The Winter Queen

by mynewnameisfluffy

Summary

The Bastard of Winterfell is born a girl in a world of female primogeniture. As the war of the Six Monarchs unfold, who will sit the Iron Throne in the end is known to no one but the Gods. That is, if there will be a throne left to sit, or a queendom to govern.
Winterfell is a silent castle this time of day. The only ones out and about are the servants preparing
the morning meal or rousing fires. Jorunn is the only member of the ruling family to be up at this
early hour, before dawn. No one saw her, though. She was sure of this, because she was inside the
walls of the ancient Keep. And that was entirely to her liking. As eldest female child of the family,
she was under constant scrutiny, although she was technically not heiress of anything, due to her
status as bastard. She was spare to both Winterfell and Starfall, but she sincerely hoped she would
never have to take up the mantle as Lady of any of them, as she loved both her cousins dearly, even
if she only knew cousin Ned through his letters. It was nice to get away from prying eyes from time
to time. And now that the King was coming to Winterfell in what he thought was a secretive plot, the
entire stronghold was turned on its head to have everything cleaned and prepared. Of course they
knew what the secret reason for King Robert to visit this far north was, at least Jorunn, Cousin
Sansa, and Aunt Catelyn knew. If Uncle Ned had been informed, Jorunn did not know, as she had
been employed by Aunt Cat, the official Lady of the Castle until Sansa comes of age, to help oversee
the preparations, and had not had much time to talk to him in private. Uncle Ned's foster-father, Lord
Jon Tully, the Hand of the King, had recently passed away. It would take a fool not to guess why the
entire court was coming northwards. She was not looking forward to the Kings visit, both because it
would most probably mean that both Uncle Ned and Cousin Robb would be leaving, and because
she herself looked like a reincarnation of her Aunt Lyanna, apart from her Lady Mothers eyes and
cheekbones. She was afraid of the King, or more specifically, his advances. Everyone knew he had
loved her Aunt dearly, even if she did not love him in return. Lyanna Stark had not had much say in
her betrothal, even if she was to become Lady of Winterfell and Warden of the North when she came
of age at sixteen. No child really had. Rickard Stark had managed the Keep for his daughter after his
wife died in childbed with Benjen, and a child of three became its lady as Lyarra Stark was put to
rest in the crypts, holding her end of the iron sword supposed to keep the spirits of her and her Lord
Protector at bay.

“Mother sent me to fetch you.” Bran interrupted her thoughts. “You are expected to break your fast
with us at the high table.”
“I will be there in a moment, I just have to brush my hair. You run along, you probably have to find
Arya as well.”
“No, Robb is getting her.”
Jon let a slight smile grace her features.
“Does he know where to find her?”
“I do not know. Where do you think she is?”
“Easy. We have been so busy preparing the castle for the King, there has been next to no time to
practice in the yard. She will be in the Godswood, with her sword.”
“There has been plenty time to practice.”
“For you, yes. For us girls, having to help more with the preparations, as we need the practice in
running a keep, and the extra hands are needed, no. Now, run along, I need to make myself
presentable for the household.”

Jorunn, lovingly called Jon because her cousin Sansa could not properly pronounce her name when
she was little, made her way from her hiding-place inside the walls of the keep to her chamber. There
she combed and plated her hair, washed her face, an put on a simple gray wool dress with purple
trimmings. As she was about to leave the room, Arya was herded in by her older brother, Robb.
Arya was, as always, in a dress muddy at the hem and torn in the sleeves, her face was full of
smudges, and her hair was a birds-nest of twigs and leaves.
“You found her in the Godswood, did you not?” Jorunn asked bemusedly.
“I did indeed. Fighting her opponent, an evergreen of some sort, with the wrong sword. In the
confusion when she snuck out before daylight, she took one that was too heavy. She could hardly lift it, but was too stubborn to get another one.”

“Had I tried to go back for another one, someone would have stopped me and sent me to my bath, and I wanted to practice. Its not fair that you get to practice and I do not.”

“Robb needs to perfect his swordsmanship to impress the Crowned Princess, whereas you will have a storm of suitors as you grow older, Heiress Tully.” Jon said, mockingly curtsying, winking at Robb. “Let us get you in presentable order for breakfast. You must sadly leave the Maiden’s Wing, Lord Stark.”

