prisoners!” The Greatjon replied back. Ned didn't miss the way Ser Jaime rested his hand on the pommel of his sword.

“It’s just for tonight Lord Umber, everybody is returning home tomorrow so can you really call them prisoners? If for whatever reason they do need to leave the castle before then, an escort will suffice.”

*Gods he wanted to hate the man, he was just too tired to do so at this point.*

“This still doesn't sit right with me, not one bit.” Lord Umber said to himself as he shook his head.

“Lord Stark will be allowed to say goodbye to his family before he makes his journey north to take
the black my lord. I’m a father myself, I won’t deny him that. I believe I’m being more than fair in this situation.” The King said to his friend.

The Greatjon sighed as he looked at him, he lowered his voice as he leant close to him.

“Are you sure you’re okay with this Ned? We won’t give up on you, you just have to say the word.” He said to him. Ned felt blessed in that moment knowing he had support.

But at the end of the day, the support wasn't needed. He’d come to terms with his fate, feeling somewhat fortunate that he could clear his conscience while somehow keeping his head in the process.

He shook his head at his friend, he didn't want more people dying, especially for him. He also didn't think it was a smart idea for the Greatjon to essentially plot against a man who was stood literally five feet away from them, regardless if he even heard him or not.

Which he had.

“Lord Stark doesn’t get a choice I’m afraid Lord Umber, he forfeited that power when his crimes came to light.” The King interrupted. Lord Umber looked truly fed up of the man as he turned and looked up at him, that was before his face scrunchied up in confusion.

“Crimes? As in more than one? What else has he supposedly done?” Umber asked, his eyes taking a glance his way before looking back for his answer.

“Apart from kidnapping my son and keeping him hidden from me for the good part of seventeen years, Lord Stark here also ignored my given orders towards the end of Robert’s rebellion in which he was given a sealed note to hand to my Queen’s uncle, Prince Lewyn Martell. The Kingsguard knight was protecting Lyanna during her pregnancy and was ordered to stand down per my sealed note.” Rhaegar said before his eyes moved over to him “Lord Stark withheld that note and instead fought and killed the Dornish Prince so that there would be no eyewitnesses for the next crime he was about to commit.”

The fact that the Greatjon lowered his head and didn't even look at him showed what he thought of his actions.
“Which brings up another question,” The King said as he looked towards his wife, who was still stood up behind her chair, the children had returned to there’s.

“Were you aware of Lord Stark’s crimes for all these years, my lady?”

He froze, his eyes instantly landing on Jon. The way his nephew looked at him made him realise that Jon held a considerable amount of power right now.

Catelyn never knew about Jon’s parentage, and Jon knew that. But a small part of him feared Jon would say otherwise. All to spite the woman who has been a thorn in his side for most of his life.

Catelyn floundered with the question, looking at the King wide eyed.

“Absolutely not your grace, I swear it. I found out when you did, by the seven I swear it.” She said, understandable fear on her face.

“She speaks the truth, I hid it from everyone, even my wife.” He announced, turning to the stern faced monarch.

The King looked at him for a few moments, seemingly deciding whether or not to believe him. His eyes eventually turned to Jon, and so did Ned’s, pleading with his eyes alone that Jon wouldn't do something he would come to regret in the future.

“Jon? What is your opinion on the subject? You lived with her for years so you probably have a better understanding of this.” The King asked. Jon seemed to mull the question over as he looked at his wife, taking his time to make Catelyn sweat no doubt.

He eventually spoke.

“No, she didn't know.” He said as he looked from Catelyn to the King. He did well to not show how relieved he was hearing him say that.

Catelyn was about to say something but she was interrupted by Jon before she could do so “She couldn't have known, she would've treated me with a little bit of human decency otherwise.” His
nephew growled out.

“What do you mean?” The King replied, his eyes bouncing between Jon and his wife. Ned didn't like the look of the frown on his face.

“It doesn't matter, none of it really matters now.” Jon replied as he took a deep breath.

“Well,” The King said with a sigh “...I think I’ve heard enough, and I hope you have too Lord Umber.” Rhaegar said as he looked to the Greatjon.

His friend’s eyes turned to him, a defeated look to them “Aye, I’ve heard enough too. I’m just sorry that it came to this Ned.”

He gave the man a small smile.

“Me too friend.”

He received a paw sized clap on his shoulder as the giant lord rose to his feat, a small chuckle released “Hey, at least Castle Black is closer to Last Hearth than Winterfell is. I’m sure his grace isn't against a recreational visit once in a while? Even bring you up some proper ale instead of the piss you’ll be drinking there eh?” His friend said followed with a small laugh.

*Leave it up to the Greatjon to make light of this type of situation.*

He just gave the man a nod and a polite smile before the lord of Last Hearth nodded to the rest of the room, a pat on Jon’s shoulder without looking at him and a kind smile aimed at Ned’s children were his last actions before leaving the room.

“Ser Barristan.” The King said as he turned to the veteran knight. The knight in question nodded to his King.

“Be so kind as to escort Lady Catelyn and her children to guest wing of the castle, make sure to give word to one of the servants that the King has requested rooms for the Starks to be prepared.” The King instructed to Ser Barristan, who nodded again in reply.
He gave each of them a hug as they passed him, Rickon still a little confused about what was happening as he copied his siblings. He could feel how stiff Catelyn went when he brought her into an embrace, eventually, and reluctantly returning the hug.

She didn't even bother showing and courtesy to the King or Jon, the latter came to no surprise.

The library door finally closed with a click, the only people left in the room were him, Jon, the King and Jamie Lannister.

His eyes sought out Jon’s, his nephew looked tired, which was confirmed as he let out a long yawn.

The King moved over to Jon’s side of the table and took a seat next to him, momentarily looking at Jon before turning to him.