“As Lady Snow commands. Shall I explain why you will be running late for breakfast?”

“Oh, I imagine everyone will know exactly why we are late, cousin dearest. Now, run along. I am sure there is something your mother needs you to do. You have to carry your part of the burden, if you are to be prepared to help your future lady Wife in managing the household.”

“I shall hope she is not as harsh a mistress as you my Lady.” Robb countered, as he bowed his way out the door.

“Boys.” Arya muttered disdainfully. Jon snorted, as she led Arya to the vanity, to start to untangle the chaos that was her hair.
After much ado, and some quite unladylike cursing, Arya was cleaned, dressed, and her hair was braided. The dress she wore was of fine-spun red wool, with white details on the bodice and sleeves, and around her shoulders hung a cape of Tully blue, fastened by a direwolf pin.

“Why do I have to wear this ridiculous dress?”

“Because the King is coming with all of court, and you need to make a good impression.”

“But I do not want to make a good impression, I want to practice.”

“Tell you what, if you behave at the feast tonight, I will practice with you tomorrow. Okay?”

“Yes!” Arya exclaimed, loudly enough to startle a nearby maid rushing along with an armful of beddings.

“But you have to act with all of the decorum needed of an heiress to a Great House. I know you find it boring, and that you feel like everyone expects too much of you at times, but you know its because you are to be Lady Paramount of the Trident one day. They just want you to be the best you can be.”

“But why am I to inherit Riverrun, and not Winterfell? Sansa is the one who has the look of a Tully, and I look Stark.”

“I cannot answer that, because I have never been told of the reasoning behind the decision to give Winterfell to Sansa, but it might have something to do with your Lady Mother having siblings in the line of succession, as opposed to your Lord Father, and therefore had secured spares. If you want a better answer, you can ask your Lady Mother once you are alone.”

“But Father has a spare as well. You.”

“I may be a daughter of the elder sibling, but I am still baseborn, Arya. I am technically not in the line of inheritance, or at least Robb is to inherit before me.”

As they now entered the Great Hall for breakfast, the conversation halted. At this hour of day, the hall was occupied by the family, the servants attending the breakfast, and those preparing it for the feast later in the evening. Jorunn and Arya made their way to the high table, accepting the curtseys from the servants gracefully, and a little less gracefully, respectively. As they reached the dais, they curtsied and sat down to eat, as the rest of the family was already seated.

“Good morning.” Ned greeted them from his chair, as he peeled a hard-boiled egg.

“Good morning, Uncle. Aunt Cat. Sansa, could you pass me the butter?”

“Of course. Mother, is there anything more that needs preparing before the King comes, or is it just nit-picking left?”

“I do believe everything is finished, except for the food, but the cooks have their instructions.”

“If we don’t need to do anything, can we go outside and play?” Arya asked, while loading her plate with sausages.

“Do not, not don’t, Arya. And no, not in those clothes.” Catelyn chided her daughter.

“If I change?”

“It took me forever to get you this clean, I am not doing it again today.” Jorunn answered her.

“Can I at least visit Nymeria?” Arya pleaded.

“If you bring Jorunn, Robb or Sansa.”

“I will go with her.” Sansa said. “It is a long time since I have seen Lady. Will you be accompanying us, Jon?” She sent a knowing smile her cousins way. Arya looked at her with pleading eyes.

“There is nothing else of worth for me to do today, so I think I will.”

“Good.” Sansa reached for a jar of preserves.

“Where is Bran?” Arya asked.

“On the roof, looking for the Kings retinue.” Lady Catelyn answered her daughter. “He finished eating early, and ran off before I could stop him.”

After breakfast, the girls made their way outside, towards the shed were the direwolf-pups where
They had been found by Jorunn, when they were on their way back to Winterfell after overseeing Ned’s execution of a Night’s Watch deserter. All the children save Rickon had attended, as Bran was deemed old enough at last. Sansa had looked heartbroken when they had only found five, but she had spotted a sixth in the snow, white with red eyes, and had shouted for Jorunn to get it. Asha Greyjoy, Ned’s ward and the Heiress to Pyke, did not put much faith in the pups survival, but Jorunn was determined to see to it that Ghost, as she had named it, should live.

The pups scared the horses and the dogs, and as they could not be allowed to run underfoot during the preparations, a small hut had been converted to a makeshift kennel. As the girls drew nearer, they could hear the pups rummaging around and scraping the door, eager for their mistresses to pay them attention. Arya stormed to the door and ripped it open in her eagerness see the wolves, and in the flurry of small animals charging her, she almost fell over.

“Careful, Arya. Do not destroy your dress.” Jorunn shouted at her, while strolling towards them in a more leisurely pace, arms linked with Sansa. “Do you think the King is only coming to arrange for Uncle to become Hand, or do you think we will have a betrothal on our hands before he goes south?”

“What between the Crowned Princess and Robb, you mean?”

“Well, they are both unpromised. It would be a good match.”

“Maybe he means to marry his youngest to Arya.” She perched up from where she was crouched on the ground upon hearing her name, but her attention was lead towards the pups again, when Rickons Shaggydog bit at her fingers.

“Or his eldest to you.”

“My? I am a bastard with no lands to my name, San. Why would he want me for his son?”

“His eldest is set to inherit Storms End, and needs a capable Lady Wife to help him. You have had all of the training I have, and more still, there is little chance you need to take up the Ladyship of anything, and you are the niece of the King’s oldest friend. Need I go on?”

Before Jorunn could answer, they were attacked by their respective wolves, and any further conversation about betrothals and splitting the pack was delayed, in favour of playing fetch with and petting all six of the wolf-pups.
Chapter three

Chapter Summary

The court comes to Winterfell.

The Kings retinue arrived with much ostentation and grandeur, Jorunn saw from where she stood, behind the Stark family, beside Asha Greyjoy, the ward. Both Jorunn and Asha knew that Asha was not so much a ward as a hostage, to assure the King of her fathers good behaviour, after the Greyjoy Rebellion. From what Jorunn had gathered from fragments of what Asha said, she did not think her father saw it as a great loss. Asha had been born seven years after her eldest brother, and was not seen as heiress by her father, who wanted to turn them back towards the old ways, which, it seemed, included having the eldest son inherit. Asha was her elder by seven years, so they had never been particularly close, although they got along fine when it was called for, but the ward, who occupied the fourth chamber in the Maidens Wing, had from time to time stumbled into her room to share her womanly knowledge and cynicism. It was no secret that the Greyjoy Heiress stood for substantial amounts of the castle's consumption of moon tea.

First in the great inner walls of the castle, was one of the Kingsguard, carrying the Royal Standard of the Crowned Stag. From the look of it, the knight was Ser Arys Oakheart, youngest son of Lady Arwyn Oakheart of Old Oak. Then came the Princes, Joffrey and Tommen Baratheon, riding behind a enormous man with a dogs head helmet. Following them, of course, came a beautiful man with a head full of golden curls, who could only be the Kingslayer. Suddenly, a blast of trumpets were heard, and the Crowned Princess came riding in, her golden hair bound up in an intricate Southron style, a small diadem of antlers residing on her head. Her dress was beautiful, with skirt and bodice of what appeared to be black silk, sleeves of golden fabric, and a cape embroidered with the Crowned Stag of House Baratheon of the Iron Throne.

“She must be cold.” Remarked Asha “Or she is drunk enough to not feel it.”
“Careful so they do not overhear you, dearest.” Jorunn retorted. “We do not want to invoke the famous Baratheon fury, do we?”
“I guess I wish to keep my head on my shoulders.”

Any further discussion was halted, as Uncle Ned led the Starks down to kneel in front of an immensely fat man. Jorunn and Asha, and the rest of the household, did the same.

“Winterfell is yours, your Grace.” Uncle Ned said in his most solemn, lordly voice.
“You’ve gotten fat.” As Uncle Ned showed no sign of standing, the King, for it was obviously the King, whoever much he did not fit the image Uncle Ned’s stories had painted, took his arms, raised him roughly to his feet, and embraced him warmly. “And don’t call me your Grace, Ned. I can’t take you, of all people, calling me that.”
“As you wish, your Grace.”
At this, Robert Baratheon gave a hearty laugh.
“Father, will you not introduce us?” asked Myrcella from beside her father. Her mother had yet to join them, as she was climbing out of the wheelhouse she travelled in. “Do you not think it rude that he has yet to introduce us, Tom?”
Tommen just stood there, dumbstruck, staring at Uncle Ned, Sansa, and Robb interchangeably. Robert gave a hearty laugh.
“Allow me to introduce myself, Princess. I am Eddard Stark, Lord of Winterfell until my daughter comes of age. My Lady Wife, the Lady Catelyn Tully of Riverrun.” Uncle Ned gestured to Aunt Cat, poised at his right, who curtsied. “My Daughter and Heiress, the Lady Sansa Stark. Lady Catelyn’s Heiress, the Lady Arya Tully.” They both curtsied deeply. “My sons, Robb Stark, and Brandon and Rickon Tully.” Robb and Bran bowed. Rickon looked around for Shaggydog.