“Lord Stark, even though you did something that has created much resentment, I do understand that the question I’m about to ask you is a difficult one to answer.” The King said as he clasped both of his hands together and leaned on the table in between them.

He knew what was coming, and in all honesty, he’d hoped he’d somehow forgot in the middle of all this mess.

“As you know, I made you aware that due to your actions, sending you to the Night’s Watch wouldn’t be the only thing that I would require. A ward of the crown would also be required, not as a punishment per se, but as a deterrent for any possible ideas of rebellion due to what has happened today. Do you understand?” Rhaegar explained. He knew it made sense, his wife seemed to have it all worked out, on her own warpath until she was told one of the children would become a ward of the crown.

_It still didn't mean he had to like it though._

He cleared his throat before speaking “I understand, but is there really no other way. The children didn't do anything wrong and I feel like they are being punished for my actions.”

“For your mistakes Lord Stark, lets make that very clear shall we?” Rhaegar replied, evident ire upon
his face.

*If you say so…*

He nodded once, eyes searching out Jon’s who was sat next to the King, lent back in his seat with his arms crossed as he looked to be in a world of his own.

“No! Look to him for answers Lord Stark, because he won’t have what you seek.” The King said to him. He could tell that the man really wasn't happy about the fact that he was walking out of this whole situation with his head still attached.

“What if I did though?” Jon spoke up, everybody in the room looking at him.

He looked at his nephew eagerly, noticing the way the King frowned as he turned to look at his son.

“Jon?” The King said. “I’m not sure…”

“Hear me out.” Jon interrupted, something the King didn't look best pleased with. Rhaegar nodded for Jon to continue though and Ned hoped his idea was realistic.

*Please be realistic.*

“You say you need a ward to keep the peace?” Jon asked, Rhaegar nodding for him to continue.

“Wouldn’t it be preferable for the crown to seek out ties with House Stark instead of holding a glorified prisoner?” He proposed, his gaze looking in between Ned and Rhaegar.

*Where is he going with this?*

“Instead of keeping prisoners, making peace through a marriage is surely more advantageous to everybody involved?” He continued.
Rhaegar shook his head “How would that look to other houses hmm? People will be queuing up to defy the crown if they knew they could get a preferable marriage out of it, all in the guise of “making peace”.”

“This will be a one off, a gift from the King to his long lost son to make up for all those namedays that were missed.” Jon replied, a small smirk on his face.

*His mother’s smirk.*

The King looked at his son incredulously “You can't be serious?”

“Of course I’m serious.” Jon said as the smirk on his face dropped, a look of anger growing on his face, almost like something had snapped.

“I’m trying to resolve this somehow, I’m trying to find a way that doesn't fuck both sides of my family over! Is that really something that is hard for you to believe I would try and do!?” His nephew said, getting louder the more he spoke.

“Your grace?” Ser Jaime said, looking concerned as he spoke to his King, eyes wearily looking at Jon as he eyed the two blades that could be spotted behind him.

Before Rhaegar could speak, Jon stood abruptly, making everybody jump “No!” Jon said as he pointed at Ser Jaime “He needs to hear this, they both do!” He continued as he looked back at him and the King.

“I get it, he fucked up, he’s human, it’s what we do, and we were designed to learn from those mistakes.” Jon began as he looked at Rhaegar as he pointed at Ned “He was a young man barely older than me, with the weight of the world on his shoulders when Robert Baratheon marched on King’s Landing. He didn't give a shit who sat on the throne in the end, he just wanted the mad fucker who killed his father and uncle dead, and his sister back, back from her *apparent* kidnapper.” He said, a raised eyebrow aimed at his father.

“Careful, mind how you proceed Jon.” The King growled, his face showing how unimpressed he was right now.

“Or what? Hmm? I’m genuinely interested to see what you will do if I carry on like I plan to do.”
Jon replied, he gave the King that look he’d seen a couple of times, the one that had been aimed at him a few times.

The King stared at Jon like he couldn't believe what he was hearing.

Jon pointed at Ned while still looking at his father “He made a decision seventeen years ago when he took me back north, he decided that he was going to do what he thought was best for his family.”

The King answered back in anger “A decision he had no right making!” He said before turning to look at him.

“No, but he made it anyway, doing what he thought was his duty to his family. He chose his duty to his family over his duty to the crown.” Jon replied, looking down at the King from where he stood.

“Treason.” The King announced.

Jon sighed “Yes treason.” He said as he looked at Ned “…but he’ll be paying for it for the rest of his life. The duty he should’ve given to the crown seventeen years ago he’ll be doing for years to come in the Night’s Watch.”

“Work on fixing ties with House Stark instead of tearing them up even more.” He said more calmly, looking at his father intently.

The only thing that Ned could think of at that moment was his sister. She’d not had the opportunity to bring Jon up as a parent but it was easy to see that the apple hadn't fallen far from the tree. Defending his family till the bitter end, even if Ned didn't feel like he deserved it.

*He's not doing it for you, he's doing it for your children.*

The King sat forward “Me!? You want me to work on fixing ties? I’m not the one who committed treason!” Rhaegar said as he looked at his son.

Jon pointed at Ned and replied back “Well he can't do it can he? Your sending him to the bloody wall!” He said, almost shouting at his father.
“Jon.” Ned said softly, his nephew looking at him with clear annoyance on his face. He knew he needed to calm him down before something regrettable happened.

“It’s okay.” He assured. He appreciated what he was doing but it looked like he was about to blow his top, with the King no less.

Jon took a long breath in through his nose and out through his mouth before retaking his seat next to the King. Ser Jaime seemed to ease up after that, the man seemingly torn on what to do earlier.

The King looked at his son intently, Ned could clearly see the man was weighing up some sort of response to Jon. A few moments later after drumming his fingers on the table, the King closed his eyes and let out a heavy sigh.