“Beautiful daughters and handsome sons.” Robert complimented. “Well, Husband, will you not introduce us?” Cersei asked as she walked up to her husbands right-hand side, standing right in front of Uncle Ned. “This is my wife, the Lady Cersei Baratheon.” The Queen Consort’s expression grew cold at the use of her married name. “My daughter and Heiress, the beautiful Princess Myrcella Baratheon.” Myrcella smiled and bowed her head at their hosts. “And lastly, my sons, Joffrey and Tommen.” Both boys bowed, Joffrey stiffly, as if offended, and Tommen with much more eagerness, and much less grace, looking for a moment like he would topple. Asha rolled her eyes at that, and Jon found herself nudging her in the side instinctively. As she looked up again, her eyes met those of the Kings.

“Lyanna?” he breathed. Uncle Ned followed his gaze disconcertedly. “No, your grace. You are looking at my niece, Brandon’s natural daughter. Jorunn Snow.” Jorunn felt herself stiffen with nerves, this was what she had feared would happen. She did not wish to draw the eye of the King. Uncle Ned must have felt he had to avoid a thoroughly embarrassing situation, for which Jon was grateful. “You wished to see the crypts?” “Surely, the dead can wait. We have been travelling for a moons turn now.” Cersei declared icily. Robert did not acknowledge her, just put a hand around the shoulders of his childhood friend, and let him lead him away.

“Let me show you to your rooms, Your Grace. My daughters can take the Princess to hers, and my boys can show the Princes to their quarters.” Aunt Cat said, while dropping into yet another curtsy. The Queen nodded, and followed Aunt Cat away from the courtyard. As soon as the Queen was out of hearing distance, Sansa waved for Jorunn to come closer. She hesitantly moved towards the Princess and her cousins, dropping into a deep curtsy. “Your Majesty, it is an honour to meet you.” “Lady Snow.” The Princess acknowledged, bowing her head in return. “I hope you will find your chambers to be satisfactory, My Princess.” Sansa said, as the four of them started walking towards the castle. “They are located in one of the warmer parts of the castle, where the hot water runs in abundance in the walls. It has a view out over the Wolfswood, and it is truly a sight to behold when the sun rises.”
Chapter four

Lyanna sits in the crypts of Winterfell, sharing her tomb with Brandon, her Lord Protector, as tradition dictates. Their relationship, time, and manner of death is chiselled into the stone behind them, in the runes of the first men. The iron sword meant to keep their spirits at bay are laid out over their laps, Brandon holding the hilt, a scabbard of stone at the statues hip, Lyanna holding the tip of the sword, as a symbol of the more challenging position of Lady of Winterfell. A shield painted with the direwolf of Stark was propped against the seat of the effigy of Lyanna Stark, and in death, she wore the crown of the Queens of Winter. Lyanna was clasping Brandons right hand in her left. At their feet sat twin direwolves. Further up sits their mother and father, depicted in much the same manner, but for the lack of crown and shield for Lyarra Stark. Brandon and Rickard both wear plate, to show they died in battle. Lyanna and Lyarra, on the other hand, has a lone wolf head of stone resting against their abdomen, showing they died on the woman’s battlefield. The birthing bed. All of this Eddard Stark, who never thought to hold the castle, thinks of, as his King kneels at his sisters likeness and weeps.

“She doesn’t belong here. She was too free. You should have buried her on a hilltop, where she would be able to feel the wind and the snow.” Robert rasped out, after many a minute.

“She was a Stark, your Grace, and the Lady of the castle. She belongs with her foremothers, as was her wish.”

An image of his sister, dying in a bed of blood, comes to him as he once again looks up at her face made of stone.

“Promise me, take us home. Promise me Ned.”