“I hope I’m not making a mistake here, but since my son is so incredibly stubborn, not too different from his mother,” Rhaegar said with a small smile, Ned feigned a smile in response. In truth, he hated it whenever the man mentioned his sister, somebody he knew a hell of a lot more of than he did.

“...I’ll make the first step fixing ties with our houses by retracting the crown’s need for a ward. With aims of tying House Stark to the crown in the not too distant future, whether it be with marriage or something else.” The King finished. Ned felt a huge weight lift from his shoulders.

“All I’ve got to do is convince the Queen and her family that this is the right course for moving the realm into a more stable future. I can already tell that they won’t be happy that the man who killed their uncle will be joining the Night’s Watch with no further action taking place.” The King added as he looked at him unimpressed.

Jon let out a humourless chuckle “I suppose I’ll be receiving the brunt of their ire eh?” He said shaking his head and smiling to himself “One of Prince Oberyn’s daughters can’t stand me already, might as well add on to that.”

He looked at Jon confusingly, the King beating him to it as he asked him what had happened.

“One of them got a bit gobby with me in one of the practice yards, seemed she hated me before she’d even met me.”
It was the King’s turn to chuckle this time “That’ll be Lady Obara. The Queen has told me before how unimpressed her niece is with most things. Though to her credit, it’s turned her into a no nonsense combatant, very respected amongst her peers.” The King explained.

“Couldn’t care less to be honest, Miserable bitch.” Jon said to himself as he folded his arms and sat back in his chair. The King didn't seem to know what to do as he looked at Ser Jaime. Ned held back a smile, this was something the King would have to live with now, zero filter from the lad.

Good luck leashing him to your southern pleasantries and teachings. Lya is probably cackling her fucking head off up there seeing her boy being unleashed on them.

Rhaegar blinked a couple of times “Well...” The King said as he rose to his feet, hands pressed into the table to help him. “...I think that concludes this conversation. You are free to return to your family Lord Stark, tomorrow you and a personal guard will be travelling to Maidenpool where you’ll board a ship, this will take you all the way up to Eastwatch-by-the-Sea where you will travel from to Castle Black to take your vows. A raven will be sent in the morn detailing Lord Commander Mormont of everything that has transpired here today, do you understand Lord Stark?.”

His nod was automatic, he had already come to terms that he’d be a brother of the Night’s Watch in the not too distant future, all this was just a formality.

“I’ll take him.”

His brow shot up as his eyes fell on Jon, his nephew looking back at him. He didn't look angry but he didn't look happy either. The King turned and looked at his son like he’d gone mad.

“What do you mean?” Rhaegar asked. Jon just looked up at the King with a blank look on his face. Both him and Rhaegar must have come to the realisation at the same time, the King shaking his head and Ned becoming a little bit anxious at what had gone unsaid.

“Absolutely not.” The King exclaimed.

“I’m going back north anyway, I need to see Robb. I might as well take him with me, he’ll be able to speak with his son before he joins the watch. Uncle Benjen and uncle Aemon will be pleased to see me again as well.” Jon explained to the King, Ned’s head shook side to side as he refused to come to terms with what his nephew was suggesting.
I can’t, I can’t ride on that...thing!

“Jon,” The King said as he sighed “...you can’t just disappear whenever you want, you’re my son, a prince of the realm, there’s protocols.”

“And what are these protocols?” Jon asked like he was already fed up with the conversation.

The King looked somewhat surprised that Jon was being somewhat reasonable “Well...you need a guard for starters. I know you’re very capable yourself, we all saw the melee, but you need somebody watching your back at all tim...”

“What about him?” Jon said as he pointed in Ser Jaime’s direction “He can come with me.”

Ned looked at the Lannister knight to see what his reaction was to the idea of experiencing something that Ned was having trouble even coming to terms with.

“I’m not getting on that bloody thing.” The Kingsguard answered as he looked between Jon and his King.

“I’ll tell her you said that, it will make it even more awkward when you’re on her back.” Jon replied as he gave the knight a small grin.

He’s enjoying this.

“Your grace?” Ser Jaime said as he looked at the King, a subtle look of concern on his face.

The King in question looked deep in thought as he looked at his son, the small sigh indicating that he’d come to a decision.

“Ser Jaime will travel alongside you.” The King declared as he looked at the Lannister man “...that’s if you’re sure the dragon is capable of multiple passengers.” He continued as he looked back at Jon for an answer.
“She’ll manage, even with his fat arse being towed along.” Jon replied as he nodded his head in Ser Jaime’s direction, the knight frowning and looking down to look at himself.

A knock on the library door sounded through the room, Ser Jaime gripped the hilt of his sword as he checked to see who it was.

The door was opened wider by the Lannister man as Ser Barristan entered “Your grace,” He said as he bowed “…Lord Stark’s family has been settled in the guest quarters.”

The King nodded at the legendary knight as he made his way towards the door, turning as he realised that Jon was still sat down.

“Jon?” He said as he looked to his son in confusion.

“I won’t be long, just want a little chat with my uncle that’s all.” Jon replied without looking at his father.

“Ser Jaime will be just outside if you need him.” Rhaegar said as he finally exited the room, Ser Barristan and Ser Jaime along with him.

The room was silent as the two of them looked at each other, Ned eventually looking away from Jon’s uncomfortable gaze.

“What did you want to talk about?” He finally asked, somewhat pleased that he’d decided to stay behind instead of going off with his new family.

*It isn’t a new family, it’s always been his family, you just decided otherwise.* His mind answered back.

Jon shrugged his shoulders as he looked down at his hands rested on the table, he was slowly picking away at the skin at the edge of his thumbnail.
“Just thought we’d have a talk alone. Not like we are going to be able to do this again anytime soon.” He replied.

He smiled back at him.

It was nice to know that he’d not completely destroyed his relationship with him.

_________________________

Elia

What a mess. She thought as she took a seat and let out a sigh. Everybody else finding their own places to sit within her husband’s solar. He motioned towards Margaery and her daughter-in-law handed over a tired looking Alysanne for her to hold, Margaery quietly thanked her as she walked towards the wine decanter that Rhaella was already at.

“What we need to be prepared.” Her son said as he took a seat behind the desk, his eyes roaming the room for everybody’s reaction. He placed Blackfyre on top of the desk.

“If you are speaking of what I think you’re speaking of then I think you’re getting a little carried away Aegon.” Rhaella said to her son as she took a swig from her goblet.

“And what are we speaking of?” She asked as she looked between the two.

“War.” Her son replied, a heavy sigh released as his shoulders dropped. Seeing him sat behind that desk gave her a subtle image of what he would look like when he one day took his father’s place.

Rhaella shook her head as she took a seat “It won’t come to that.”

“You don’t know that grandmother. You saw the northerners in there, everybody saw how they reacted, especially Lord Umber.” Aegon replied as he got to his feet and poured himself his own cup of wine. Margaery held her hand out and her son took it as he sat down on the lounger next to her.

“Lord Stark seems to have accepted his punishment for what he’s done, if he has, the northerners should follow suit. They’d be no reason for them to spark a war unless they knew there was no doubt of their victory. No,” Rhaella said as she shook her head “...bloodshed would be their spoils, something nobody would thank them for. War would damage the northerners exceptionally, all for the sake of a man who has accepted his punishment.”
“What if there was no doubt of their victory?” Viserys asked from the corner of the room. His voice surprised her, he’d been eerily quiet in general while all this was happening.

“And how do you suspect they can guarantee their success hmm?” Rhaella said to her son, an unimpressed look on her face.

The question was left unanswered but the implication was as loud as Jon’s dragon.

Rhaella started shaking her head, a finger pointed at her youngest son “Oh no, I won’t have you playing games boy. I love you like I love all of my blood but I won’t hesitate in locking you up in a gilded cage and throwing away the key if you start playing mind games within this family. I will NOT stand for it, do you hear me?” Her mother-in-law asked to her son. The mother dragon was out to play it would seem.

Viserys didn't answer as he went and poured himself a drink, and it would seem it was as good as Rhaella was going to get.

“Your grace?” Margaery said, all of them looking up in habit at the title, the girls eyes solely on the Dowager Queen “...you have to admit, there is a slither of truth to his graces concerns, that’s if we are speaking about the same thing.” The girl respectfully spoke as she bowed her head in respect.

Alysanne squirmed in her arms at the sound of her mother’s voice but she eventually rocked her back to a more calmed state.

“I’m going say this only once. Jon isn't going to start a war over a man who lied to him for seventeen years.” She said resolutely.

“Yes, he has great love for his cousins, and some would think he would wage war on this realm for their sake, but his love for those cousins is the same reason he isn't going to fight against us. Jon isn't the type of man to go to war with his own blood.”

“I can’t imagine what that boy is thinking right now, both sides of his family at each other’s throat, him right in the middle of it all.” Rhaella finished, a shake of her head in disgust.
The room went quiet after that, everybody deep in their own thoughts. Her daughter looked especially torn on something.

Her eyes widened momentarily, with everything that was happening, she’d completely forgot.

*Rhaenys’ little crush has just collapsed and crumbled around her.*

She cleared her throat as she looked at her daughter “Rhaenys?” She said, her indigo eyes looking up at her like she’d just been caught daydreaming.

“Hmm?” She answered.

“You okay?”

Rhaenys seemed to go over her answer in her head before she replied. She could tell straight away that whatever was going to come out of her mouth wasn’t going to be what was truly on her mind.

“Just thinking of Jon’s name that’s all. Wondering why Lady Lyanna gave him such a northern name.”

Across the room, she heard Rhaella clear her throat “Jon is the name that Lord Stark gave him, mainly to hide his real identity I suspect but a part of me makes me wonder if he did it because he didn’t like the name his mother gave him.”

“And what did Lyanna name him originally?” Elia asked, butting her way into the conversation because she really had to know.

*I miss her.*

Rhaella gave her a soft and understanding smile “She named him Jaehaerys, a good strong Targaryen name.”

She nodded as she looked down at her lap, the day had finally caught up to Alysanne and she’d
fallen fast to sleep.

All of a sudden, she chuckled, Rhaella was still smiling at her but a confused look appeared on her face as she cocked her head.

She nodded down at the sleeping Alysanne “His name has good company.” She said as she thought of the Conciliator and the good Queen. Rhaella just chuckled and smiled at Alysanne.

A knock on the door disturbed the momentary peace that had come over her, Ser Loras opening the door and bowing.

“Your grace.” He said to nobody in particular, but his eyes were solely on her.

“Lady Ashara has requested an audience with the Queen.” He announced, looking proud that he sounded so sure of himself. Margaery looked at her brother with a smile, she seemed happy that her brother was getting settled within the white cloaks.

She nodded and stood up, carefully handing a sleeping Alysanne over to her great grandmother. Rhaella looked happy as she looked down at the little sleeping angel.

She exited the solar and noticed straight away that Ashara wasn't alone, along with her was her daughter and it seemed that their escort would be her brother.

“Ash? Is there something wrong?” She said as she approached the group. The look on her best friends face screamed that yes, something was wrong.

“Can we go somewhere more private?” Ashara nervously spoke. Elia looked up at Arthur but his face gave nothing away, Clarissa on the other hand looked exactly like her mother did.