“I kill him in my sleep every night, Ned. Every night I smash his chest in. And every night, I wish I could do it a thousand times more, bring him back, just so I could kill him one more time.” Ned does not answer, just lays a hand on his friends shoulder and squeezes. Robert raises himself to his feet with great difficulty. As he turns to face Him, Ned sees that his eyes are red, and there are tear streaks down his cheeks. As the King starts walking to the entrance of the crypts, he speaks again.

“I need you to come back with me to the capital. To become my Hand. I need people I can trust in that cursed pit of snakes. Your daughter is old enough to take up her position as the ruling Lady, aye?”

“She is thirteen, you Grace. Is there no other you can honour with the Handship? Sansa needs me for some years still.”

“Honour. Hah. I’m not trying to honour you Ned. I need someone to govern the realm for me after Jon died, and there is no-one else but you I want. It can be like in the old days, you and me, working together.”

“Jon, how did he die?” Ned asks tentatively, both out of need to know, and of need to steer the conversation away from the Handship. His wife had warned him, but he still did not want the position.

“I’ve never in my life seen a man die so quickly. He went from hale to dead within a fortnight. There was nothing the maesters could do to help him but all his suffering, Great Maester Pycelle assured me.”

“And how fares his widow, the Lady Tully? Catelyn worries for her sister.”

“I fear his death drove her mad. After talk of fostering her son, she fled with the rest of her household in the dead of night. If she went to that keep of hers, to her childhood home, or to her goodsister in the Vale, I do not know.”

“If it was Riverrun, we would surely have known. Lord Hoster would have sent us notice.” Ned mused.
“Enough of this. I have a son, you have a daughter, let us join our Houses as Lyanna and I was supposed to do all those years ago.”
“My apologies, your Grace, but Sansa is to be wed to the eldest Karstark boy. We felt it was prudent to marry her within the North, as she has her Lady Mothers southern looks. Arya is not mine to give away, as she is her Lady Mothers heiress as Lady Tully of Riverrun, and I think she is of a mind to propose betrothal to Lyman Darry.”
“The Targaryen loyalists?”
“Well, yes. But the lad sounds capable enough, and is the only one within both suitable age and birth to be Lord Protector to the Lady of Riverrun.”
“You have a bastard I can legitimize.”
“She has no Keep nor lands to inherit, nor is she mine.”
“My Joffrey is heir to Storms End. He will be in need of a suitable Lady Wife to be Lord Protector for. They are of suitable age. She has gotten the same education as your daughters, has she not?”
“I felt it was prudent she should be of help to her cousin when the day came for me to abdicate my place as Lord of Winterfell.”
“Then she will be perfect. Renly is obviously in no hurry to sire a daughter, and Stannis will not have another than his own Heiress. Your girl will have to take the Baratheon name, is all. Your eldest boy, is he promised? My Myrcella is in need of a Lord Protector.”
“He is not, your Grace. But would it not be unwise to marry two of your children into the same family?”
“Who cares. Let us find a maester and finalize the matter.”