She nodded and it wasn't long before Ser Arthur was escorting the three of them into a spare room near the solar. The room looked a lot cosier than the other room she was in, large cushioned seats and numerous decanters of wine spread around the room.

The door closed behind them, Ser Arthur looking very capable defending the one door into the room.
Ashara took a seat and Clarissa squeezed in next to her. Elia followed and sat opposite them, waiting for them to speak so she could find out what else had happened on this crazy day.

Ashara took a deep breath, seemingly to centre herself before opening those beautiful eyes in her direction.

“I need to tell you something.” She said. The look on her face didn't instil confidence in her that’s for sure.

“Whatever it is you have to say, just tell me Ash. Today has been incredibly long as you can expect and I think I’m just counting down the seconds before I can climb into my bed.” She explained as her eyes bounced between mother and daughter.

*The two of them reminded her of herself and Rhaenys, both daughters looking similar to their mothers.*

Ash’s eyes looked over at her brother momentarily before landing back on her, the face she pulled made out like she’d come to some sort of decision.

“Lord Stark is Clarissa’s father.”

She looked at her friend in astonishment, gaze slowly drifting to her daughter.

One thing came to mind as she took a calming breath.

*Will this day never end?*

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**Clarissa**

*Well that was awkward.* She thought as her and her mother were escorted by the Queen and Uncle Arthur to the library where Lord Stark was being held.

*Her father.* Her mind whispered as she wiped her clammy palms on her dress, signs of anxiety seeping in.
When the Queen had been told the truth, her reaction had been interesting. She knew she’d had a long day like the rest of them so her exasperation when her mother told her everything had been unsurprising.

Everything had happened so fast, one minute she was watching the joust like everybody else, the next, a dragon once again existed in the world, Jon was no longer her brother but her cousin and a secret prince, and her father was being sent to the Night’s Watch for hiding him from the King all these years.

All in one afternoon.

She’d wondered if it was the right time for her mother to reveal it to her father but after quickly thinking it through, she knew there was no other way. Who knew if she’d ever see him again after today.

She didn’t know how to feel when she saw him, whether to be angry, sad or sympathetic with him since they now knew that a lot of the things they believed turned out to be false. She turned to look at her mother as they got closer to the library, she could tell by her face that she was having the same kind of thoughts that she was having herself.

She squeezed her hand, her mother giving her a small smile and her returning it. She turned back the way they were going and noticed Ser Jaime standing guard outside of the library.

*Is the King still in there?* She wondered.

Both Queen Elia and her uncle nodded to the Lannister man as they entered the room, inside sat at the table having a conversation was her father and her brother, now cousin, Jon.

*Prince Jon now, you need to remember that.*

Her father stood to his feet when he noticed who had entered the room, Jon remained seated but looked like he realised why they were here.

“Your grace.” Her father said as he bowed to the Queen, his eyes quickly glancing in her and her mother’s direction behind her.
The look on his face dropped as his eyes connected with hers, a pale complexion taking over.

*Does he know? Does he see something in me?*

“Lord Stark.” The Queen replied as the room became increasingly uncomfortable already. The Queen nodded in Jon’s direction, her cousin giving the Queen a little smile and a nod in reply.

*That seems somewhat promising between the two.* She thought. She expected a lot of awkwardness between them given the circumstances.

“Lady Ashara.” Her father said as he nodded to her mother, a look of longing on his face. His eyes fell to her and she swallowed the lump in her throat.

“Lord Stark.” Her mother replied as she placed her hands on her shoulders, almost presenting her to her father.

“This is my daughter, Clarissa.” She said, her voice sounded strong as she declared it to the room. Her father approached her like she was a wild animal ready to bolt. She almost shivered as he pulled her hand to his lips and kissed the back of it. As he looked up at her, she could see the beginning of tears forming in his eyes.

“Well met my lady.” He said as he dropped her hand, he turned and looked at Jon, something must have show on his face because as soon as Jon looked at him, he was getting to his feet to greeting them.

She stuck her hand out for him to kiss it but she made a small noise instead as she was brought into a bear hug, her mother was the recipient of the next one, a smile on her face as Jon embraced her.

*Her father is probably so confused right now.*

The clear of a throat could be heard to her right, the Queen looking between her best friend and her...*what was Jon to her? Son? Stepson?* A somewhat amused look on her face.
Jon seemed to misunderstand what was happening because as soon as he let go of her mother, he was giving the Queen a somewhat awkward hug. She didn't miss the way her uncle went for the hilt of his sword as Jon embraced Elia, he did ease up though when he saw the soft smile on his Queen’s face.

*They’re still a little nervous around him.*

Jon pulled back and looked at the Queen, coming to his own conclusion, that he might have misunderstood.

“Sorry.” He said as he looked down at the Queen, the Queen herself shaking her head with the smile still on her face.

“No, it’s fine.” The Queen simply responded, her cousin nodding before turning away and looking at Lord Stark. The look he gave her father didn't try to hide the sympathy he seemed to feel for the man.

The Queen turned and looked towards her father as well “Lord Stark, Lady Ashara and her daughter would like to have a word with you, if that isn’t a problem with you of course.”

Her father shook his head “It’s fine. What..er...what is it you would like to talk about?”

The Queen looked at her mother and nodded, she turned back and replied.

“I’ll let my friend here tell you that.” She said as she linked her arm with Jon’s, catching him by surprise whilst doing so. “Me and Jon will leave you to it. Ser Arthur can stay to keep an eye on proceedings.” The Queen explained as she nodded towards her and her mother.

“Ser Jaime.” The Queen said as she walked towards the library door, Jon within her grasp. The three of them left the room, closing the door behind them, the only people left in the room were her, her mother, her father and her uncle.

To call the silence that enveloped the room uncomfortable would be an understatement.
Her father cleared his throat as he motioned towards the seats at the table, her mother nodded and moved to take a seat, she followed automatically, thanking her mother as she pulled a chair out for her.

Her father took a seat opposite them, her uncle was visible out the corner of her eye, stood next to the door, not at all hiding his apparent dislike for the man sat opposite her.

Her eyes moved back to said man opposite her, catching him staring at her intently, when their eyes connected, he broke his gaze and looked at her mother.

She saw him visibly swallow before speaking.

“How have you been?” He asked her mother. Her uncle scoffed from where he was stood, her mother gave her brother a look before turning back to her father and answering.

“I’ve been better, seems like you have as well. I mean, what in the world were you thinking Ned?” She said, clearly talking about the whole mess concerning Jon. Her mother needed to tread lightly or she’d quickly find herself being a little hypocritical.

Her father dropped his gaze to his hands resting on top of the table, before he could speak though, her mother spoke again.

“It doesn’t matter now I suppose, what’s done is done. You’ll be paying for what you have done for the rest of your life.” She added, in a slightly sympathetic tone.

She still cares for him.

Her father gave her mother a soft smile “Why are you here Ash?” He asked, taking a quick glance at her before looking back to her mother.

Her mother scoffed “After all these years, that’s what you ask me?” She replied. Clarissa dropped her gaze to her lap, this was never going to be an easy conversation for her parents to have.

Her father replied, and it sounded pained “Ashara...”
Her mother took a deep breath and shook her head “Like I said, it doesn’t matter now does it.” She said as she turned and looked at her. She closed her eyes and took another deep breath.

“You need to know something.” Was all her mother said into the silence of the room. She looked up to check her fathers reaction and noticed that he was already looking at her like he already knew what was about to be said.

“I think I already know what you’re about to say.” Her father said with a soft smile on his face as he carried on looking at her. She decided to smile back at him in response.

“You do?” Her mother said, her tone clearly showcasing how surprised she was. Her father just nodded without tearing his eyes away from her.

Her father sighed as he looked down at the wood of the table “None of us could have known that Aerys was going to do what he did to my father and brother.” He said as he looked at her mother.

She looked on confused as her father carried on talking.

“I didn't know about you and Brandon,” He said as he looked up, eyes connecting with Ashara’s before looking at her “...I'm sorry you never got to meet him.”

_He thinks I’m his brother’s daughter._

“Ned...” Her mother began to say but was quickly interrupted by her father.

He shook his head as he looked away from them “No it’s fine. I knew Brandon was fond of you so it’s not much of a surprise rea...”

“Eddard Stark you silly man!” Her mother snapped, both her and her father looking at her mother in shock.

Her mother had a stern look on her face but it wasn’t devoid of softness, a small smile beginning to
grow on her face.

“Me and Brandon never did anything, he knew how much his brother cared about me to even try.” She said, what was left unsaid might as well have been screamed in her father’s direction.

She had very little difficulty pinpointing the moment of realisation on her father’s face.

She saw the tear run from his eye as he dropped his head.

“I’m sorry.” He said, the urge to walk around the table and hug him becoming more and more irresistible.

“I should’ve been there for you.” He added. She looked at her mother, her eyes reflecting the same sadness that she was feeling.

“You didn't know Ned, you didn't know because I didn't tell you.” Her mother said, she could see the sorrow in her father’s eyes as he looked up.

“I didn't tell you because I thought that everything that you’d said to me the last time we were here at Harrenhal was just said to get what you really wanted. The news that you had married somebody else after you’d promised yourself to me along with the fact that you already had a son from some unknown woman broke me Ned. It broke me enough for me to rebuild myself in a much harder material Ned, with a cage around my heart that very few people had access to, you not being one of them.”

“And then everything that I thought was a hard truth I had to swallow turned out to be far from the truth. You taking Jon from his father did more damage than you think Ned.” Her mother said as she looked in her direction “Our daughter grew up loathing you like her mother did.” She said as she looked back towards her father “And now that the truth has come out, that you’re a very silly man for what you did but not the man we thought you were, she now has very little time left to know her father before he’s shipped off to the wall.” She explained.

Her father looked at her with longing “Can...can I give you a hug?” He asked. She nodded to him and stood up, her father following suit.

The hug she gave him was crushing, the one she received back was just as tight. She could feel him
slightly shaking as he buried his face into her shoulder.

He pulled his face away from her shoulder, signs of tears in his eyes, something that reflected her own eyes no doubt.

“With the little time I have left, I would love to spend it getting to know you.” He said, his eyes looking towards her mother.

“Would you join us for dinner? I’d like you to meet your brothers and sisters too.” He asked before looking towards her mother.

She felt nervous at the thought, her mother seemed to feel like that as well.

“Is that a good idea?” Her mother said. “I’ve heard stories from Jon about your wife, I’d rather my daughter not be subjected to that.” She explained, a hard look on her face at the mention of her father’s wife.

“My wife will have to accept that I want my daughter to meet her siblings and that Clarissa is my firstborn, conceived a long time before we were even betrothed.” Her father explained in an iron tone.

“Do you think the Queen will allow my request for Clarissa’s legitimisation?” Her father asked her mother a few moments later, his arm rested across her shoulders.

“My niece already has a name Lord Stark.” Her uncle said from the side of the room “She has our family name, the family she has always had.”

Her father reluctantly nodded before looking back at her mother “So she can meet her siblings then?”

“If that’s what Clarissa wants.” She said as she looked at her. Clarissa nodded within her father’s grasp to which her mother nodded to in response.

She had to admit to herself, she was both anxious and excited to meet the siblings she’d known about for years.
She just hoped they accepted her.

Jon

The rain that came down heavy last night seemed to have subsided as he walked out of the room he’d been given last night. It was by far, the comfiest bed he’d ever slept in, though it didn’t do much for the tossing and turning he did in the middle of the night.