Jorunn lies sprawled on her bed, arms cushioning her head as she stares onto the stone roof of her bedchamber, counting the cracks. Sansa sits with her back to the headboard, needlework in her lap.
“Why does Aunt Lyanna’s likeness look the way it does? She is bedecked like a warrior Queen of old, and with thehonours of a woman dying in the birthing bed. Did she die in the birthing bed?”
“What has you thinking of this all of a sudden?”
“The King wanting to visit the crypts, and the way he looked at you.”
 Jon grimaces at the memory.
“Uncle Ned says he commissioned it like this because in his eyes, she was a warrior Queen of old, at least in spirit, and he gave her those honours in the memory of all the children neither she nor Brandon would never have.”
“But Uncle Brandon had a child.” Sansa remarks, as she pokes Jon in the rib with her foot.
“Well, had he lived, I would have had siblings, dearest San. I could have been you, heiress to Winterfell, and you would have been Arya, the future Lady of Riverrun.” Jorunn had a wistful look on her face.
“Do you wish it? That you were Heiress, I mean.”
“No. I just wish I knew them, that is all. That they were alive. Mother, at least. I feel like I know of Father, at least to a degree, because people here in Winterfell knew him, but Mother is a stranger to me. I do not even know what she looked like.” Tears start to pool in her eyes, and as she wipes at them, trying furiously not to let them fall, Sansa puts her embroidery down and takes Jon in her arms.
“Had I only had the chance to visit Starfall, see where she came from, meet her family, it might have been a bit easier to bare.” She chokes out.
“Who says you will never visit Starfall? Surely you can accompany father when he goes to Kingslanding, and continue on. You can see Dawn, as you have always wanted. Try to tame one of the sand steeds. Write me, so I can have something to entertain me while I freeze my toes off here in the North.”
“Does not the nose go first, though.” Jorunn murmurs.
“What?”
“If you get frostbite, is it not the nose that goes of first?”
“Oh Gods, it is! Can you imagine me without a nose?” Sansa exclaims, sitting up and clutching at her face.
“I bet none of the Ladies or Lords of the North would dare defy Sansa No-Nose.” Jorum says. “You would be like taken right out of one of Old Nan’s stories.” Sansa can not help it. She starts to giggle. It is small at first, but as the words of her cousin dawns on her, her laughter gets bigger and more uncontrollable, and she has to clutch at her stomach. Jon joins in after staring at her for a while, still lying flat on the bed, but laughing near hysterically all the same.
Sansa Stark had always known she was to become a great lady one day, ruling the North from her family’s ancient seat, as her foremothers had done before her. Branda Stark, who built the wall and the keep and founded the family. All he Branda’s to come after her, like the shipwright, or her daughter the burner. Her grandmother Lyarra, born a Flint of the mountains to her mother, The Flint, who took her fathers maiden name and the keep, due to both her aunts dying without issue. And her aunt Lyanna, for whom a war was started, due to her virtues. Sansa had always wanted to live in a song, having a prince court her, love her above everything else except their many daughters. Now Jorunn was the one who was to marry a prince, and Robb a Princess, but Sansa could not find it in herself to envy any of them. Robb would be taken from his home forever, to live and die as King, the Lord Protector of the Realm, to give his wife daughters to inherit the throne. Jorunn would become the Lady Baratheon of Storms End, ruling it despite her bastard blood. Sansa would have been thrilled for her, had it not been for the way the King was obviously looking at her. She knew how much her cousin despised being compared to their deceased Lady Aunt, and it was bad enough when it was family, or the Winterfell Household. When it was the King, looking at her and seeing his former betrothed, for whom he would have become Lord Protector and ruled alongside, it must have been a thousand times worse. As the night wore on and the King got increasingly drunk, the looks he sent her cousin became less and less discreet, and the Queen Consort got more and more irritated. And still the King shamed his Lady Wife more, by groping the serving women. Sansa felt herself becoming more and more indignant on the behalf of her household, as the King should have known this was not a way to treat women, and in front of his host and family alike. The nerve! Her father tried to get him to stop, but he was too far into his cups to care, and he was the King. He could do what he bloody well liked. Before Sansa could gather her courage to chastise the King as the Lady Heiress, he arose on unsteady feet.

When the King had announced to the great hall that the houses Baratheon and Stark were to be joined through the marriages of Robb and Myrcella, and Jorunn and Joffrey both, he could not hold himself from slipping in a joke or two on how his son would have problems keeping up with his wild northerner of a wife, and to just hope he had stamina enough to keep up with her in bed. “Make sure she doesn’t bite your head off,” he had said to his son, before flopping back into his chair and bellowing for more wine.