He nodded at the Kingsguard that had been stationed outside his room, it felt bizarre if he was being honest, having somebody guarding his back, making sure he was safe even while he was asleep.

“Your grace.” The knight bowed, the cringe on Jon’s face clearly visible as the man smiled at him like he knew that the title bothered Jon.

“Ser Oswell...wasn't it?” He replied as he started walking towards the great hall of the castle. The man nodded as Jon readjusted the strap on his shoulder that held his swords in place. The walk was quiet and brisk as the two of them made their way through the corridors of the castle. Most of the inhabitants were still asleep given that the sun was just on the cusp of dawning.

He wanted the least fuss he could possibly get this morning. Plus if they left this early, they’d arrive at Winterfell with enough time for him to have a talk with Robb and some supper before bed.

That’s if he isn't kicked out the moment Robb finds out what has happened.

He sighed as he got closer to the great hall. Last night after he left the library arm in arm with the Queen, he arrived in what seemed like the royal family’s personal dining room. He tried his best but he couldn't help but feel awkward sat in that room with everybody.

His long lost family, who also happened to be the ruling family of the entire country.

The food he'd eaten last night was the finest food he'd ever been served, but he couldn't help but compare it to those pies that Gage made back in Winterfell.

Gage’s pies won that contest with ease really.
He’d left that meal early, using the excuse of retrieving Ghost. That had caused a few faces to scrunch up in confusion, an explanation that Ghost was his direwolf and that he was still in his tent. He had a feeling some of them didn’t know he even had a direwolf with the looks he got back.

He didn't give them chance to ask questions though as he made his swift exit, Ser Jaime following him like a steel shadow, something he was finding hard to adjust to to be quite honest. He was a lone wolf, used to the freedom of being alone and doing his own thing.

The northern camp was dark as he entered it, he didn't miss the couple of looks that were sent his way, looks from people who didn't seem to know what to make of him now. He held their gazes though as he walked past, a lot of them turning away before he did.

*He wasn't going to be made out as some sort of villain in all of this.*

Ghost was happy to see him as he entered his tent, even giving Ser Jaime the once over, sniffing his hands and around his feat. The Lannister man looked calm but he didn't miss the way he kept his hand on the pommel of his sword.

He packed his measly tent up and returned back up to the castle, with two shadows this time, glaring at the guards when they even dared to slightly draw their swords when they noticed Ghost.

As he entered the entrance hall, he instantly noticed two of the hardest people to look at during dinner, both princesses seemingly waiting for him along with Ser Loras and Ser Jonothor.

If the dinner was awkward, then this was a test set by the gods. It was hard not to essentially perv at the two beautiful women petting his wolf like he was a common dog, didn't help that Ghost was eating up the attention he was getting from them either.

Ghost had continued to bathe in the attention he got as well, to the point that when Jon excused himself, Ghost had stayed put, staring at him stubbornly. He didn't like it but the way the two princesses beamed at him when he said Ghost could stay with them if he wanted was kind of worth it.

And that’s where Ghost had stayed all night, or he guessed that was what happened since it was the last time he saw him.
I hope they don't mind me asking them to look after him while I'm gone.

As he entered the great hall, he instantly noticed his uncle stood in the corner of the room talking to his children as Jory watched on. He also noticed that Lady Stark and Rickon were nowhere to be seen.

He wasn't surprised by this in the slightest.

What he was surprised to see though was the fact that Ashara and Clarissa were stood in the room. He noticed that Sansa was having a conversation with Clarissa too.

The conversation last night must have gone well. He mused.

"Jon!" He heard Arya shout from the corner of the room as he noticed the King and Queen along with Rhaella, Aegon and Rhaenys stood at the other end of the hall.

This is gonna be hard.

The first thing he noticed was that the hug she gave him wasn't as tight as they normally are. He patted her on the back as she released him, Bran taking her place.

"I wish we weren't parting on such unfortunate circumstances little sis." He said as Arya gave him a sad smile.

"Me too." She said as she looked to her right where Sansa and Clarissa were stood "I got a new sister out of it I suppose." She seemed to say to herself, like it was some sort of consolation prize.

"Will we see you again Jon?" Bran asked, he could see him biting the skin on the inside of his cheek.

"I hope so Bran. Let's hope Robb doesn't ban me from Winterfell." He said, the end said with a small chuckle. Bran just gave him a small smile.

"He better not, or I'll get Nymeria to eat him. I bet she's getting big now, just like Ghost." Arya said.
He heard his uncle chuckle at his daughter's antics.

*A daughter he won't get to see grow up.* He thought sadly to himself.

He moved over to Sansa who politely hugged him, no words, just a polite smile. Clarissa gave him a hug similar to Arya.

"Fly safe, and don't drop him okay?" She joked as she nodded towards her father. He smiled in response.

"You owe me a ride on a dragon Jon, remember that." He heard Arya shout at him.

"Your mother would kill me," He said as her face dropped "...but we'll see, okay?" He added which cheered her back up.

“Jon!” He heard somebody else shout, he turned and noticed the other side of his family approaching. The voice in question happened to be Aegon, or Egg as he was told to call him after they got talking last night.

*Egg, what an odd nickname.*

Aegon gave him a smile as he approached before greeting the rest of the Stark’s in a manner the crown prince would normally do, surprising him by even given his uncle a small nod in acknowledgement.

“Gonna be sad to see you go so soon after meeting you.” Aegon said as Rhaenys came up to him and gave him a hug that felt like it lasted longer than it should have.

“I don’t think I’ll be gone that long, Kireina doesn't mess around.” He replied as he gave his grandmother a hug.

“Have you got everything?” She asked as she broke away from him.
“Everything except for Ser Jaime, is he done pissing his breeches yet?” He asked with a grin as he started pulling on his black gloves.

Aegon chuckled “He’s on his way, he didn't look too happy.”

The Queen gave him a small hug before backing away “You’ll have to excuse Daenerys, she’s still sleeping, she isn't very pleasant when you wake her.” She explained with a smile and a shake of her head.

He shook his head himself and smiled back “It’s fine, I’m the same to be honest.” He replied. “Ghost wasn't with her by any chance was he?” He asked.

It was Rhaenys to answer this time “He hasn't left her side since last night, even slept in her room.”

“He isn’t being a nuisance is he?” He asked.

She shook her head “Far from it. Between you and me, I think Dany has a new best friend.” She said with a small laugh.

*She has a nice laugh.* He thought to himself.

“Do you think she would mind if I left him with her to look after while I’m gone? I don’t think Ghost will fend too well on a dragon’s back.” He asked, worried that he’d have to leave Ghost to fend for himself for a few days. He was a direwolf capable of many things but he was still a pup really, easy pickings for a pack of wolves if he was on his own.

“I think Dany will be delighted by the suggestion.” She replied, looking at him with those deep indigo eyes.

He nodded, a little uncomfortable under her gaze, Aegon seemingly noticing this and changing the subject.

“Margaery would have been here too but I left her and Alysanne to sleep.” He said “Viserys isn't here either because...well he’s just Viserys. You’ll learn what that means in due time I reckon.” He
said with a small chuckle. Jon just nodded in response, it wasn't a surprise that Margaery and Viserys weren't here this morning, they were the most quiet last night, almost as if they couldn't decide what to think of him.

“I’m waiting.” Kireina informed him through their bond, she sounded somewhat impatient.

Thankfully, Ser Jaime entered the hall just in the nick of time, almost as white as bed linen.

“Are you alright?” He asked to the knight with a little chuckle.

Ser Jaime visibly swallowed but nodded “I’m fine, just had a little trouble with the latrine, not to worry.”

He grinned “You been throwing up?”

“C’mon,” Ser Jaime said, ignoring his question as he started walking towards the door heading outside “...let’s get this over and done with shall we.”

The King placed his hand on his shoulder, he held back from not shrugging it off. Even though he knew his uncle had to pay for what he did, he still couldn't help but feel a slither of resentment from his apparent father.

“Be careful son, and fly safe.” He said, Jon just nodded in response “I’ll see you back in King’s Landing.”

He gave Arya, Sansa, Clarissa and Bran one last hug before nodding to his uncle. Ned gave them all one last hug too, there were only a couple of tears but it still made him feel like shit seeing them. He couldn't help but feel like all this was all his fault.

“Give a hug to Rickon for me please.” He asked Sansa who just gave him a small smile and nodded.

“Let’s get this over with then.” His uncle said as he made his way to his side.
“Lord Stark.” The King said in an iron tone behind them, both him and his uncle turning to see what he wanted.

Rhaegar had a blank look on his face “I wish you good fortunes.” He said before nodding. His uncle gave him a reluctant nod back before giving his family one last smile.

He could sense the whole group following them outside as they exited the castle, Kireina’s huge bulk easy to be seen. She’d made her self comfortable as she waited for him, attracting a small group of people off to the side as she laid there. The group in question bolted backwards as she unfurled her wings, a clear sign that she’d spotted him.

“How is this going to work?” His uncle asked as they approached her.

“Watch closely as I get on, then copy what I do.” He said as he walked away from both his uncle and Ser Jaime and begin his ascent up Kireina’s flank. He saw a few people pointing and talking as he got settled in his spot, a spike right in front of him to grip hold of.

“You first.” He heard Ser Jaime say as he nudged his uncle forward. He was impressed when he made his way up Kireina’s side, not as fast as Jon but clearly following the same path as he had. He settled in behind him as he got to the top.

“You alright?” He asked his uncle got settled. All he received in response was a nod, he guessed that he was too awestruck to speak as he ran a hand across Kireina’s scales.

Ser Jaime wasn't so elegant as he ascended the dragon’s side, and he looked like he was glad it was over as he took a seat behind his uncle.

“Do you really need to wear all that armour? That would’ve been a whole lot easier without it.” He said as the Kingsguard knight scoffed, shuffling into place.

“With all due respect your grace, this armour makes it harder for somebody to kill me, and I can’t afford to be dead if I’m supposed to be guarding your arse.” He replied. Jon just laughed.

“Hold on to my waist.” He said, his uncle realising what he was saying as he circled his arms around him. Ser Jaime did the same with his uncle.
He waved to the small group that had followed them out, Jory was looking after the Stark children and the King and Queen were both stood with each of their children, his grandmother stood to the side with Ser Barristan.

“Hold on.” He shouted as Kireina rose to her feet, the grip around his waist tightening as the height from her back to the ground doubled.

He’ll no doubt deny it till the bitter end, but he was pretty sure he heard Ser Jaime scream as Kireina set off and propelled herself into the morning sky over Harrenhal.

Chapter End Notes

I'm not sure where this idea of my fic being abandoned is coming from, I've seen a few comments parroting the same belief.

1. Writer's block is 100% a thing and was something I managed to navigate through in this chapter.
2. I would like to think I've been keeping a steady flow of chapters coming over the 12 months this story has been around.
3. My free time isn't solely dedicated to writing fanfic, I am allowed to do other things lol.

To the patient readers out there that have done nothing but support this story, thank you. To the readers who give feedback on the writing and the plot, whether they like it or not, thank you. (Even the lengthy discussion about someone's unadulterated dislike for Rhaegar I actually enjoyed reading lol.)

But to the minority of people moaning that the end is nigh and my fic has been hung out to dry, have a day off would you?

See you in the next one :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!