She could see the resignation on Jon’s face, the embarrassed but curious looks shared between Robb and Myrcella, and the flash of anger that went over Joffrey’s face, before it settled in a neutral mask. The feast went on as before, but for the occasional cheer from the hall for their beloved Jon, who was now to be the great Lady she was destined to be, and Robb, who would aid the future Queen in her rule. As people finish off their food, the tables and benches get pushed to the sides, and the musicians starts off with a fast-pace northern reel. Robb blushes profoundly when he asks the Crowned Princess to dance, and she blushes as much when she accepts. They lead the dancers, fumbling, stepping on each others toes, and seemingly has a good time. After a visible shove from his mother, Joffrey asks Jon to dance. She graciously accepts, but is quite stiff in her movements when he leads her to the dance floor, to take up their places in the line of dancers. Sansa is, for now, content with sitting where she is, sipping her heavily watered out wine, looking out on the dancers. Robb and Myrcella makes a handsome pair where they dance in the centre of the room, but it is Jon and Joffrey who really steals the attention. She is two years his senior, sixteen to his fourteen, quite old to have just become betrothed. Many of the northern lords with second and third sons had made less and less veiled attempts to win her hand for their sons, evidently not caring overly much that she was a landless bastard, believing Ned would grant her a keep to hold for Sansa, or Sansa granting her one when she ascended her seat. The couple is full of beautiful contrast, Jon is fair of skin where
Joffrey is bronzed somewhat by the southern sun, Joffrey golden of hair where Jon was a rich chestnut. Jon wore her best dress, white of fabric with black trimmings. Sansa had helped her embroider it during their lessons on politics, held by her mother. Joffrey was, oddly enough, wearing his mother's colours of red and gold, although he was his Lord Uncle's heir. They moved together gracefully, as Jon did everything gracefully, from dancing, sewing, painings, to sword work and settling disputes. As Sansa finished her cup, Benfred Tallhart of Torrhen's Square asks her to dance, which she accepts with a demure smile.

Jorunn had danced her first dance with her betrothed, which she has not decided her opinion on yet. Smalljon Umber had asked her for a dance after, which gave Joffrey a prickly look. Smalljon had fancied her for years, and he was a nice enough boy, but she did not fancy him in return. Therefore it was a relief when Robb saved her from dancing more than one dance with him mooning at her and stepping on her toes. Dommec Bolton offered next, and she accepted. Roose had tried to get her betrothed to him for years, but her uncle had always said he would wait to promise her until she wanted to. Truth be told, she had no wish to become Lady Bolton. Dommec was a great lad, but Roose would not be her ideal goodfather. After dancing with many a young lordling, she excused herself from the Karstark she had danced with, and exited the keep.

The night was crisp and cold, just to her liking. As she wandered the courtyard, looking up at the stars and wondering if she should go in for a cloak, she heard from the shadows: “Who do I see here? My nephews new lady, the beautiful Snow of Winterfell. Why are you out here?”

She turned around, not sure who had spoken, before she spotted the Imp sitting on a bench by the castle wall. “My Lord Lannister” she said, before she dropped into a curtsey. “No need for formality.” He said, waving his hand disarmingly. She noticed a wineskin in his other hand, which he now raised to his lips, and took a long gulp. “I needed a break from the crowds, my Lord. Why are you out here, is a better question.” “I needed a break from my sister. She scowls so when I sit beside her, and it is slightly mood-dampening. So I brought my drink out here.” He looked at her thin frame without a cape. “You look cold. Here, have some drink” he said, as he offered the wineskin. Jorunn accepted, and went to sit beside him, before taking a hearty gulp. “It is an interesting name you have. I've never heard of it before,” Tyrion remarked. “That is probably because it is a name brought by the first men. It is also an old Stark name, first borne by Queen Jorunn Stark, a Flint married to King Eddrick Snowbeard. The most famous one, of course, is Jorunn the Shieldmaid, who became Queen of the North in her own right at fifteen, when her mother died in childbed with her only brother. She led the Northern forces against the wildlings wielding Ice, astride a direwolf, if legend is to be believed. Often it isn't. It also states she never married, and that all of her seven children were fathered by a wolf,” “Were they now. Convenient way of getting heirs,” “I suppose it is. It did not matter who the father was; really, it was her eldest daughter who inherited the title anyway. And when you strangle a giant with your bare hands, I presume people will let you do as you like,” “Did she do that?” “Does your father shit gold?” A look if comprehension came upon his face. “I hear strange tales about you, you know. The bastard girl of Winterfell, considered heir presumptive to the stronghold by many until your cousin was born, taught in the arts of warfare and weaponry, rumoured to be one of the best sword wielders in the land, born for the saddle, and an
amazing tracker and huntress. Were you trained to be your cousins Lady Protector?"
“No, I got the customary training in hearing petitions, going over the ledgers, running the household, building alliances, and sewing. I also just happened to want to learn other things as well, when I saw Robb learning them, when we were both but children. I think my Lord Uncle must have remembered how my Lady Aunt was unhappy when she was denied such activities in her youth, and did not want me to end up miserable like her. In this one thing, being compared to my deceased Lady Aunt is not a bad thing.”
“You are compared to her quite a lot. Often near my goodbrother, the King. I never met her, so I cannot say, but you do look Stark through and through. Except the eyes, of course.”
Her eyes darkened considerably at the mention of the King.
“Yes, the purple eyes of a Dayne. If you would excuse me, my Lord, I think I will retire for the evening. It was a pleasure talking to you.” She arose, curtseyed, and went on her way inside the keep again.

Tyrion looked after her with a thoughtful look, and took another swig of wine. She would be a though one for the court.
Chapter 6

The day after the feast, Jorunn were showing the Crowned Princess around Winterfell, at her insistence. They had seen the glass gardens, the library, the Maiden’s Wing, and were now strolling through the Godswood, Myrcella’s arm tucked in Jorunn’s elbow.

“I think that you will find Storms End very much to your liking, sister.” The Crown Princess said, as she looked around, taking in the holiest place in Winterfell. “Is it okay if I call you sister? I have always wanted a sister.”

“Of course, your Grace. I would be honoured.” Jorunn said, a wide smile gracing her face. “One can never have too many sisters.”

“If I am to call you sister, so must you call me the same. At least, say Myrcella.”

“It would be a pleasure, sister. I imagine I will spend a lot of time in King’s Landing, initially. Will you tell me of it?”

“It stinks. Too many people placed too close together, but what can one do? Force them to move out?”

“Give them soap?”

“We could try that, yes.”

They walked on in silence, Myrcella watching the woods around her in wonder.

“You know, there is a Godswood in Kingslanding.”

“Is there? Do you visit it?” Jorunn asked, her eyes lighting in wonder.

“There is yes, but not as formidable as yours. It is rather sparse, and holds no real Weirwood, or so I have heard. I have never really had any reason to visit it, as I am to hold the patronage of the Faith of the Seven, but now that I will marry a northerner, I might frequent it more often.”

“I know husbands are supposed to yield to their wives Gods, if they are of a different faith, but I cannot see Robb letting go of the Old Gods completely. He is too devout for that.”

“Of course, just as long as we marry in the Great Sept of Baelor, and he helps me uphold the rituals we must, he can practice any religion he will in private.”

“Is there a Godswood in Storm’s End?”

“I believe so, yes. You know, it is said the first men helped raise your future stronghold. It is built so masterfully, the stones fitted so perfectly for its place in the walls, that neither besiegers nor the storms have ever found hold on them.”

“Then I know where I will be if war breaks out.” Jorunn said, as she lead them back towards the inner courtyard.
“Jon, there you are.” Said Sansa, as Jorunn and Myrcella strode in the doors of the Great Keep. She came running towards them, looking distressed.

“Bran fell.”


“Well, he did. Mother and Father is with him, as is Maester Luwin. I need to get some of the guests out of the way, to get some of the chaos under control. Can you help me?” she pleaded. She looked lost.

“Of course. We will organize a hunt. That will get the King out of the way, and with him, most of his retinue. Robb could lead it, and I can help you sort out the household.”

“Yes. Fetch Robb, tell him to meet us in my Lord Fathers sollar.” Sansa ordered a maid rushing past. “If you would excuse us, Your Highness.”

“Of course, Lady Sansa. You have urgent buisness to attend to.”

And with that, they walked each their way, Jorunn and Sansa to meet with Robb, and Myrcella to her quarters in the guest house.

“You want me to lead a hunting party.” Robb said, disbelief at her words evident in his tone. “Is this the best time?”

“We need you to get the guests off of our backs for a while, Robb, so that we can gain a bit off control over the situation here. Besides, the King has been moaning about the lack of hunts that has taken place.” Sansa said, sitting at her Fathers desk.

“Fell a moose. Impress your future goodfather. And wife. Myrcella is most likely willing, if not eager, to join you.” Jorunn said, looking at the most resent entry in the ledgers, noting that the Kings visit had been expensive indeed. Their guests had helped them trough four caskets of arbor gold, three of dornish red, and five of their own cider, brewed on the last autumn apples.

“Will she?” his face lit up a bit at the prospect t spend some time with his betrothed, even if it was alongside her father. He was clearly deeply besotted.

“Yes, she will. She is also getting restless, and any number of walks in the woods cannot beat a good hunt. Now go, before I change my mind and lead the damned thing myself.” Jorunn said. Robb grinned, bowed teasingly, and shot out the door.
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